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TRAINING MEN AT BRIDGE CHURCH, PERRY, OHIO, TO  
SPIRITUALLY LEAD CROSS-GENERATIONAL  
SMALL GROUPS

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Darin Ray Avery  
December 2014

**APPROVAL SHEET**

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SMALL GROUPS

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To Deborah,  
my praying wife and encourager;  
to Landon, Emmaline, and Isaac,  
who make me proud;  
and to Bridge Church at Perry,  
fellow laborers in the harvest.

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## PREFACE

Opportunities such as I have had to learn and grow as a leader are rare and not to be taken for granted. Of this truth I have tried to remind myself over the past three years and especially the last eighteen months working on this project. Few could undertake a research project without significant and ongoing support from a number of invested individuals and groups; I am certainly no exception to this rule.

From start to finish, this pursuit has been sustained by a host of brothers and sisters in Christ. Thus heartfelt appreciation belongs to those who helped me conceive, conduct, and complete this project. To my friend and mentor, John Bailey: thank you for encouraging me even after the project took a different direction than the idea we originally discussed. To the kind folks of Perry First Baptist Church: thank you for giving me a quiet and comfortable place to research and write. To Dr. Whitney and my cohort in the Biblical Spirituality Doctor of Ministry program at Southern Seminary: thank you for the encouragement and insights. To my parents, my sister and brother-in-law, and many other family members: your patient support was always felt. To Bridge Church: thank you for letting me lead you; I love you in the Lord. And, most of all, to Deborah: words are inadequate; nevertheless, thank you for loving me and helping me persevere.

Darin Avery

Perry, Ohio  
December 2014

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to train laymen at Bridge Church, Perry, Ohio, to give effective spiritual leadership to home-based, cross-generational small groups.

#### **Goals**

The first goal of this project was to assess the leadership strengths of the men who participated in the leader training process. This assessment came in two parts. First, the leadership strengths of the men who agree to participate in the training were measured through the completion of the Small Group Assessment survey (see appendix 3) showing his own perceptions of his leadership and of the overall health of his group. Second, the Small Group Assessment was given to members of each group in order to measure their perceptions of leader strength and group health (see appendix 4). These surveys provided information useful in developing the leader-training curriculum described below in goals 2 and 3 as well as a benchmark for assessing the success of the training curriculum. This goal was to be considered successfully met if five men currently leading or participating in cross-generational small groups were assessed and if for every leader at least three group participants completed the assessment.

The project's second goal was to design a one-day seminar training men in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to spiritually lead cross-generational small

groups. This one-day intensive was divided into two modules. Module 1 was divided into two segments covering the biblical and theological foundations of spiritual leadership as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Module 2 of the one-day intensive addressed various practical aspects of leading cross-generational small groups. Topics included: incorporating children and youth into the gathering in meaningful ways, structuring the gathering around the essential elements of Scripture intake, prayer, and singing, coaching families in developing the discipline of family worship in their own homes, engaging the group in outreach and mission, and developing apprentice leaders to form and lead new groups. This goal was measured in two parts. First, a survey was given at the beginning and end of module 1 to measure participant knowledge of the biblical and theological foundations of spiritual leadership (see appendix 5). Second, a survey was given at the beginning and end of module 2 to measure participant attitudes toward the task of spiritually leading cross-generational small groups (see appendix 6). The attitude survey was given again at the mid-point and end of the twelve-week study period. A T-test for dependent samples was used to analyze the results of the pre- and post-training results of both of these surveys. This goal was to be considered successfully met if the T-test showed a positive statistically significant difference in pre and post scores.<sup>1</sup>

The third goal of this project was to equip five men with a biblically- and theologically-sound resource for strengthening their confidence and competence in providing spiritual leadership to cross-generational small groups. A twelve-week Group Leader Guide was the second component of the training curriculum. During the final segment of the one-day training seminar the men were taught how to use the group

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<sup>1</sup>Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 188-94.

Leader Guide as a resource helping them develop healthy habits and patterns of spiritually leading their small groups. This goal was measured by comparing the results of a survey completed at the end of the one-day training seminar and then again at the end of the twelve-week Leader Guide period intended to demonstrate a change in participant competence in leading cross-generational small groups as a result of the Leader Guide resource. A T-test for dependent samples was used to measure a change between pre- and post-survey results. This goal was to be determined successfully met if the T-test showed a positive statistically significant difference in pre/post scores.

### **Ministry Context**

Having begun initial outreach in mid-2006, five core families launched Bridge Church's weekly worship services as part of the Greater Cleveland Baptist Association in January, 2007 with the aim of being a vibrant worshipping and disciple-making church in the small town of Perry, Ohio, and its adjoining communities of Madison and Painesville. While, ethnically speaking, the make up of Bridge Church is almost exclusively Caucasian—reflecting closely but not exactly the community of Perry, which does have small African American and Hispanic populations—the church is somewhat more diverse generationally. But, in its nearly eight-year history Bridge Church has yet to successfully foster cross-generational biblical community and disciple making.

With initial weekly worship service attendance surging to over one hundred in late 2007 and early 2008 as a result of an intensive marketing campaign also came Bridge Church's largest participation in small groups. Though Sunday morning classes for children and a Sunday afternoon youth group gathering remain important environments for discipling our young people, it has been the belief of Bridge Church's leadership from

the beginning that small groups meeting during the week are essential for the building of healthy biblical community and for growing people into fully-committed disciples of Jesus. At one point as many as eight small groups were meeting at least twice per month—most of them weekly—outside of Sunday morning. However, in early 2009, visional differences between many members and the church’s leadership precipitated a rapid decline in worship attendance and membership that was accompanied by a significant drop in both the number of small groups and the overall number of people participating in small groups.

In August of 2010, Bridge Church underwent a transition of pastoral leadership from the church’s founding pastor to myself. I had been on staff since 2006 as pastor of worship and youth. By the time of the pastoral transition average weekend worship service attendance had declined to fifty with only one small group meeting during the week on a consistent basis. Small group participation has risen modestly since the pastoral transition with four groups currently meeting weekly for Bible study, including a ladies’ group, men’s group, and two mixed gender small group Bible studies. Yet none of these groups offers an intentionally cross-generational environment for spiritual development.

### **Rationale**

While stability and modest growth in small group participation are indeed encouraging, I hope to see much more done to position the small group environment as a strategic engine for the fostering of cross-generational biblical community and disciple-making at Bridge Church. At the time of the writing of this project’s proposal, Bridge Church had begun to pilot intentionally cross-generational small groups. While Bible

study is one aspect of these groups, other important elements distinguish them from traditional small groups. Such distinctions include the incorporation of children and teens in the activities, singing of praise, extended times of prayer, fellowship meals, and planning of family-related mission and outreach activities. Thus far the response from participants in these groups has been very positive. It is my hope that every family and individual associated with Bridge Church will be involved at least twice monthly in a cross-generational small group environment to not only experience deeper spiritual community and more consistent growth as disciples and disciple makers but to also gain exposure to and appreciation for the generational diversity of the body of Christ.

Although children's classes, youth gatherings, and mixed and gender-specific adult Bible studies certainly have some communal and discipleship value, these environments do not and cannot capture consistently all the elements of worship, biblical community, and disciple making that a generationally-integrated small group can. Yet, looking to the future of Bridge Church with the expectation that the number of cross-generational small groups will grow, important questions remained: how will these groups grow and what will be the means by which they will be strengthened, sustained, and new groups started? These are the important questions this project was intended and designed to address.

The Bible presents clear patterns of intentional leader development. Spiritual leaders are to be spiritually qualified men who, under the authority of God's Word, serve the community of God's people through exemplary lives, biblical teaching, emotional encouragement, spiritual oversight, and, finally, by training and deploying yet more qualified leaders. The answer to Bridge Church's next strategic hurdle is the development

of an intentional spiritual-leadership training process for men, and this project was undertaken to help meet that need.

### Definitions

Three key terms used frequently throughout this project—*cross-generational*, *small groups*, and *spiritual leader/leadership*—are defined as follows:

*Cross-generational*. Spiritual leaders must be grounded in the pursuit of raising up the next generation of disciples. J. Oswald Sanders says, “Leaders today—those who are truly spiritual—must pass on the torch to younger people as a first-line duty.”<sup>2</sup> According to Steve Wright, “What has been missing [in many churches] is a mentality that places equal importance on family and church.”<sup>3</sup> Wright says further, “The responsibility to teach our children the incredible truths of God may seem overwhelming, but the Bride of Christ is there to help.”<sup>4</sup> In 1969, writing about what would become the modern small group movement, Clyde Reid suggests diversity within groups is to be preferred over homogeneity. He says,

It is an advantage to include in the same group whenever possible a range of persons old and young . . . . Those of us who are older need the stimulation and freshness of the younger generation. Those of us who are young can profit by really listening to the seasoned wisdom of a more experienced person.<sup>5</sup>

In this project the term “cross-generational” refers to a group open to persons of all age groups, from infants to senior adults, as distinct from an age-specific group.

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<sup>2</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 18.

<sup>3</sup>Steve Wright, *A Parent Privilege* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest, 2008), 99.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>5</sup>Clyde Reid, *Groups Alive, Church Alive: The Effective Use of Small Groups in the Local Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 37.

*Small groups.* Scripture is clear that God’s people have congregated in large groups for worship (e.g., Neh 8:1-11; Acts 2:46a), but it is also clear that God’s people have gathered in smaller more intimate settings for spiritual purposes (Neh 8:12; Acts 2:46b). The leadership training process at the heart of this project will be designed around the environment of a small group comprised of between 6 and 20 persons meeting at least three times per month outside of the Sunday morning worship service. While terms reflective of different group needs or emphases (e.g., care groups, community groups, life groups, support groups, etc.) have been applied to these smaller gatherings in recent years, Jerry Bridges says groups should seek to incorporate the essential elements of Bible study, sharing of needs, accountability, and prayer for one another. He says, “Great care should be taken to ensure that small groups accomplish the objective of spiritual fellowship, that is, of mutually enhancing our relationship with God.”<sup>6</sup> Brad House keenly observes, “Our previous experiences in small groups can limit our imagination of what community can be.”<sup>7</sup> Not wanting to fall victim to such limits, though Bridge Church has had a variety of group environments meeting for the past six years, each of which having brought some measure of spiritual fellowship and community to the participants, it is believed that the intentional training of leaders for cross-generational small groups will enhance these outcomes and broaden our communal imagination.

*Spiritual leader/leadership.* John C. Maxwell defines leadership quite simply as “influence.”<sup>8</sup> Spiritual leadership therefore, in the context of this project, is understood

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<sup>6</sup>Jerry Bridges, *True Fellowship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1985), 89.

<sup>7</sup>Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 87.

<sup>8</sup>John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader within You* (Nashville: Nelson, 1993), 1.



as seeking to have significant spiritual influence in the lives of others. E. M. Bounds says of those who have had effective spiritual leadership, “They are not leaders because of brilliancy . . . but because, by the power of prayer, they could command the power of God.”<sup>9</sup> Successful spiritual leaders for Bridge Church are those men who not only possess growing confidence and competence in conducting cross-generational small group meetings but who have, in increasing measure, the heart and mind of Christ and who therefore bring those attributes and that type of influence to bear upon the lives of the people they serve both inside and outside the Bridge Church community at every age and stage of spiritual development.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The chief limitation of this project was its length of fifteen weeks. The project period began on Sunday, March 2, 2014, and ended on Saturday, June 14, 2014.

The first delimitation of this project was its focus group of men only. A second delimitation was the participation of only those men who had been leaders of or active participants in small groups for at least two months prior to the project period. A third delimitation of the project was its focus upon Bridge Church. The pre- and post-project survey of small group participants included only those persons who had been in a Bridge Church small group for a minimum of four consecutive group meetings.

### **Research Methodology**

Concerning goal 1, in the two weeks prior to the start of the project period, the leadership strengths of the five men who agreed to participate in the training as well as

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<sup>9</sup>E. M. Bounds, in R. Kent Hughes, *Living on the Cutting Edge: Joshua and the Challenge of Spiritual Leadership*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1987), 11.

the overall health of the groups they led or in which they had been participating was measured through the completion of the ten-question Small Group Assessment survey.<sup>10</sup> This survey was taken by each leader, and by at least three members of his small group.<sup>11</sup> For each question, leaders and group members checked the blank beside one of the four numerically valued answers available. Questions were modified slightly to account for member perspectives. Here is an example question in its leader and group member versions: Leader: “How frequently do you spend time praying for the needs of your small group members?” Group member: “How frequently do you spend time praying for the needs of your group leader(s) and/or fellow small group members?” The possible answers and numeric values to this question were: None or very little (1), Once a week (2), Every other day (3), and Daily (4).<sup>12</sup> The numeric value corresponding to all ten answers was assigned to obtain a total score for each survey. These surveys were given again in week 15 of the project period to measure changes in leader and group member perceptions of leader competence and overall group health as a result of the training and resource provided. A T-test for dependent samples was used to determine a statistically significant positive change between pre-and post-project survey scores.

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<sup>10</sup>Used and modified with the permission of creator, Andrew Mason. See appendix 1 for permission, appendix 2 for the original Small Group Assessment survey (also available online at <http://www.smallgroupchurches.com/small-group-assessment-tool/>), and appendices 3 and 4 for the modified leader and member versions of the survey and scoring chart used in this project.

<sup>11</sup>Since I was not present to administer and collect all group surveys, leaders were assigned a four-digit code (e.g., 4321). Leaders shared this four-digit code with their group members instructing them to mark their pre- and post-project Small Group Assessment surveys with the leader’s code plus another four-digit code for each member also assigned by me (e.g., 4321 – 1234) so that leader and member surveys might be kept and analyzed together. Leaders were asked to pass the list of member codes to each group member and were trusted not to look at the code sheet or surveys to preserve anonymity within the groups. Only I knew the identity of each group member.

<sup>12</sup>The original survey was scored differently with a low score for each question being 0 and a high score of 10. Scoring in this project will be simplified to values of 1, 2, 3 or 4. Thus scores will range from 10 to 40. See appendix 1 (email 5) for Andrew Mason’s member survey scoring suggestions.

The second goal of the project was measured in two parts, each corresponding to the two modules of the training seminar, which occurred at the end of week 2 of the project on Saturday, March 15, 2014.

First, a twenty-question multiple-choice survey generated by the content of the biblical and theological segment was given at the beginning and again at the end of the first module of the one-day training seminar to measure a change in participants' knowledge of the biblical and theological foundations of spiritual leadership (see appendix 5). Each question had only one correct answer, thus scores ranged between 0 and 20 and were graded on a 100 percent scale. Pre- and post-surveys scores were matched using a T-test for dependent samples which determined if a statistically significant positive change in participant knowledge was achieved.

Second, a twenty-question survey—given before and after module 2, as well as at the mid-point and at the end of the project period—measured a change in participant attitudes toward the task of spiritually leading a cross-generational small group (see appendix 6). Taking the form of a six-point Likert scale, participants circled one of six possible answers corresponding to their attitude toward the subject of each question. Answers had a value of 1-6 points with 1 indicating a highly unfavorable attitude and 6 indicating a highly favorable attitude. Thus possible test scores will range from 20 to 120 points. Pre- and post-survey scores were matched using a T-test for dependent samples to determine if a statistically significant positive change in participant attitudes toward various aspects of spiritually leading a cross-generational small group was achieved.

The third goal of the project was measured by another twenty-question survey (see appendix 7) given at the end of the one-day training intensive and again at the end of

the twelve-week Leader Guide period (week 15 of the project period) designed to detect a change in participant confidence and competence in spiritually leading small groups as a result of the Leader Guide resource. The Leader Guide provided: sermon text-based personal study notes and questions, five daily devotions from sermon focal text, prayer guide for leader's personal relational network (including of course his small group), weekly group memory verse from the focal text, sermon-based group discussion questions, song suggestions, and a journal page for personal reflections. The questions in the habits and skills survey examined each leader's growth in the four principle areas of spiritual leadership presented in module 1 of the training seminar: devotion to God first, determination in the face of opposition, denial of self, and diligence in teaching and conduct. This survey also took the form of a six-point Likert scale. Pre- and post-survey scores were matched using a T-test for dependent samples to determine if a statistically significant positive change in participant confidence and competence was achieved.

All of the research undertaken in this project was conducted in full compliance with the requirements of the Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR  
TRAINING MEN TO SPIRITUALLY LEAD  
CROSS-GENERATIONAL  
SMALL GROUPS

In his classic *Spiritual Leadership*, J. Oswald Sanders rightly cautions, “Christians must resist a certain kind of ambition and rid it from their lives.” No doubt many who aspire to positions of leadership do so out of selfish ambition. But does this mean all ambition is evil? Certainly not. Biblically informed Christians will agree with Sanders’ conclusion that “we must also acknowledge other ambitions as noble, worthy, and honorable.”<sup>1</sup> How else are we to account for the many scriptural stories of those who answered God’s call to leadership and were greatly blessed along with those they led? Or, how are we to explain texts such as 1 Timothy 3:1, which says those aspiring to local church leadership desire a ‘noble task’, and Hebrews 13:17, which commands Christians to submit to local church leaders as those who keep watch over their very souls? The community of God’s people, as presented in the Old and New Testaments, is not a leaderless community. Nor is ambition—even proper ambition—the only quality necessary for leading the people of God. But what are the right qualifications, and how are spiritual leaders to be nurtured and developed?

While the Bible is clear that God’s people may be endowed with certain spiritual gifts (e.g., Rom 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28, etc.) and natural talents (Exod 35:10,

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<sup>1</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 13.

Matt 25:15a, 1 Pet 4:10-11, etc.). These attributes are certainly worth encouraging men to study, identify, and utilize for the benefit of the body of Christ, but the focus of this chapter is on the more general areas of leader character and skills—qualities that any leader, regardless of gifts or natural talents, can work to sharpen. This chapter presents biblical and theological support for the thesis that the character and skills of men who serve as spiritual leaders in the cross-generational context of God’s community must be intentionally developed.

This chapter begins by analyzing Deuteronomy 6:1-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6-9, Ephesians 6:4 and other pertinent texts that support the thesis, showing that throughout the Bible primary spiritual leadership of God’s people is a male responsibility. Support is then given for developing in men four leadership qualities from the accounts of four spiritual leaders and their mentors: primary devotion to God as seen in Joshua as he assisted Moses and became leader of the Israelites; determination in the face of opposition as seen in Elisha’s following Elijah and carrying forward his prophetic ministry; self-denial as shown in Peter’s reinstatement by the resurrected Jesus; and finally, diligence in teaching and personal conduct as seen in Paul’s coaching of Timothy.

### **Male Leadership**

Before a particular approach to developing these character qualities is pursued, the Bible’s presentation of spiritual leadership in the home and in the broader community of God’s people as a primarily male responsibility bears acknowledging. Randy Stinson says male headship was in place even before mankind’s fall into sin. “The original creation,” he says, “involved male headship and female submission between Adam and

Eve, and sin brought about a perversion of these roles.”<sup>2</sup> Far from believing that male headship and female submission suggest inequality between the sexes or female exclusion from many valuable ministries both in the home and in the community of faith, this author agrees with Stinson who further states that “in the Christian household, redemption does not negate the distinct roles of men and women; instead, seen in light of God’s redemption, these roles become a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.”<sup>3</sup>

While many early passages affirm the pattern of male spiritual leadership—such as God’s call to Adam not Eve after the first sin (Gen 3:9), Noah’s being charged to build the ark, not his wife (Gen 6:13-14), and His call to Abraham not Sarah to “command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD” (Gen 18:19)—Deuteronomy 6:1-9 offers arguably the clearest Old Testament description of male spiritual leadership in the home and of its ramifications in the broader community. As the Israelites anticipate their long-awaited entry into the Promised Land, though he clearly has the entire community of Israel in view, Moses appeals directly to the men of the nation: “that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son . . . .” (6:2). This masculine tone flows, at least in part, from the fact that the multiplication promise (v. 3) and the land promise (v. 10) were initially given to men (viz., the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), and that men therefore, were to be the chief stewards of those promises. According to verse 7, once established in Canaan, Israel

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<sup>2</sup>Randy Stinson, “Male and Female He Created Them: Gender Roles and Relationships in Biblical Perspective,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 79.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

would remain within the blessings of these promises only as successive generations were taught to keep God's covenant: "You shall teach them diligently to your children . . . ."

Linguistically speaking, the male focus of this passage is undeniable. James M. Hamilton notes that "although many modern translations change 'sons' to the more generic 'children' [v. 7], the use of the Hebrew term for 'sons' is important."<sup>4</sup> He also suggests that the use of the Hebrew masculine form of the second person pronoun 'you' (a distinction not present in English), in the commands "you shall teach/repeat" and "you shall talk," indicates Moses' directing the responsibility of teaching sons to fathers.<sup>5</sup> Eugene H. Merrill captures this male emphasis when he comments on the regular routine of instruction necessitated by this command: "Father must educate son and son the grandson so that the fact and features of the covenant might never be forgotten."<sup>6</sup>

Yet, with only fathers and sons participating directly in its transmission from one generation to the next, might not the covenant indeed have been forgotten? What of the other half of the population? Are we to assume mothers and daughters were left to fend for themselves spiritually in Moses' arrangement? Hamilton says no.

Wives whose husbands obeyed these commands would constantly hear God's word repeated and discussed. Daughters of fathers who heeded these commands would scarcely be able to avoid the repetition and discussion of God's words. More importantly, when fathers repeated and discussed God's words with their sons, they ensured that future wives and daughters would be led by husbands and fathers who would do the same.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>James M. Hamilton, Jr., "That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord: Family Discipleship in the Old Testament," in *Trained in the Fear of God*, 37.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) 166-67.

<sup>7</sup>Hamilton, "That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord," 38.



Moses indicates in verse 20 that the Israelite fathers' diligently teaching their sons the covenant as children will be shown successful when their sons eventually ask, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" In response to this inquiry fathers were to teach their sons theological truths such as God's rescue of His enslaved children (v. 21), God's punishment of wickedness (v. 22), God's provision for His people in fulfillment of His promise to the patriarchs (v. 23), and God's preservation of His obedient ones (v. 24). The ultimate result of this obedience is found in verse 25: "And it will be righteousness for us . . . ." As Peter C. Craigie says,

Righteousness in this context describes a true and personal relationship with the covenant God, which not only would be a spiritual reality, but would be seen in the lives of the people of God. Thus the answer to the son's question finally focuses on the proper relationship of a man to God, and the fruit of that relationship in daily life.<sup>8</sup>

In the New Testament, the paradigm of male headship is neither altered nor abolished even though redemption has now been realized through Christ. Male headship and female submission remains the pattern in the New Covenant because what it signifies has not changed, namely the union between God (Christ) and his people (the church). Alexander Strauch roots male leadership of the church in the Incarnation when he says, "For the Bible-believing Christian, the primary example of male leadership is found in the person of Jesus Christ. The most obvious point is that Christ came into the world as the Son of God, not the daughter of God. His maleness was not an arbitrary matter."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 175.

<sup>9</sup>Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 52.

It is worth noting that linguistic support for male spiritual leadership of the New Testament church is as strong and plentiful as that pertaining to male leadership in the Old Testament community of Israel. Paul's overwhelming use of the Greek masculine in his adjectival descriptions of the qualifications of overseer in the lists of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is not accidental. However, one quality, consistent between the two lists, perhaps better than any other, restricts leadership within the church to men. Without disqualifying from eldership godly, never-married single men or widowers who had been faithful to their wives when he writes that "an overseer must be . . . the husband of one wife" (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6), Paul not only sets the Christ–church relationship as the pattern for male headship but also points to his Old Testament-influenced conviction that the home and family is the fundamental social context best suited for observing and developing the other traits listed. Stephen B. Clark insightfully suggests,

There is a further consideration which points toward the desirability of having the men be the elders of the Christian community . . . the structure of leadership has to be set up in a way that supports the entire social structure of the community. If the men are supposed to be the heads of the family, they must also be the heads of the community. The community must be structured in a way that supports the pattern of the family, and the family must be structured in a way that supports the pattern of the community. It is in the family that they learn their community roles as well. Conversely, what they see in the community reinforces what they learn in the family. Thus, to adopt different principles on the community level weakens the family, and vice versa.<sup>10</sup>

The qualities listed for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are undergirded by the passage that lays perhaps the firmest foundation for every Christian man's responsibility to lead spiritually. In Ephesians, Paul, speaking to the entire church, instructs every husband to portray Christ within the marriage relationship by loving his

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<sup>10</sup>Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1980), 630.

wife “as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). With respect to children, Paul then commands all fathers (not mothers) to bring them up “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (6:4). Liefeld finds strong consistency between Old and New Testament patterns of male leadership when he remarks, “Elders . . . were well known in Judaism from the time of Moses to second-temple Judaism. There is no passage in the New Testament that radically differentiates the role of Christian elders from the Jewish ones.”<sup>11</sup> While in Deuteronomy 6 Moses was clearly instructing all Israelite men—not just the elders—through his use of the singular form of ‘you,’<sup>12</sup> the presence of a smaller body of men entrusted with leading the whole community does not presume a higher standard of conduct for that group and a lower standard for all other men. According to I. Howard Marshall, the same is true in the New Testament era:

On the whole, the qualities required are the same for both overseers and deacons and are also such as would be required in any member of the Christian congregation; there is no ‘higher standard’ for church leaders, but it is expected that they will actually show the qualities which are desirable for all believers.<sup>13</sup>

That men are responsible for the primary spiritual leadership of God’s people, from the household level to the community level, is clear in these passages. But why men? In addition to husbands representing Christ as head of the church and godly fathers representing the heavenly Father’s care and discipline of His children, Scripture indicates that men and the families and communities they lead are never in a spiritually neutral environment. Thus, while spiritual leadership is a male privilege, men also bear the

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<sup>11</sup>Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 117.

<sup>12</sup>Hamilton, “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord,” 37.

<sup>13</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 472.

primary responsibility of defending the family and community against attack. It was not Adam to whom the serpent came tempting, but Eve. We may assume that this tactical choice on Satan's part is owing to the fact that he saw Adam as a harder target. As Strauch says, "a major reason that God insists on an all-male eldership is because godly males are more suited by divine design than godly females for leadership, particularly for identifying and fighting off satanic false teaching and subtle doctrinal deceptions."<sup>14</sup>

The men of Israel were not preparing to lead their families into a spiritual void. Canaan was rife with idol worship. Moses warns after commanding fathers to instruct their sons: "You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you" (Deut 6:14). But outside threats were not the only spiritual danger; Moses also warns Israel against repeating her own failures of faith: "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah" (v. 16). The Israelites men were to defend against both external and internal spiritual threats to the community. Similarly, while Greek and Roman idols posed an ongoing obstacle for early believers (cf. 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:19-21; 1 John 5:21), other threats came from inside the Christian community. As Polhill notes, the heresy in the churches of the Pastoral Epistles involved leaders from within the church preying upon women, leading some to usurp male leaders by teaching publically (see 1 Tim 2:12).<sup>15</sup> Thus, Paul's advice, "Have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander" (1 Tim 5:14), not only affirms the importance to the whole church of women submitting to both the spiritual authority and protection of godly husbands but upholds the biblical pattern of male spiritual leadership extending from Eden onward.

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<sup>14</sup>Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 61.

<sup>15</sup>John B. Polhill, *Paul & His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 401.

## **Why These Men and Why These Qualities?**

Moving now from a biblical and theological foundation for male spiritual leadership, one may reasonably wonder why and how the four men and leadership qualities named above were selected instead of simply using, for example, the lists of elder/overseer qualifications outlined by Paul in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Certainly many other Bible passages (and characters) illustrate these four leadership qualities. Of devotion to God first and foremost it would be hard to find a better example than Daniel and his contemporaries Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Paul's outline of sufferings endured for the sake of the gospel in 2 Corinthians 11 certainly exemplifies determination in the face of opposition, as does his resolve to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ" (Phil 3:14). Esther was offered half of Ahasuerus' empire but was possessed of enough self-denial to put the needs of her fellow Jews before her own wants and fears. And finally, every spiritual leader would do well to study the diligence of John the Baptist, whose purity of conduct did much to lend his public ministry its sin-exposing, Christ-announcing power.

While the life and ministry of Jesus could abundantly supply examples of these four leadership qualities—and countless others such as prayerfulness, humility, decisiveness, wisdom, worshipfulness, empowerment of others, courage, etc.—Joshua, Elisha, Peter, and Timothy were chosen for three reasons. First, their lives demonstrate an important relational aspect of growth in spiritual leadership. Though there are biblical examples of men becoming spiritual leaders under the direct tutelage of God, having no (or at least no named) human mentor (e.g., Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, and certainly Jesus), because the training process pursued in this project relies heavily upon

trainer-trainee interaction, biblical leaders were chosen who rose to prominence under strong human mentors. Secondly, these leaders were chosen to show project participants that the whole Bible is useful as a manual for Christian spiritual leadership development, not just the New Testament. And thirdly, because I believe examining real-life leaders and training relationships in their biblical contexts will better equip participants to navigate the relational contours of spiritually leading a small group than simply studying lists of qualifications.

Rather than diminishing the importance of Paul's lists of qualifications, it is my conviction that devotion to God, determination amid opposition, self-denial, and personal diligence are deep inner qualities of Spirit-filled leaders, fundamental principles underlying the attitudes and issuing forth in the very actions and avoidances Paul outlines. For example, can a man be above reproach (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6) if he has no inner diligence in his personal conduct? Will he be devoted to one wife if not first devoted to God and His revealed plan for marriage? Can he raise submissive, respectful children (1 Tim 3:4; Titus 1:6) apart from an internal determination to pursue their holiness and purity in the face of disobedience? And can he avoid arrogance, anger, greed, drunkenness, and be hospitable toward others (1 Tim 3:2, 3; Titus 1:7, 8) without a spirit of self-denial?

John MacArthur notes the distinction in 1 Timothy 3:1 between two Greek words often both translated "desire" (e.g., "If a man desire . . . he desireth a good work" KJV). The first (*orégetai*) means 'to reach out after' and describes external action, while the second (*epithumei*) means 'a strong passion,' and refers to an inward desire.<sup>16</sup> Each

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<sup>16</sup>John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1784.

man examined in this chapter faced discouragement as a leader, but none of them were dragged into leadership against their will. Each possessed an internal and external desire to be spiritual influencers, a desire nurtured by mentors but placed within them by God.

The leaders are presented in chronological order, but the qualities also fall into an important logical sequence. For instance, any man can be diligent, but not without first denying himself. Proper self-denial cannot happen without determination. And one is not likely to be determined about anything if he is not first intensely devoted to it. While each leader herein examined certainly possessed a measure of each quality, following the chronological order from Joshua to Timothy is the progression believed best suited for training men in the fundamental principles of spiritual leadership. The project will involve training in practical aspects of group leadership, but without a solid foundation of core qualities, such training is of little value. Thus we begin with Joshua and devotion.

### **Devotion**

Joshua's name first appears in Scripture in the account of the defeat of the Amalekites at Rephidim (Exod 17:8-16). Though we do not first meet Joshua praying to God but rather fighting against the enemies of the people of God, he nevertheless learned a lesson in this battle that would forever shape the course of his spiritual leadership of the people of Israel. R. Kent Hughes notes that as Aaron and Hur upheld the weary hands of Moses in prayer, Joshua discovered that "the real power was not in his sword but in God," and "that the backbone of any work done for God is prayer."<sup>17</sup>

Joshua's devotion to God over and above his devotion to the people he led marks him as a truly great spiritual leader worthy of imitation. But, though Joshua may

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<sup>17</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Living on the Cutting Edge: Joshua and the Challenge of Spiritual Leadership* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1987), 11.

have possessed natural leadership gifts, he did not become a great spiritual leader by accident or by himself. Prior to, during, and especially after the victory at Rephidim it is evident that Joshua had gained the special attention of Israel's current spiritual leader, Moses, who began, through very intentional means, to develop within Joshua the devotion to God necessary to set aside every other concern for the sake of obedience.

In Exodus 24 Moses is accompanied by Aaron, Hur, Nadab, Abihu, Joshua, and the seventy elders of Israel to the base of Mount Sinai. From verse 13 we learn that when God summoned Moses up onto the mountain, only his assistant Joshua joined him while the others had to wait. While there were doubtless other practical reasons for inviting a younger, perhaps healthier companion on such a treacherous climb,<sup>18</sup> so intentional was Moses in developing his spiritual successor's devotion to God that when Yahweh bid him come and wait for the giving of the tablets it made perfect sense for Joshua to come too.

For Israel's spiritual leader and military leader to both leave the community behind for a lengthy period was not without its risks. Douglas Stuart comments, "Letting the Israelites go for weeks without resolution of important disputes could undermine the social peace among the newly merged and newly responsible Israelites."<sup>19</sup> Indeed the idolatry and chaos that Moses and Joshua discover upon their return to the camp—aided by none other than Aaron, one of those Moses left in charge of settling disputes—proves Stuart's point. But, for the time being, what was happening on the mountain with Israel's current and future leaders was more important than what was happening at its base. In

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<sup>18</sup>Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006) 559.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.



Exodus 32:15 Moses begins his descent from Sinai alone, presumably because Joshua had not accompanied him into the cloud at the very summit but stayed further down the mountain, closer to the Israelite camp.<sup>20</sup> Verse 17 supports this view by indicating that it was Joshua who first heard the noise in the camp. Even though it is unclear how long Joshua heard the noise before Moses arrived, the lesson for spiritual leaders is that even though he mistook the clamor in the camp for “the noise of war”—something to which he would have been naturally compelled to respond as a military commander—he nevertheless resisted this compulsion and remained on the mountain waiting for Moses.<sup>21</sup>

Allowing Moses to take such a capable commander away from the people knowing the chaos that would engulf the camp shows the priority that Joshua’s preparation for spiritual leadership—including devotion to God’s interests above the peoples’ while trusting Him for guidance in resolving community problems in due time—was to both Moses and God. With no textual mention of Joshua’s accompanying Moses on either his second trip up Sinai to intercede on Israel’s behalf (Exod 32:30-34) or his third trip to receive the new tablets (34:1-29), it may be fairly speculated that on these occasions it was God’s (and Moses’) decision for Joshua to remain. Having been the only one on the mountain with Moses must surely have lent Joshua a degree of authority among the elders and community in Moses’ absence.

It must not escape the modern reader’s attention that the purpose of the initial trip up Sinai was no mere spiritual retreat but was to receive God’s Law.<sup>22</sup> While Joshua

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<sup>20</sup>Stuart, *Exodus*, 561.

<sup>21</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 479.

<sup>22</sup>J. Gordon Harris, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, New International Bible Commentary, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 20.

waited for Moses on the mountain, he was ultimately waiting for the Word of God. The further development of Joshua's devotion to God and to His word through His appointed spokesman, Moses, can be seen in other places as well. One example is Joshua's keeping constant guard at the temporary tent of meeting outside the camp in Exodus 33:7-11.

While all of Israel would watch reverently as Moses went to the tent (v. 8), and though any Israelite could inquire of God through Moses at the door of the tent (v. 7),<sup>23</sup> the text makes it clear that Moses alone went inside the tent to receive words from God (v. 9).<sup>24</sup> Guarding the tent of meeting at all times, as Stuart suggests, "does not automatically elevate Joshua above the other Israelites, as if to a par with Moses . . . but it does show the trust Moses (and God) placed in Joshua and his continuing importance as a leader."<sup>25</sup>

Another, albeit less flattering, example of Joshua's devotion to God's word through Moses is his anger at the prophesying of Eldad and Medad in Numbers 11:26-30. Timothy R. Ashley comments that Joshua here sees the unauthorized actions of the two men as a "challenge to Moses' leadership."<sup>26</sup> Keil also connects Joshua's jealousy to a concern for authority since Eldad and Medad had not received this gift through Moses' mediation.<sup>27</sup> Moses' reproof in verse 29, "Are you jealous for my sake?" was essential in showing Joshua that not even his devotion to Moses was to supersede his devotion to God. Hughes says, "For Joshua, this was very probably a watershed experience. Had he

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<sup>23</sup>Stuart, *Exodus*, 696n103.

<sup>24</sup>Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 579.

<sup>25</sup>Stuart, *Exodus*, 698.

<sup>26</sup>Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 216.

<sup>27</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, in vol. 1 of Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 71.

not been checked here, his ‘selfless jealousy’ for Moses’ honor could eventually have made him a narrow, petty man—unfit for leadership.”<sup>28</sup>

Seldom in Scripture is devotion to God more publically affirmed than in God’s designating Joshua—“a man in whom is the Spirit” (Num 17:18)—as Moses’ successor. Joshua’s commissioning (17:18-23) also affirms Moses’ intentionality in developing Joshua’s devotion to God. Though Joshua entered neither the glory cloud atop Mount Sinai nor the tent of meeting outside the Israelite camp, and though he would have to be reproved by his mentor for misguided jealousy and repeatedly encouraged by God after Moses’ death (e.g., Josh 1:6, 7, 9, 18), he had attained not only the preparation but the power necessary for the task of spiritual leadership now before him. Sanders rightly says,

Spiritual leadership requires superior spiritual power, which can never be generated by the self. There is no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader. A true leader influences others spiritually only because the Spirit works in and through him to a greater degree than in those he leads.<sup>29</sup>

Though Moses was instrumental in shaping him for leadership, Joshua’s devotion to God was born of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-empowered devotion to God by which Joshua gave his favorable report about Canaan when all of the other spies except Caleb gave unfavorable reports (Num 13:1-14) was that by which he would have the nation stone Achan and his family (Josh 7:22-26) and by which he would call—not coerce—the people of Israel to choose whether they would serve Yahweh or idols (Josh 24:15a).<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps no greater pledge of utmost devotion to God exists in Scripture than Joshua’s claim, “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:15b).

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<sup>28</sup>Hughes, *Living on the Cutting Edge*, 14.

<sup>29</sup>Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 28.

<sup>30</sup>David M. Howard, Jr., *Joshua*, The New American Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 436.

Joshua's devotion was to be his family's devotion. As Madvig notes, "Our individualistic approach to salvation must be modified by the fact that here (and in Acts 16:31) individuals are challenged to involve their entire households."<sup>31</sup> Moses' instruction to fathers in Deuteronomy 6 was not lost on Joshua who saw himself as first the leader of a family. His devotion to God on the household level doubtless led many Israelites to follow suit in pledging themselves to the exclusive worship of Yahweh.<sup>32</sup>

### **Determination**

Of the four herein examined, devotion to God is by far the most important trait of spiritual leadership; apart from it none of the others matter. As with Joshua, every Christian leader will face challenges insurmountable apart from a settled devotion to God and an absolute commitment to the trustworthiness of His word. Yet it is through such challenges that God shapes and strengthens men for even more faithful, more determined spiritual leadership among His people. The transfer of prophetic office from Elijah to his assistant Elisha provides a helpful model of the development of a spiritual leader's determination in the face of opposition.

Elijah knew he would not prophesy forever, but saw in Israel's remaining idolatry that the prophetic challenge would not end with him.<sup>33</sup> Thus God's instruction to appoint Elisha as prophet in his place in 1 Kings 19:16 surely came with little surprise. Though portrayed as Elijah's disciple (1 Kgs 19:16-21, 2 Kgs 2:1-18 and 3:11), Elisha differs from Elijah in significant ways. Richard Clifford finds key differences between

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<sup>31</sup>Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 368.

<sup>32</sup>Howard, *Joshua*, 436.

<sup>33</sup>August H. Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 304.

the two in Elisha's leading of prophetic guilds (2 Kgs 2:15-18; 4:38-44; 6:1-7; 9:1) versus Elijah's comparatively solitary life, and also in Elisha's occasional cordiality with the Israelite kings versus Elijah's unswerving hostility toward the house of Omri.<sup>34</sup> Yet, all differences aside, a common ingredient of both of their ministries (and in fact of every spiritual leader's ministry) was opposition.

Not unlike Joshua who evidenced devotedness to God prior to Moses' refining influence, as a young man Elisha showed determination. Paul House roots Jesus' reflection 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:62) in Elisha's killing his oxen and burning his plow in order to demonstrate to his relatives and to Elijah a clear break between his old and new life. House notes further how, "Elisha seems to know he must take a single-minded approach to the difficult task he will assume."<sup>35</sup> As important as Elisha's natural, intuitive determination may have been, it was not enough. Though nothing is recorded of their partnership from Elisha's anointing to Elijah's translation to heaven besides Elisha's assisting Elijah (1 Kgs 19:21), it would be foolish to assume that during that time Elijah neglected to nurture even deeper determination within Elisha for the challenges to come. Given that the same term (lit. "aide") is used to describe Elisha that was used for Joshua's relationship with Moses (Exod 24:13; 33:11) it is difficult to imagine Elisha not being present and learning spiritual determination at Elijah's denunciation of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 21:17-24), the incineration of the two captains with their companies of fifty (2 Kgs 1:9-12), or at the denunciation and death of Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1:13-17). Indeed it must

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<sup>34</sup>Richard J. Clifford, "Elisha," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 183.

<sup>35</sup>Paul R. House, *1 & 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 225.

be—at least in part—the senior prophet’s intentionality in this task over the course of the assistantship that emerges in Elisha’s resolve not to leave his master on the day of Elijah’s whirlwind departure into heaven in 2 Kings 2:1-12.

Whereas Joshua’s keenest lesson on devotion to God came in Moses’ rebuke for being overly jealous for his mentor’s authority, Elisha’s toughest lesson on determination came through Elijah’s three appeals to part company on their final journey together: first at Gilgal, then at Bethel, and finally at Jericho. The text makes it clear that God had revealed Elijah’s departure to Elisha and the sons of the prophets (at both Bethel and Jericho) independently of one another. Hence the sons of the prophets’ twice asking Elisha, “Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?” and Elisha’s twice replying, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet” (vv. 3, 5). That Elijah also knew what was about to happen is evident in verse 10: “if you see me as I am being taken . . . .” But more important for this study is his motive for asking Elisha to leave him. On this question scholarly opinions vary. Keil suggests humility—that Elijah did not want anyone to witness his glorification without being well assured their presence was in accordance with God’s will.<sup>36</sup> Elisha’s persistence would thus signify God’s approval of Elisha as Elijah’s successor, not merely Elisha’s loyalty to his mentor.

Conversely, in view of similar biblical situations, such as Naomi’s three appeals for her daughters-in-law to return to their homeland (Ruth 1:8, 11, 12), Jesus’ replies to various persons wishing to follow Him (Luke 9:57-62), and His threefold summons to Peter (John 21:15-17), Alfred Edersheim indeed finds in Elijah’s three entreaties a means of testing Elisha’s fidelity. He poignantly remarks,

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<sup>36</sup>C. F. Keil, *I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. 3 trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 291.

There are occasions when all seems to indicate that modest and obedient retirement from the scene of prominent action and witness, perhaps even from the dangers that may be connected with it, is our duty. But he who would do work for the Lord must not stand afar off, but be determined and bold in taking his place, nor must he be deterred from abiding at his post by what may seem cross-Providences.<sup>37</sup>

Patterson and Austel attempt a synthesis of these views suggesting first of all that “perhaps [Elijah] sought an assurance of the Lord’s will with regard to the succession by putting Elisha to the test.” However, having already argued that the politeness of Elijah’s command indicates a permissive rather than prohibitive tone, they conclude, “more likely the test was primarily for the strengthening of Elisha’s faith.”<sup>38</sup> Whether Elijah’s motive was to discern God’s will, to prevent Elisha from giving undue glory to his mentor, or to strengthen Elisha’s faith cannot be conclusively discerned; it is most likely an amalgam of motives aimed ultimately at the glorification of Israel’s God in the continuation of the fight against idolatry.<sup>39</sup> What can be clearly discerned is that in the space of a single day God saw fit to transfer the prophetic torch from one man to another in the sight of yet another generation of faithful prophets who now have a new leader and the privilege of announcing the climactic declaration of the entire episode: “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha” (2 Kgs 2:15).<sup>40</sup>

Elijah’s route afforded him a final encouraging visit to the young prophets in Bethel and Jericho,<sup>41</sup> and also gave them a model of determination in Elisha whom he

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<sup>37</sup>Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History: Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 744.

<sup>38</sup>R. D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1 & 2 Kings*, in vol. 4 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 174-75.

<sup>39</sup>House, *1, 2 Kings*, 256.

<sup>40</sup>Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings*, 379.

<sup>41</sup>House, *1, 2 Kings*, 257.

knew would pass his test and prove to their students that a man of God is not to be drawn aside from his task. The fifty young prophets from Jericho apparently learned this lesson well. Having been granted by Elisha their determined request to search for Elijah (vv. 16-17) and being satisfied that he was nowhere to be found, they returned, doubtless with greater resolve to listen to their new leader.<sup>42</sup> Like Elijah and Elisha, spiritual leaders in every generation must build determination for God's work into their successors while at the same time nurturing proper respect for their predecessors.

### **Self-Denial**

One's devotion to God will be proven false and one's determination to fulfill God's community purposes in the face of opposition will ultimately be found flimsy if one is unwilling to deny himself. Perhaps no spiritual leader receives a more direct exhortation to a lifestyle of self-denial than that which Peter receives from Jesus in John 21:15-19. Bearing similarities to the mentor-student relationships between Moses and Joshua and between Elijah and Elisha, the mentor, Jesus, calls His pupil to total devotion to God over and above those he leads and to spiritual determination in the face of intense opposition, including certain martyrdom. Yet the episode differs from the previous two in that the mentor is none other than God Himself, who, unlike Moses and Elijah, did not divert devotion and glory away from Himself but in fact sought it.

It is morning at the Sea of Galilee and Jesus appears to His disciples for a third time after His resurrection (21:14). After serving the disciples breakfast, Jesus commences His famous threefold interrogation of Peter, "Simon Peter, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (vv. 15, 16, 17). Understanding Jesus' question requires

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<sup>42</sup>Patterson and Austel, *1 & 2 Kings*, 177.



clarity as to whether by “more than these” Jesus means more than he loves the other disciples, more than the other disciples love Jesus, or more than fish and the fishing profession to which Peter had returned. Kostenberger offers this analysis:

On one level, all three are true: Peter must love Jesus more than he loves other people (Matt 10:37; Luke 14:26) or his natural profession (Mark 1:16; Luke 5:1-11), and he is called to love Jesus more than these other men do and to be willing to render extraordinary sacrifice on behalf of his master (John 6:67-69; 13:36-38; 21:18-19). Indeed, Peter earlier had claimed a devotion to Jesus exceeding that of the other disciples (Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29; John 13:37; cf. 15:12-13). Hence, in context, the second alternative seems most likely here: Jesus challenges Peter to love him more than the other disciples do.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus’ three questions and Peter’s three responses all appear the same in English, but they become more revealing of the gracious intent of Christ and the humble condition of Peter’s heart when considered in Greek. D. A. Carson explains,

When Jesus asks the question the first two times, ‘Do you love me?’, the verb [for ‘to love’] is *agapaō*; Peter responds with ‘I love you’ (*phileō*). The third time, however, Jesus himself uses *phileō*; and still Peter cannot bring himself to use more than the same. Commonly it is argued that *agapaō* is the stronger form of ‘to love’, but so powerfully has Peter had his old self-confidence expunged from him that the most he will claim is the weaker form – even when Jesus draws attention to the point, using the weaker form himself when he asks the question for the third time.<sup>44</sup>

Peter’s three responses in these verses affirm not only his love for Jesus, but also Jesus’ knowledge of his love. Again, though the three statements “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you” appear identical in English, in Greek they are nuanced. According to Tenney, the verb ‘know’ (*oida*) used in Peter’s first two responses implies the intellectual knowledge of a fact, but the word *ginōskō* for ‘know’ used in Peter’s third

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<sup>43</sup>Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 597.

<sup>44</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 676.

answer denotes knowledge gained through experience.<sup>45</sup> Jesus had experienced Peter's love and devotion; Peter had essentially left everything behind to follow Him for three years, but unfortunately the dark hour of his denial of Jesus is often more readily recalled. Peter had truly failed in the self-denial that Jesus demanded not just of spiritual leaders but of any who would be His disciple (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Yet in the present setting, Jesus, who knows all things (John 1:42; 2:25; 16:30), understands that despite this terrible falling, Peter is still a man of faith and commitment.<sup>46</sup>

Every spiritual leader fails and, like Peter, must come to grips with his own hypocrisy. Burge suggests that by asking, "Do you [indeed] love me more than these other men love me?" Jesus is asking Peter to examine the strength of his earlier pledges (e.g., Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29; John 13:37; cf. 15:12-13),<sup>47</sup> whereupon Peter realized that part of self-denial is self-acceptance. Unless one accepts his own capacity to falter and fail in the faith—he cannot embrace fully the grace and power of God essential for the self-denial required to spiritually shepherd the faith of others. Paul's famous words in 2 Corinthians 12:9 are appropriate to this point: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

What, in the moment, may have seemed to Peter a great humiliation before his peers was in fact Jesus' elevation of him to a new level and kind of spiritual leadership among the eleven. Keener comments,

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<sup>45</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, *John*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 202.

<sup>46</sup>Gary M. Burge, *John*, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 586.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 586-87.

Just as Jesus fed his disciples here (21:9-14), so Peter is to feed them after Jesus departs. This involves not so much physical nourishment as the bread of life (6:26-27). It is however, noteworthy that Jesus invites Peter to feed others only after Peter has himself first eaten (21:15); just as Peter had to accept Jesus' washing before he could serve the Lord (13:8-10), he had to eat his meal.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps it should be noted that, although a spiritual leader must not deny himself that which is essential for his own spiritual health (i.e., intake of the word of God), self-denial must nevertheless encompass all manner of sinful and fleshly desires, including even the preservation of physical life when physical death is required as a testimony to Christ and example to others. Noting Jesus' use of similar language concerning His own death earlier in John's Gospel (cf. 12:27-32; 13:31), according to Tenney, Jesus' prediction of Peter's eventual crucifixion placed Peter in a category with Himself—a life spent for God and ultimately sacrificed to glorify God. Jesus showed Peter that if he were to fulfill his promise of loyalty, he would have to follow Him to his own cross.<sup>49</sup>

The cross at the end of Peter's life was a literal one, but to get to that cross he had to embrace his crucifixion not merely as a future eventuality but as a day-to-day reality overshadowing his every moment and shaping his every desire and decision as a spiritual leader. That Jesus' prediction of martyrdom did not scare Peter out of following Him to death, but rather strengthened his resolve to deny himself and pass this lifestyle on to others, is evident in his later words to the early believers: "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God" (1 Pet 4:1-2). Every spiritual leader

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<sup>48</sup>Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:1234.

<sup>49</sup>Tenney, *John*, 202.

does well to follow Jesus' example by intentionally focusing other leaders on the daily reality of the cross; and every spiritual leader does well to follow Peter's example of encouraging others in the daily discipline of denying the self and its human passions.

### **Diligence**

Self-denial may for some connote a complete disregard of one's self in exchange for an absolute focus upon others, but Christian leaders must understand that nothing could be further from the intent of Jesus and the apostles. Proper self-denial implies an intimate awareness of the self in relation to the gospel and how one's wicked tendencies interrupt service to God and others in His family. Proper self-denial—flowing from a heart devoted to God and determined to put His interests first—seeks to establish a life of self-discipline. The fourth and final quality of spiritual leadership to be explored in this chapter is diligence in one's teaching and personal conduct.

In 1 Timothy 4:6-16 the apostle Paul exhorts his protégé to personal godliness and doctrinal diligence in his ministry. Polhill notes that Timothy was neither the bishop nor the pastor but rather Paul's personal representative to the Ephesian house-churches carrying Paul's full apostolic authority.<sup>50</sup> But rather than diminish the passage's usefulness as a guide for developing personal and doctrinal diligence within local church leaders, it heightens it, especially given this project's focus on small, cross-generational groups. Paul was entrusting to Timothy the responsibility of identifying qualified men to serve as long-term local church shepherds capable of developing yet more leaders; hence his generationally-focused imperative in 2 Timothy 2:2: "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others

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<sup>50</sup>Polhill, *Paul and His Letters*, 407.

also.” Timothy’s comparatively short-term assignment made it all the more important that he model diligence in both personal behavior and public teaching. Laxity in either area—because he would only be in Ephesus temporarily—would prove him the irresponsible youth many may have expected him to be (cf. v. 12), bring disrepute upon his mentor, and misrepresent the nature of true spiritual leadership to those who were to continue training leaders once his apostolic duties took him elsewhere.

The passage begins (v. 6) and ends (vv. 11-16) with a view to the content and character of Timothy’s teaching ministry. Though denying Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, Raymond F. Collins says, “These things” (vv. 6, 11) refers to the instructions that have been given to Timothy thus far in the epistle, and that “if Timothy shares these instructions with the community, he will prove himself not only a real disciple of Paul but also a good servant of Christ Jesus.”<sup>51</sup> The importance of Timothy’s teaching content cannot be overstated. The two imperative verbs found both in verses 6 and 11—(*paraggéllō*) “command” and (*didaskō*) “teach”—appear in the same or similar terms several times in the letter (e.g., 5:7; 6:2, 17) and also in Titus (e.g., Titus 2:1, 6, 15; 3:8), and, according to Knight, “require continual engagement in commanding and teaching the apostolic instructions.”<sup>52</sup> While the whole body of believers (*adelphoi*; i.e., “brothers and sisters”)<sup>53</sup> is to receive Timothy’s teaching—including public reading of Scripture (v. 13)—the proximity of the list of elder qualifications, including “[ability] to teach” (3:2), must not be overlooked. Timothy’s faithfulness and diligence in teaching the

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<sup>51</sup>Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy & Titus*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 120.

<sup>52</sup>George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 204-5.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 194.

whole church not only informs the content of future spiritual leaders' teaching but shapes the character of their lives by his own example as well (see vv. 15-16).

Though young, Timothy was ready for the spiritual leadership role to which Paul had appointed him. Learning the Old Testament from his mother and grandmother as a boy (cf. 2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15), he also gained experience in the church (Acts 16:2) and training at Paul's side.<sup>54</sup> Yet, despite Timothy's knowledge and experience, Paul reminds him of the gravity with which a spiritual leader must carry himself among God's people by challenging him toward a disciplined life of holiness. Also, noting the passage's "remarkable" abundance of imperatives, Marshall sees Paul placing "significant stress on [Timothy's] being an example to others . . . [and] a two-fold emphasis on the hard work which Timothy must put into his Christian life and service and on the spiritual resources which he needs if he is to be able boldly to uphold the truths in 4:6-10 and refute the heretics (4:7)."<sup>55</sup> This 'hard work' is seen in Paul's use of athletic imagery. By training (*gymnaze*) himself for godliness (*eusebian*) through spiritual discipline—unlike physical training (v. 8), which has limited benefit—Timothy prepares himself for the copious toil (*kopiōmen*) and agonizing struggle (*agōnizometha*) faced by all who hope in God (v. 10); and in so doing makes himself a fit trainer of other spiritual leaders. According to Knight, "Paul . . . speaks of his own and his colleagues' spiritual struggle and exercise, not only in terms that apply to every Christian, but in terms that he also applies to the activities of the ministers who are the leaders within the congregation."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy*, 157.

<sup>55</sup>Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 557.

<sup>56</sup>Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 202.

It bears repeating that in every generation and phase of redemptive history the people of God have never lived in a spiritually neutral environment. Timothy was not simply a shepherd among sheep but—in another sense also—a shepherd among wolves entrusted with developing other spiritual shepherds who would also face spiritual wolves. The combination of right doctrine and right living among God’s people was Paul’s prescription to Timothy for ensuring the health and holiness of the Ephesian church in the face of heresy. Ralph Earle comments, “No matter how straight a person may be in his doctrine or how effective he may be in his teaching, if there is a flaw in his inner or outer life, it will ruin him,” adding that in verse 16—“Watch your life and doctrine closely”—Paul is saying to Timothy, “Stay right in there; keep on doing the things I have called your attention to.”<sup>57</sup> Paul insisted on the purity of Timothy’s character and doctrine because he expected Timothy to endure in ministry thereby passing forward these same emphases to the local church leaders he was responsible to identify and develop.

### **Conclusion**

There are doubtless many other traits of spiritual leadership and numerous other spiritual leaders presented in the Bible worthy of inclusion in this chapter. However, it is believed that, apart from the constraint of chapter length, for a project whose focus is upon the intentional training of male spiritual leaders in the relational context of a local church, the four attributes of devotion to God, spiritual determination in the face of opposition, self-denial, and diligence in a spiritual leader’s life and teaching as seen in the four mentor-trainee relationships herein examined are the most suitable and profitable.

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<sup>57</sup>Ralph Earle, “1 & 2 Timothy,” in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 375.

While Scripture offers the sole authoritative basis for the building of spiritual leaders, historical and contemporary writings on the theory and practice of developing spiritual leaders offer additional valuable insights. Chapter 3 explores these sources.



CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR INTENTIONALLY  
TRAINING MEN TO SPIRITUALLY LEAD  
CROSS-GENERATIONAL  
SMALL GROUPS

Writing from the perspective of the Galilean fishermen, the courses of whose lives had forever been altered by their encounter with Jesus, A. B. Bruce identifies the heart aim of all Christian leadership development—selflessness for the sake of others.

In former days, ere we left our nets and followed Jesus, we girded ourselves with our fishermen’s coats, and walked wither we would. When we shall have become apostles, all that will be at an end. We shall be burdened with a heavy load of responsibility; obliged continually to think of others, and not to please ourselves; liable to have our personal liberty taken away, yea, even our very life.<sup>1</sup>

Selflessness for the sake of others does not come naturally to sinful humans, as the examples in the previous chapter—particularly of Peter—prove. According to Sanders, “Humility is the hallmark of the true spiritual leader . . . [who] will choose the hidden path of sacrificial service and approval of the Lord over the flamboyant self-advertising of the world.”<sup>2</sup> But humble, godly servant leaders do not become such accidentally. This chapter offers two-fold support for the thesis that intentional training is necessary in order to fully develop men as spiritual leaders for cross-generational small groups: first, by examining the emphasis upon intentionality in the training of spiritual leaders in historical and current writings; and second, by examining the emphasis upon

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<sup>1</sup>A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve: Timeless Principles for Leadership Development* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971), 516.

<sup>2</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 61.

servant-hearted spiritual leadership as essential to group health in writings on community and small groups.

### **Intentionality**

Carl George says that an effective small group ministry must accomplish three goals: (1) provide nurturing relationships in the presence of Jesus Christ; (2) invite others to faith in Jesus Christ; and (3) reproduce a new set of leaders so new groups can be formed.<sup>3</sup> Noting that the first objective is met in most small groups and that the second is met in about a quarter of small groups, George laments that the third and perhaps most strategic thing church leaders can do—helping to raise up another generation of leaders—is approached haphazardly in most churches.<sup>4</sup> Developing the type of men who will set themselves aside for the sake of Christ and the faith community requires intentionality. From an informal poll conducted during his 1998 leadership conferences, John Maxwell found that five percent of his respondents became leaders as the result of crisis, ten percent because of natural gifting, and eighty-five percent due to the influence of another leader.<sup>5</sup> Put simply: leaders make leaders! Jesus was neither accidental nor haphazard in choosing His future apostles; He was intentional. As Coleman notes, “There is no evidence of haste in [Jesus’] selection of [His] disciples, just determination.”<sup>6</sup>

This section establishes theoretical grounds for intentionally training men in three key areas of leadership: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The order of these three is

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<sup>3</sup>Carl George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership* (Taylors, SC: Center for the Development of Leadership for Ministry, 2007), 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 133.

<sup>6</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 27.

purposeful, for right leading (skill) flows out of right thinking (attitude), and right thinking is based upon proper knowledge. The training process pursued in this project begins with knowledge and flows through attitude formation toward skill-development.

## **Knowledge**

To form the right attitudes, which aid in the development of the right skills, the spiritual leader needs two types of knowledge: Scripture knowledge and self-knowledge.

**Scripture knowledge.** Scripture is the God-given source of all proper knowledge of the human self, but it provides knowledge of far more. Paul’s prayer that God would fill the Colossian Christians “with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9) was prayed in view of their already having received scriptural truth: “Of this [hope] you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you . . .” (1:7). As Sanders says, “Spiritual leaders of every generation will have a consuming passion to know the Word of God through diligent study and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> But, lest the spiritual leader grow lax in his pursuit of Scripture knowledge, he must be intentionally reminded of this priority, as Paul reminded Timothy, “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed,” and that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:14, 16).

*The Reformed Pastor* offers an historical model of intentionally training men to lead the most basic of cross-generational small groups—the family—in knowing

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<sup>7</sup>Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 102.

Scripture. Much like Paul with Timothy, Richard Baxter exhorts young pastors to

go occasionally among them [families], when they are likely to be most at leisure, and ask the master of the family whether he prays with them, and reads the Scripture, or what he doth? Labour to convince such as neglect this, of their sin; and if you have opportunity, pray with them before you go, and give them an example of what you would have them do.<sup>8</sup>

As men are intentionally trained to know Scripture, it matters greatly how they are taught to view it. Spiritual leaders-in-training must learn that, more than just a body of facts to be known, the Bible—as Paul, Baxter, and countless other trainers of trainers believed—is divine instruction to be obeyed. Jesus commissioned the eleven to go to all nations, “teaching them to observe (obey) all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20). For behavior adjustment (i.e., observing/obeying)—not just intellectual attainment—to be the principal aim of a spiritual leader’s Bible teaching, it must be central to his training. Teaching the Bible from this perspective and with this aim will result in gospel growth as God’s word through the Spirit transforms lives. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne say, “Training is the engine of gospel growth,” and that “under God the way to get more gospel growth happening is . . . to see more people equipped, resourced and encouraged to speak the word prayerfully to other people . . . .”<sup>9</sup> Such equipping, resourcing, and encouraging happen most effectively when pursued most intentionally.

Men must also be trained to see Scripture as a living history of spiritual community. Barth says, “We go to Scripture not as aliens but as spiritual descendants.”<sup>10</sup>

Paul D. Hanson notes that “as communities of faith today draw on this heritage for their

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<sup>8</sup>Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1999), 100.

<sup>9</sup>Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* (Kingsford, New South Wales: Mathias Media, 2009), 90.

<sup>10</sup>Karl Barth, quoted in Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 544.

own sense of identity, they draw on a vividly comprehensible history,” and, “if we open our eyes to the community of faith that took shape in biblical times, the way in which we look on the communities of faith of which we are a part will be radically transformed.”<sup>11</sup> Training leaders to see Scripture as a ‘living history’ helps them and those they lead to see their small groups as extensions of the biblical narrative.

The biblical narrative is of course one large story comprised of many smaller stories. Noting sociology and management theory’s influence on contemporary ministry, beginning with the church-growth movement in the late 1970s, Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl suggest that Bible story is more powerful than management theory. “Young and postmodern leaders,” they say, “are by nature resistant to applying management principles to ministry. Instead, they are highly responsive to Bible stories . . . as sources of examples and principles for ministry.”<sup>12</sup> When it comes to intentionality, those Ogne and Roehl term “transformissional coaches” routinely use biblical counsel to guide leaders, which depends on the coach’s familiarity with biblical stories and . . . ability to choose a story that addresses an issue.”<sup>13</sup>

Also taking issue with much of modern ministry training, which they suggest “emphasizes uniform and predictable responses that are learnt and reinforced by practice,” Marshall and Payne contend that “in the New Testament, training (*gymnazo*, as in 2 Tim 3:16) is much more about Christian thinking and living than about particular

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<sup>11</sup>Hanson, *The People Called*, 545-46.

<sup>12</sup>Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl, *Transformissional Coaching: Empowering Leaders in a Changing Ministry World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2008), 225.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 226.

skills or competencies.”<sup>14</sup> While such a view may appear to neglect the importance of developing skills for application in real life ministry settings, their argument is worthy.

The heart of training is not to impart a skill but to impart sound doctrine. Paul uses the language of ‘training’ to refer to a lifelong process whereby Timothy and his congregation are taught by Scripture to reject false religion, and to conform their hearts and their lives to sound doctrine. Good biblical training results in a godly life based on sound, health-giving teaching.<sup>15</sup>

The training process undertaken in this project seeks intentionally to nurture and develop a balanced view of Scripture as divine doctrine to be learned and obeyed and divine story to be entered into—both in the context of Christian community.

**Self-knowledge.** By reading the Bible merely to gain and transmit scriptural information leaders miss the Bible’s most fundamental benefit: the chance to know one’s self in the light of the God therein revealed. Paul’s commands to Timothy, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (2 Tim 4:16), remind every generation of pastors to gain proper self-knowledge when training other spiritual leaders. Purity is a key priority in spiritual-leader training. Paul wanted Timothy to keep not only his doctrine pure, but himself as well. Joseph M. Stowell says, “A leader bent on purity becomes a living advocate for a lost but valuable commodity. He draws to Christ defiled lives looking for cleansing and shows them the way to enjoy a deepening intimacy with God.”<sup>16</sup> Two especially vital areas of purity for spiritual leaders are moral purity and purity of motive.

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<sup>14</sup>Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 70.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church: Effective Spiritual Leadership in a Changing Culture* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 229.

While moral purity is not to be overlooked in the training process, current and future spiritual leaders must be challenged to know themselves by examining the purity of their ministry motives. Gordon MacDonald names the need for approval, validation from achievement, the longing for intimacy, and the power of idealism as four motives which, if unchecked, will destroy spiritual leaders at every level of ministry. Wisely he says, “Only the man or woman who baptizes his or her motivations every day will have any hope that things will not turn sour down the road.”<sup>17</sup>

Even leading a small group in a small church can become an engine for ego-stroking, so, while this personal ‘baptizing’ of motives is certainly needed, intentional relationships wherein motives can be examined are also essential. In addition to a relationship with Christ, Steve Gladen, small groups pastor of Saddleback Church, requires each group leader to have three additional ministry relationships: a relationship (1) with a mentor (a coach to offer advice and guidance); (2) with a spiritual partner (a member of the same sex who knows the leader’s struggles, provides accountability, and is focused solely on spiritual development); and (3) with an apprentice (someone who shares the responsibility of leading the group).<sup>18</sup> Pursuing such intentional relationships, under the authority of Scripture, gives spiritual leaders-in-training a context for knowing themselves and keeping their ministry motives pure.

The more accurate a leader’s knowledge of Scripture, of himself in the light of Scripture, and as discerned in relationship with a coach, other leaders, and his small group, the better will be his attitude toward the task of spiritual leadership.

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<sup>17</sup>Gordon MacDonald, *Building below the Waterline: Shoring Up the Foundations of Leadership* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011), 52.

<sup>18</sup>Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 173-74.

## Attitudes

D. L. Moody once said, “Attitudes determine our actions, for good or bad.”

Spiritual leaders need both an attitude of reliance and an attitude of resilience.

**Reliance.** Right spiritual knowledge of God and the things of God is derived from sources outside of and other than the self, namely Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Similarly, to gain right knowledge of himself—especially of his ministry motives—a spiritual leader must intentionally rely upon other Spirit-filled people.

When a spiritual leader realizes that right knowledge of God and of himself does not originate in himself, an attitude of reliance is born. Sanders warns, “Pride takes many forms, but spiritual pride is the most grievous. To become proud of spiritual gifts or leadership position is to forget that all we have is from God, all the position we occupy is by God’s appointment.”<sup>19</sup> But while the importance of reliance upon God and His Word cannot be overstated, a Holy Spirit-led understanding of Scripture forces one to rely upon others within the community of God’s people as well—even those who may seem to have the least to offer. A spiritual leader well acquainted with “small-group” ministry in difficult circumstances, Dietrich Bonhoeffer argues, “Every Christian community must realize that not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak. The elimination of the weak is the death of the fellowship.”<sup>20</sup>

Weak or strong, spiritual leaders need others whose gifts differ from their own if the community is to thrive. Reggie McNeal notes several important features of others-

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<sup>19</sup>Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 154.

<sup>20</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 94.



reliant spiritual leadership when he contends,

Team approaches to ministry help satisfy the hunger for community. Because team ministry captures the power of community, it carries some significant benefits. Teams encourage and support the risks needed to bring about behavioral change. Teams create synergy both in formulating vision and in turning it into reality.<sup>21</sup>

McNeal also points to the often-overlooked fact that spiritual leadership is something not to be loathed but enjoyed when he concludes, “The relational component of doing ministry through teams [introduces] the value-added dimension of fun to the challenging task of spiritual leadership.”<sup>22</sup> Spiritual leaders intentionally trained to rely upon others will enjoy what they do and will keep doing it, even when it is not easy.

**Resilience.** When a leader is saturated with knowledge from God’s Word and supported by others, he can and will derive proper joy from his spiritual leadership task in spite of the many challenges inherent to it. Joy keeps leaders in an attitude of resilience. Resilience in the face of rejection and suffering was the attitude of Christ, of whom the writer of Hebrews says, “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross” (Heb 12:2). Resiliency is at the core of James’ exhortation, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds” (Jas 1:2). And Paul, a picture of the resilient Christian, sought to imbibe this same attitude when he wrote to the Corinthians:

[W]e do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:16-18)

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<sup>21</sup>Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 133.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

David Forney cites researchers Mary Lynn Pulley and Michael Wakefield from the Center for Creative Leadership who define resilience as

the ability to recover quickly from change, hardship, or misfortune. It is associated with elasticity, buoyancy and adaption. Resilient people demonstrate flexibility, durability, an attitude of optimism, and openness to learning. A lack of resilience is signaled by burnout, fatigue, malaise, depression, defensiveness, and cynicism.<sup>23</sup>

Though writing with full-time clergy in view, Forney's principles of resilience also apply to laymen whose ministry is that of spiritually leading small groups. He proposes four assets to be cultivated in the developing of resilience. The first of these assets is persistency in changing the world. For spiritual leaders to overcome various types of adversity—from mild frustrations to intense opposition—it is crucial they be intentionally reminded that their efforts are making a positive impact upon the world. When this is believed, resilience is possible. From Paul's words, Forney compares the work of spiritual leaders to that of ambassadors, specifically "ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:20). He contends that a mindset actively (not passively) embracing—or "living into"—the calling of spiritual leadership helps ward off exhaustion and cynicism in ministry.<sup>24</sup>

Resilience in spiritual leadership also springs from a balance of loci of control. Forney describes this second asset: "[Living] in the dance between facing struggles directly (seeing them as challenges that you can influence), while daily offering [one's] ministry to God."<sup>25</sup> This taking of personal responsibility while trusting God's sovereignty, Stowell contends, "renders a shepherd a far less manipulative, controlling,

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<sup>23</sup>David G. Forney, "A Calm in the Tempest: Developing Resilience in Religious Leaders," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 6.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

power-playing entity in the ministry. Faith simply believes, then behaves accordingly and lets God manage the outcomes.”<sup>26</sup>

A third asset of the resilient leader is understanding and using pain as a platform for growth. Forney advises leaders to “live with and through the pain of the current situation, knowing that [it] can be of benefit too by the work of the Holy Spirit.” Endurance, in this view, “is not escapism but rather a disposition that pain is real and informative.”<sup>27</sup> This is true especially in the painful times of conflict. But as Reggie McNeal laments,

Unfortunately, many spiritual leaders prove to be conflict allergic. Their heightened sensitivities, so often a strength for them, render them especially vulnerable to deal with the pain associated with conflict situations. The tenderness and personal connectedness that make them effective also leave them personally exposed. Unless they develop a strategy for dealing with conflict, they may withdraw from the battle. If they do, their hearts remain stunted relative to what they could have been.<sup>28</sup>

Key in formulating such a strategy for surviving and growing from the pain of conflict—and other types of pain—is Forney’s fourth asset of resilient leaders: constant relationship building. But while Forney speaks to the necessity of clergy having genuine friendships both inside and outside their congregations,<sup>29</sup> Greg Ogden, emphasizes intentional discipling relationships. He warns, “What we have failed to appreciate is the power of invitation to be with others on an intimate basis over time.”<sup>30</sup> Though not easy, healthy attitudes of reliance and resilience—arising from right knowledge of Scripture

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<sup>26</sup>Stowell, *Shepherding the Church*, 209.

<sup>27</sup>Forney, “A Calm in the Tempest,” 28.

<sup>28</sup>McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 155.

<sup>29</sup>Forney, “A Calm in the Tempest,” 28.

<sup>30</sup>Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 123.

and of self—necessitate and motivate the intentional cultivation of intimate disciple-making relationships as an essential spiritual leadership skill. Thus we arrive at the third dimension of intentional leadership training: skill development.

## **Skills**

Just as humans must know and think, we must also act. Knowledge and attitude will always manifest themselves in action. Skill is the appropriate deployment of knowledge and attitudes in actions that benefit oneself and others. A spiritual leader's skills may appropriately be divided into people skills and procedural skills.

**People skills.** While relationship building is an important spiritual leadership goal, as the previous section on resilience indicates, intentional relationship building is also an important ingredient in the formation of spiritual leaders. Jerry Bridges says, “All believers share a common life in Christ, whether or not we recognize it.” He then notes, “This objective truth of *koinonia* is meant to provide the foundation for the experiential aspects of fellowship.”<sup>31</sup> But how are a spiritual leader's people skills to be cultivated? The short answer is through community. According to Bob Logan and Tara Miller, “To be a disciple of Jesus means engagement—engagement with Jesus, with others, with the world around us. It's under the real-life situations and strains of interacting with people that Jesus shapes his followers' character.”<sup>32</sup> Leaders grow in concern for and compassion towards those led when intimately acquainted with them. As McNeal says,

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<sup>31</sup>Jerry Bridges, *True Fellowship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1985), 65.

<sup>32</sup>Bob Logan and Tara Miller, *From Followers to Leaders* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2007), 102.

Leaders are not shaped in isolation. Leaders are shaped in community. And they are shaped by community. Leaders cannot be separated from the formative processes of community. Despite any claims to the contrary, leaders are not self-made people. God deliberately and intentionally shapes the leader's heart through community.<sup>33</sup>

Yet while God invisibly shapes spiritual leaders through community with those being led, intentional hands-on training of leaders by other leaders is an indispensable part of His process. Bobb Biehl suggests that as much as 80 percent of developing leadership is based on two things: (1) making sure the leaders you are developing have clear, realistic, measurable priorities (either goals or problems); and (2) being there to help the leaders accomplish their priorities.<sup>34</sup> Though Biehl's focus on priorities is appropriate, Ogden identifies conformity to Christ as the chief priority of leadership development while including the essential element of intentionality: "Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well."<sup>35</sup>

Joseph Hellerman anchors his advocacy of team ministry in two precautionary aspects of Jesus' design of the church's leadership structure. The first is that the church is to be led by a plurality of leaders (e.g., Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil 1:1; I Thess 5:12-13; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1-4; Heb 13:17; and Jas 5:14). The second is that leaders in God's church must be servant leaders (e.g., Matt 23:11-12 and Phil 2:3-8). He then concludes,

The combination of these two safeguards will go a long way to ensure the relational health of the strong-group church family model. A team of leaders who hold one another accountable to serve those entrusted to their charge—and who are

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<sup>33</sup>McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 115.

<sup>34</sup>Bobb Biehl, *Mentoring: Confidence in Finding a Mentor and Becoming One* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 146.

<sup>35</sup>Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 129.

held accountable to do so by the broader church family—will not turn a local Christian church into a destructive self-serving cult.”<sup>36</sup>

As people problems inevitably emerge in the context of Christian community, spiritual leaders having their people-skills strengthened and sharpened by intentional relationships with other spiritual leaders will be those best equipped to address such problems in godly and constructive ways.

**Procedural skills.** While people-skills are an important facet of spiritual leadership, procedural skills are essential for advancing those people to maturity in Christ. For a church and its small groups to be organized for both maximal worship of Christ and maximal engagement in His disciple-making mission, spiritual leaders must be taught to continually evaluate their training procedures and hone their skills in effecting these ends. And, as Logan and Miller suggest, the best place to learn is on the job.

How do leaders learn? They learn by watching, by doing, by reflecting. And by making mistakes. Sure, they can learn in some other ways too, such as reading, listening, or taking classes. But the primary way all of us really learn is by doing and by making mistakes. In any new skill or endeavor, we have to start at the beginning. Everyone has to learn. There are no shortcuts. We learn by watching, by practicing, by failing, by trying again—all with guidance from someone.<sup>37</sup>

Collin Marshall and Tony Payne suggest six procedural steps for reshaping a ministry around people and training.<sup>38</sup> Aware of the power of the sermon and of the large weekend gathering as an opportunity to cast vision and affect cultural change within a congregation, Marshall and Payne first recommend setting the agenda on Sundays. This approach retains the weekly structure of the Sunday gathering and sermon while

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<sup>36</sup>Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Community* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 203-4.

<sup>37</sup>Logan and Miller, *From Followers to Leaders*, 137.

<sup>38</sup>Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 158-65.

adjusting them to allow room for a new intentional training initiative to begin taking root in the hearts of the congregation. For a small church such as Bridge Church, which meets congregationally only once weekly in a rented space, Sunday morning is the optimal time to draw attention to a new training emphasis. For the duration of the project, a sermon series was preached through Ephesians. Men participating in the training process were resourced with devotionals based on the sermon text and study guides for preparing to lead small group discussions during the week. The aim was to deepen the application of Sunday teaching through community life by equipping men to facilitate this application.

Marshall and Payne's second step is to work closely with the elders or parish council. Thom Rainer says, "The most challenging aspect of alignment is pulling existing ministries and staff in the same direction, especially if they have been moving in opposite directions."<sup>39</sup> Bridge's various teams had not been moving in 'opposite directions', but, having no cohesive disciple-making process, a priority of this project was to see its leader training process become a pilot pattern for all disciple-making efforts.

Step 3 is to begin building a new team of co-workers. Because every person cannot be an initial member of a new team, great intentionality must be used to select co-workers with the visional capacity, personal humility, and procedural adaptability to train other trainers. Elmer Towns and Warren Bird note, "Only when every current leader becomes a leader-maker of others will [the] church begin to develop the number of leaders it needs to have an adequately functioning biblical community."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 187.

<sup>40</sup>Elmer Towns and Warren Bird, *Into the Future: Turning Today's Church Trends into Tomorrow's Opportunities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 172.

Marshall and Payne emphasize the “new” nature of this team as inclusive of future not just current leaders.<sup>41</sup> According to Towns and Bird, many churches struggle for lack of lay leaders because [they] have an invisible layer of untapped, untrained talent, and they have not yet built the kind of leadership culture that will draw it out.”<sup>42</sup> Building such a leader-training culture at Bridge Church was a central aim of this project. Thus, project participants were not only long-time small group leaders, but men who had only recently begun to lead or serve as apprentice leaders.

Step 4 is to work out with the new team of co-workers how disciple making is going to grow in the present ministry context. Brad House, Community Groups Pastor at Mars Hill Church in Seattle recommends the following five helpful questions when developing a disciple-making strategy for small groups: (1) Does the structure of our groups flow out of biblical convictions? (2) Does the structure reinforce those convictions? (3) Will the structure survive success? (4) Are we primed for growth or limited by our structure? And (5) Are the expectations for our leaders aligned with our purpose?”<sup>43</sup> An evaluative grid such as this helps leaders eliminate confusion and maximize procedural intentionality, thus fostering greater unity within the body. This project was not intended to be Bridge’s final disciple-making strategy but rather an initial step towards a more comprehensive strategy worked-out by leaders in community.

Fifth, Marshall and Payne suggest running some training programs. Because of the time parameters of this project the training process outlined in Chapter one and

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<sup>41</sup>Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 161.

<sup>42</sup>Towns and Bird, *Into the Future*, 173.

<sup>43</sup>Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 190.



thoroughly explained in Chapter four of this thesis served as a programmatic environment for introducing the new team of co-workers to the principles and procedures of a church-wide disciple-making strategy. As House suggests, “The purpose of basic training is to establish a baseline for leaders and to ensure that every leader to whom you delegate authority to shepherd your people owns the ethos of your church . . . to establish the vision and expectations for leaders and ensure consistency across the board.”<sup>44</sup>

Lastly, step 6 is keeping an eye out for ‘people worth watching’. Carl George says, “The more ministry-capable leaders there are, the more quality [small] groups a church can sponsor.”<sup>45</sup> It is the duty of anyone in a position of church leadership to continually scan the congregational landscape for potential or emerging leaders. Small groups provide an excellent up-close opportunity to observe new leader potential. Clyde Reid says, “good group leaders help group members to assume an increasing share of responsibility and leadership, to grow away from dependence upon him when the situation makes it appropriate.”<sup>46</sup> A critical element of this training was helping men identify potential leaders and to intentionally engage them in serving the group.

In addition to the sermon-based Leader Guide resource intended to help regularize leader habits of preparing themselves mentally and spiritually to lead their groups, throughout the twelve-week project period I sought to engage participants in a variety of relational ways to gather feedback, hear about struggles and successes, and to pray for them in order to intentionally cultivate each leader’s progressive growth in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills just described.

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<sup>44</sup>House, *Community*, 188.

<sup>45</sup>George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*, 6.

<sup>46</sup>Reid, *Groups Alive, Church Alive*, 86.

## Spiritual Leadership is Servant Leadership

Having now examined the importance of intentionality in developing a spiritual leader's knowledge, attitudes, and skills, this chapter concludes with an emphasis upon servant leadership as an essential element of small group strength and sustainability. In a culture fascinated with all things leadership, it is important to distinguish between worldly forms of leadership and the model of leadership set forth in the New Testament. Jesus Himself made the clearest distinction between these two types of leadership in Mark 10:42, 43 when He said to His disciples,

You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

Though the word "spiritual" is used throughout this thesis, the term "spiritual leadership" is best understood in the light of biblical servanthood. Worldly leadership, whether in military, business, political, academic, or religious settings, will always bear the mark of self-service. But true spiritual leadership in the local church is characterized by self-giving servanthood as exemplified in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This of course applies to the primary venue of interest in this project: small groups.

Henry and Richard Blackaby name three traits of servant leaders: love for their people, knowledge and acceptance of themselves, and understanding whom they serve.<sup>47</sup> While loving others and proper self-acceptance are critical for spiritual leaders, these first two traits hinge upon the third. Unless a spiritual leader rightly understands whom he serves he will have neither security in his own identity nor love for those he

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<sup>47</sup>Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 165-67.

leads. As the Blackabys contend, “Spiritual leaders are not their people’s servants; they are God’s.”<sup>48</sup> This God-ward orientation is essential for leading people to spiritual maturity as servants of Christ within the context of the body of Christ. Following the model of Jesus with His disciples, the spiritual leader sets a tone of service to God for the entire group offering his own life and leadership as an example.

Serving God by leading a small group involves a delicate balance on the part of the leader. Reid says, “The leader should create a climate in which group members can feel free to minister to each other,” cautioning, “The danger lies in developing a group in which the leader meets all the important needs of persons.”<sup>49</sup> Gladen says the small group point person’s job “is not just to care or teach but to develop each person within [his] sphere of care to balance the Great Commission and the Great Commandment for spiritual health.”<sup>50</sup> The reality Reid and Gladen hope to avoid is that often group members feel inadequate to serve while group leaders often feel over-adequate. Leaders who see their lives as examples of God-oriented service will bless both God and their groups by seeking to develop the same posture in those they lead. Therefore trainers of spiritual leaders must model a servanthood that derives its serving adequacy not from personal gifts or talents but from God who graciously bestows them.

## **Conclusion**

With no shortage of theoretical approaches to small group ministry or spiritual leadership training, this chapter has sought to capture key principles and insights from a

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<sup>48</sup>Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 167.

<sup>49</sup>Reid, *Groups Alive, Church Alive*, 87.

<sup>50</sup>Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose*, 73.

variety of contextual perspectives. Chapter 4 integrates the theological principles of chapter 2 and the theoretical insights of chapter three in a detailed description of how this particular project was executed.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS OF HOW THE PROJECT WAS EXECUTED

The purpose of this project was to train laymen to give effective spiritual leadership to home-based, cross-generational small groups. This chapter describes in detail the following five aspects of the project: Bridge Church's existing small groups and their leaders; the one-day leader-training seminar; the design and features of the Leader-Guide resource; the surveys used to measure the effectiveness of the training seminar and the leader-guide resource; and finally, the activities of the fifteen-weeks comprising the project period.

#### **Existing Small Groups**

Three small groups and five group leaders participated in this project for a total participation of 19 persons. Two groups were team-led by two leaders and the other group was led by one leader.

#### **Sunday Group**

I led the Sunday evening group until two months before the start of the project when one of the other men agreed to take the lead and participate in the project. The largest of the three groups with ten regularly participating adults, the group consists of three married couples, a single mother of three teens and a single father of three (one in college and two teens). The leader and his wife have two children, one in elementary and

one in middle school. My wife and I have three children under age six, and the other married couple has two under age six. Though Roman Catholic, this third couple comes every week to the Sunday evening group and agreed to take part in the project surveys.

### **Wednesday Group**

The Wednesday evening group is Bridge Church's longest-running small group. Having been led for nearly five years by the church's other elder (besides myself), the group is comprised of two couples and two single mothers for a total of six adults. The group leader and his wife are parents of two college-aged children and the two single mothers are each parents of three teens. Only occasionally do the children of these parents attend the group, and usually only to socialize in another area of the house. The other married couple is younger and they are parents of a toddler. For the project the younger husband agreed to participate as a co-leader of the group with the elder.

### **Friday Group**

Bridge Church's Friday evening small group was launched two months before the start of the project. Comprised of three married couples in their thirties—two couples with two children under age five, and one couple (my wife and I) with three children under age six—and a fourth couple in courtship, this group is co-led by one of the married men (besides myself) and the young man in the courting relationship. Both of these men participated in the project, and all of the adults are members of Bridge Church.

With only one toddler, the Wednesday group had no children's component; but both the Friday and Sunday evening groups intentionally incorporated children into the gathering by having a special time of singing, Bible story, and prayer just for them.

## **Leader Training Seminar**

As important as regularly leading a group is for ongoing growth as a leader, it is also important to gather with other leaders for times of focused training. For this reason a key component of this project was a one-day leader-training seminar held on March 15, 2014. Given the busyness of participants and the difficulty of scheduling numerous smaller training seminars during the twelve-week project period, an intensive single-day format was determined the best option. Incorporating the principles outlined in chapters 2 and 3, the training seminar was structured into two main modules as follows.

### **Module 1: Biblical and Theological Principles of Spiritual Leadership**

The morning session of the training seminar considered the importance of male spiritual leadership in the home, the small group, and in the church. Also examined in module 1 were the four leader qualities from the lives of Joshua, Elisha, Peter, and Timothy presented in chapter 2: devotion to God first, determination amid opposition, self-denial, and diligence in one's teaching and personal conduct.

Before beginning the morning session, a survey on biblical and theological principles of spiritual leadership was given to the five participants (see Surveys section below). The same survey was then given again at the conclusion of the morning session to measure whether or not participant knowledge of these principles increased.

### **Module 2: Practical Aspects of Spiritual Leadership**

The second module of the one-day training seminar was designed to shape the spiritual leader's attitude and to sharpen his leadership skills by sharing practical and

theoretical insights from historical and contemporary thinkers and leaders in the small group movement.

Before beginning the first session of module 2 covering the dual attitudes of reliance and resilience, participants took the first of four identical surveys gauging their attitudes toward spiritually leading a small group (see Surveys section below). Taken again—at the end of the attitude session of the training seminar, at the midway point of the twelve-week project period, and finally at the end of the project period—it was hoped that the attitude survey would show an overall improvement of leader attitude toward leading their groups as a result of the training seminar and use of the Leader Guide.

The next session of module 2 addressed people and procedural skills. The people skills section covered how to engage in spiritually edifying ways with persons of different ages and levels of spiritual maturity both in and outside the group meeting. The procedural skills section focused on different aspects of leading the group meeting such as praying, preparing to teach, presenting the lesson, and partnering with others for various tasks such as prayer and teaching children. Similar to the Attitude session, before the Skills session participants took a skills and habits survey (see Surveys section below).

Though formatted as lectures—including outlines with fill-in-the-blanks for use in following a PowerPoint presentation—built into the sessions of each four-hour training module was a time for questions and discussion designed to help participants better process the information both individually and as a group.

### **Leader Guide Resource**

Following the Skills session, the one-day training seminar concluded with a brief introduction to the Leader Guide resource. For this project, the epistle of Ephesians



was chosen as the basis for the lesson material of the Leader Guide. A message series dividing Ephesians into twelve sermons was written and preached from March 16, to June 1, 2014. The Leader Guide was written as a companion to this sermon series and was intended to help group leaders lead their groups deeper into the biblical text during the week. At the end of the training seminar participants were given three weeks of lessons and were walked through the different components of a weekly lesson. These components are described below. (See appendix 8 for sample lessons).

### **Memory Verse**

To aid leaders and group participants in internalizing God's Word, each lesson included a memory verse from that week's focal passage. Perforated business-sized cards were provided to each group leader for distributing weekly to group members.

### **Leader Tips**

The Leader Tips section—simply a few bullet points given to help open up the focal text as the group leader began preparing to teach his group—was provided only to group leaders, not to group members. This section included some of my own exegetical thoughts along with those of various theologians and Bible commentators.

### **Starter Questions**

One or two starter questions were provided to help leaders transition from the socializing period at the beginning of a group gathering to the focused time of Bible study. Starter questions were intended to be broad, open-ended, and aimed at helping group members engage in meaningful spiritual dialogue about the text and topic at hand.

## **Opening Paragraph**

After spending five to ten minutes discussing the starter question(s), an opening paragraph summarizing the overall emphasis and trajectory of the biblical text was to be read, followed by a prayer for guidance in the Word. This opening paragraph provided a segue from the generalities of the starter questions to the more rigorous and pointed application of the group discussion questions.

## **Group Discussion Questions**

Each Leader Guide lesson included five to eight group discussion questions. Group leaders were to note other Bible passages pertinent to the focal text in their preparation for the group meeting. The heart of the gathering, the Group Discussion Question section was designed to last between thirty and forty minutes.

## **Kid Time**

For leaders of groups including children, a section called Kid Time sought to capture the main focal-text theme by suggesting a Bible story resource and an appropriate song to be sung with the kids. Though duration varied based on the age and attentiveness of the children in the group, Kid Time was designed to take approximately ten minutes.

## **Devotional, Reflection Questions, Journal, and Prayer Guide**

To help project participants build consistency and discipline into their own spiritual lives I wrote five daily devotions as a companion to each of the twelve weeks' focal texts. At about half a page in length (single-spaced) the devotionals offered personal insights and historical illustrations as a means of opening up the leader's own

understanding of the passage. Each devotional was followed by two or three personal reflection questions and/or prayer suggestions. To strengthen (or perhaps start) the habit of journaling, leaders were encouraged to give a written response to these questions and suggestions in a journaling space provided below the devotion (another half page).

### **Surveys**

As indicated above, surveys were the sole instrument for measuring the effectiveness of the training and resources created for and provided to group leaders in this project. The sufficiency of these surveys for generating accurate and useful information will be assessed in the final chapter's evaluation. Before the four surveys used in this project are described, however, the question should be answered: why were surveys used instead of other means of data-collection? The reasons are as follows.

First of all, surveys were utilized because, unlike face-to-face interviews, they can be distributed and collected relatively quickly in a group setting. My desire for group leaders or members was to not have to attend special "interview" meetings outside of normal group routines. Nor was it my desire to take up a group's entire meeting with writing out answers to lengthy questionnaires or to have participants complete such questionnaires at home (which would almost inevitably have resulted in a frustrating collection process for me and/or the group leaders).

Secondly, short surveys (of no more than twenty questions) were used to elicit quicker, more honest responses. My aim for group members—and for the one-day training—was to minimize the amount of time spent on individual surveys or questions, which would have diminished group-discussion and/or leader-training time and also increased the likelihood of over-thought and thus less-accurate answers.

Thirdly, paper and pencil surveys were administered in-person in order to allow respondents to ask the administrator for clarification on any particular question, thus helping to insure accurate responses.

Finally, survey questions with pre-printed multiple-choice or scaled answers were used because a before and after comparison of right or wrong answers (such as in the biblical & theological knowledge survey), numerically-valued answers (as in the pre- and post- group and leader surveys), and numerically-scaled answers (like those in the attitude and skills surveys) allows for an easier assessment of change within the sample group, whether positive or negative, in that survey's specific field of inquiry.

For these reasons—though valuable information about the effectiveness of this project's key components could have been obtained via face-to-face interviews, in focus groups, or through long-answer questionnaires—it was decided that hard numeric data would be gathered through the surveys described in further detail below.

### **Pre- and Post-Project Small Group/ Leader Assessment Survey**

The ten question pre- and post-project survey was the only survey to be taken by the members of the three small groups. The five men participating in the project's training seminar and Leader Guide components were given a slightly different version of the pre- and post-project survey than those taken by group members (comp. appendices 3 and 4). Each group member and leader completed the survey once at the beginning and once at the end of the twelve-week study period. Members of the two groups with co-leaders completed a pre- and post-project survey for each of their two leaders. For this reason, each leader in these two groups completed a member survey for his co-leader.

This survey's ten questions each had four possible answers: the first worth 1 point, the second worth 2 points, the third worth 3 points, and the fourth worth 4 points. Thus final scores on this survey ranged from 10 to 40. Higher scores reflected greater group and leader strength while lower scores indicated group and leader weakness (see appendix 4 for a scoring guide). Pre- and post-project survey scores were compared using a T-test for dependent samples to determine a statistically significant change in group and group-leader health as a result of the training seminar and Leader Guide intervention.

### **Training Surveys**

Training surveys are those taken only by the five men who participated in the training seminar and Leader Guide components of the project and were intended to measure growth in the three main areas of knowledge, attitude, and skill over the course of the project period.

**Biblical and theological knowledge survey.** The only purely objective (right or wrong answer) survey used in the project, this test (see appendix 5) was given at the beginning and end of module 1 and was the only survey contained entirely within the one-day training seminar. Comprised of twenty multiple-choice questions (each with five options), this survey pertained to principles of spiritual leadership from the biblical leaders and qualities examined in chapter 2 and covered in module 1 of the training seminar. Pre- and post-training scores (ranging from 0-20) were compared to determine an increase in leader knowledge of this material.

**Leader attitude survey.** The Leader Attitude survey (see appendix 6) was given at the beginning and end of the first session of module 2 of the training seminar on

leader attitude, and then again at the mid-point of the project and at the end of the twelve-week period in order to plot attitude change resulting not only from the training seminar but from using the Leader Guide as well. This survey's twenty questions had no right or wrong answers but rather six possible subjective responses arranged in a six-point Likert scale left to right from least- to most- favorable and ranging in value from 1 to 6 points for a total possible score of between 20 and 120. Survey scores were then compared using a T-test for dependent samples to determine if a statistically significant positive change in participant attitude was achieved over the entire course of the project study period.

**Habits and skills survey.** The third and final training survey was given once at the beginning of the training seminar's last session and again at the end of the twelve-week Leader Guide period (see appendix 7). Like the attitude survey, this survey was comprised of twenty questions with responses arranged on a six-point Likert scale. Point values and possible final scores are also the same as those of the attitude survey. Final comparison of the Habits and Skills survey scores was done via a T-test for dependent samples to determine if a statistically significant positive change in participant habits and skills was achieved as a result of the training seminar and/or use of the Leader Guide.

### **Fifteen-Week Project Period**

The final section of this chapter describes my activities and tasks during the fifteen-week project period beginning on March 2, 2014 and ending on June 14, 2014.

#### **Week 1: March 2–8**

During the first week of the project, pre-project group and leader assessment surveys were printed, distributed, and collected. Time was also spent during the first

week preparing the PowerPoint presentation, binders, and handouts to be used in the one-day training seminar on Saturday, March 15.

### **Week 2: March 9–15**

Having collected pre-project surveys from the Friday and Sunday groups (Wednesday group surveys were not received from the group leader for a few weeks), week 2 was spent making final preparations for the one-day training seminar. PowerPoint slides and fill-ins were completed, training surveys were printed and copied, refreshments were purchased, weeks 1–3 of the Leader Guide were finished and put in binders for the leaders to use during the March 15 seminar and throughout the remainder of the project. And lastly, the first sermon in the Ephesians series was prepared.

### **Weeks 3–6: March 16–April 12**

With the one-day intensive training seminar completed on Saturday, March 15, and the Leader Guide period launched with the preaching of the first Ephesians sermon on Sunday, March 16, group leaders began conducting weekly group gatherings while I continued to prepare sermons as well as lessons for the Leader Guide. During this period Leader Guide lessons were distributed to the leaders in one- or two-week packets at least a full week in advance in order to give them adequate time to read the devotionals and utilize the other study helps in their preparation to teach the passage to their groups.

### **Weeks 7–11: April 13–May 17**

During week 7 leaders were given the mid-project attitude surveys. Leader Guide lesson preparation and distribution continued through this period. Sermon preparation stopped for two weeks after the sermon at the beginning of week 11 (Sunday,

May 11) as my family vacation had been scheduled to last from Friday, May 16, to Saturday, May 24. Prior to project launch the primary Wednesday and Friday group leaders were asked to preach on May 18, and May 25, respectively. Though not a stated goal of the project, seeing men strengthened to not only teach in small group environments but in larger congregational settings as well was very encouraging.

### **Weeks 12–15: May 18–June 14**

With only the final sermon in the twelve-week series to write and preach upon returning from vacation, and having already distributed the final weeks of Leader Guide lessons and devotions prior to vacation, the closing weeks of the project involved administering and collecting post-project group and leader assessments as well as the post-project skills surveys and fourth final attitude surveys. Analysis of the survey results began the week following the close of the project.

### **Conclusion**

While participating group leaders were encouraged to hold group meetings each week of the twelve-week project period, it was understood that cancellations might occur—and that all group members would not be able to be present for each and every group gathering—for any number of reasons. Survey results may in some ways bear out these unavoidable inconsistencies in attendance and participation. Thus, once all survey results had been tabulated, each leader was asked to offer his written perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of different aspects of the project. Some of this feedback—along with that of select group members—is included in the following evaluation of the project and of the appropriateness and sufficiency the surveys utilized herein.



## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This fifth and final chapter offers a comprehensive evaluation of the project by answering the following questions: (1) Was the stated purpose of the project fulfilled? (2) Were the individual goals of the project met? (3) What were the strengths of the project? (4) What were the weaknesses of the project? and (5) What would I do differently? These sections will be followed by my theological reflections, personal reflections, and project conclusion.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The stated purpose of this project was to train laymen at Bridge Church, Perry, Ohio, to give effective spiritual leadership to home-based, cross-generational small groups. Rather than design a training system either for developing lay preachers who could fill the pulpit on Sunday morning or for helping men to exercise spiritual leadership in their own homes—(both of which would have been valuable undertakings), this project sought to target a ministry environment in between the entire assembled congregation and the individual family unit: the cross-generational small group. It was decided that while every Christian man is called to be the spiritual leader of his household, and while very few Christian laymen will be called to minister the Word to the whole congregation, a way to strengthen some husbands and fathers to broaden their spiritual leadership in the church—and perhaps to encourage a few of those men to rise to aid in the preaching

task—was to develop training and a tool useful in honing the character, knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to spiritually lead families in a small group context.

This purpose was fulfilled. Training took place and tools were developed. Two men who, three months prior to the start of the project had not led a cross-generational small group, gained focused training for and experience in that very task. Two men who had significant pre-project experience in leading cross-generational small groups gained not only this training and further experience, but also the experience of working with an apprentice co-leader. And one young man in a courting relationship, who, prior to the project had only led youth group gatherings, gained training for and experience in spiritually leading other adults and children.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

This project had three primary goals. The first goal was to assess leader strength and group health. The second was to train leaders. And the third goal was to resource the leaders for the task of leading. These goals are evaluated below.

#### **Goal 1: Assessing**

The first goal of the project was to assess the leadership strengths of the group leaders and the overall health of the participating groups prior to the start of the project. In order to successfully meet this goal, five men were to be assessed as leaders by no fewer than three group members each. With five men agreeing to participate, each being assessed by between five and seven group members (besides himself), this goal was met. Table 1 below shows the results of the pre- and post-project group and leader assessment surveys including individual, group total, and group average scores. The null hypothesis

for this survey states that there will be no difference between the means of the pre-project and post-project assessment scores. The research hypothesis states that there will be a difference between pre-project and post-project scores.

Table 1. Pre- and post-project leader and group assessment scores

| --                          | <i>Sun.</i> |       | <i>Wed. 1</i> |       | <i>Wed. 2</i> |       | <i>Fri. 1</i> |       | <i>Fri. 2</i> |       |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| --                          | Pre         | Post  | Pre           | Post  | Pre           | Post  | Pre           | Post  | Pre           | Post  |
| Group Scores<br>(out of 40) | 24          | 26    | 29            | 31    | 19            | 23    | 27            | 27    | 31            | 29    |
|                             | 31          | 30    | 22            | 36    | 27            | 35    | 31            | 29    | 23            | 32    |
|                             | 23          | 28    | 28            | 35    | 31            | 29    | 21            | 22    | 20            | 27    |
|                             | 25          | 29    | 38            | 38    | 28            | 31    | 20            | 29    | 20            | 23    |
|                             | 33          | 31    | 26            | 31    | 34            | 34    | 26            | 33    | 22            | 28    |
|                             | 22          | 29    | 25            | 23    | 20            | 20    | 22            | 30    | 28            | 28    |
|                             | 25          | 28    |               |       |               |       | 27            | 28    | 19            | 30    |
|                             | 21          | 26    |               |       |               |       | 19            | 30    | 25            | 29    |
| Sum                         | 204         | 227   | 168           | 194   | 168           | 172   | 193           | 228   | 188           | 226   |
| Avg.                        | 25.50       | 28.36 | 28.00         | 32.33 | 28.00         | 28.67 | 24.13         | 28.50 | 23.50         | 28.50 |

Note: To avoid using participant names in this thesis each group leader is identified by the initials of the night on which his small group met. Thus co-leaders of the Wednesday and Friday groups are identified as Wed. 1 and Wed. 2, and Fri. 1, Fri. 2.

The training seminar for leaders and use of the Leader Guide did result in increased leader competence and group health. However, while average post-project scores were higher than pre-project scores for all three groups and all five leaders, only the Sunday and Friday groups' post-project scores showed a statistically significant improvement over pre-project scores. The Sunday group's perception of leader competence and overall group health increased ( $t_{(7)} = 2.631, p < .034$ ). The Friday group's perception of the primary Friday leader's competence and overall group health increased ( $t_{(7)} = 2.527, p < .039$ ) and group perception of the secondary Friday leader's competence and overall group health increased ( $t_{(7)} = 3.054, p < .018$ ). Though the

primary ( $t_{(5)} = 1.846, p = .124 > .05$ ) and secondary Wednesday leaders' ( $t_{(5)} = 1.474, p = .201 > .05$ ) post-project assessments did not show a statistically significant improvement over pre-project assessments, when scores for all five leaders from all three groups were combined, the overall post-project average did show a statistically significant increase ( $t_{(4)} = 4.185, p < .014$ ) over the overall pre-project average assessment.

## **Goal 2: Training**

The second goal of this project was to design a one-day seminar in which men would be trained in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to spiritually lead cross-generational small groups. The material for this training intensive was drawn largely from the theological and theoretical content of chapters 2 and 3 in this thesis. The one-day intensive was divided into two modules: the first training men in the biblical and theological foundations of spiritual leadership and the second addressing various practical aspects of leading cross-generational small groups. The training was attended by each of the five leaders participating in the project. This goal was measured, first of all, by a knowledge survey given at the beginning and end of module 1 covering the biblical and theological foundations of spiritual leadership, and secondly by a survey given at the beginning and end of module 2 measuring participant attitudes toward the task of spiritually leading cross-generational small groups.

As table 2 below indicates, pre-training scores on the twenty-question biblical and theological knowledge survey were quite low, with an average of just 6 points out of 20 possible. After three and a half hours of teaching—including time for discussion—the material was reviewed and the survey administered again.

Table 2. Biblical and theological knowledge survey: Pre- and post-training scores

| <i>Leader</i> | <i>Pre (score/20 – %)</i> | <i>Post (score/20 – %)</i> |
|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Sun.          | 5/20 – 25                 | 17/20 – 85                 |
| Wed. 1        | 6/20 – 30                 | 15/20 – 75                 |
| Wed. 2        | 5/20 – 25                 | 11/20 – 55                 |
| Fri. 1        | 4/20 – 20                 | 18/20 – 90                 |
| Fri. 2        | 8/20 – 40                 | 19/20 – 95                 |
| Avg.          | 6/20 – 28                 | 16/20 – 80                 |

The null hypothesis for this survey states that there will be no difference between the means of the pre-training and post-training survey scores. The research hypothesis states that there will be a difference between the means of the pre-training and post-training scores. With post-training survey scores indeed showing a statistically significant increase over pre-training scores ( $t_{(4)} = 7.626, p < .002$ ), this part of the project’s second goal was successfully met. Leader knowledge of biblical and theological principles of spiritual leadership was markedly improved through the training provided.

The second part of the training seminar addressed practical aspects of spiritual leadership in a small group context, beginning with leader attitude. Since a single training seminar was deemed insufficient in and of itself to improve leader attitude, the attitude survey was given before and after the second training module and again at the mid-point and end of the twelve-week study period in order to factor use of the Leader Guide into the shaping of leader attitude. With scores from 0–60 reflecting the negative end of the survey’s Likert scale and scores from 61–120 the positive end, as table 3 below indicates, leader attitudes toward leading their groups were solidly positive from the outset. From beginning to end, while attitude for some leaders fluctuated both positively and

negatively, averages of the leaders' scores showed steady but only slight attitude improvement over the course of the twelve weeks.

Table 3. Leader attitude survey results

| Leader | Pre-Training | Post-Training | Mid-Project | Final    |
|--------|--------------|---------------|-------------|----------|
| Sun.   | 88/120       | 80/120        | 90/120      | 90/120   |
| Wed. 1 | 89/120       | 92/120        | 90/120      | 102/120  |
| Wed. 2 | 71/120       | 74/120        | 75/120      | 80/120   |
| Fri. 1 | 98/120       | 95/120        | 105/120     | 96/120   |
| Fri. 2 | 97/120       | 111/120       | 95/120      | 96/120   |
| Avg.   | 88.6/120     | 90.4/120      | 91.0/120    | 92.8/120 |

Though not yielding a statistically significant positive change in leader attitude from the training seminar to the close of the project ( $t_{(4)} = 1.437, p = .224 > .05$ ), it is nevertheless encouraging that overall leader attitude did not deteriorate. Furthermore, the data above do provide some insights when considered person-by-person. As suggested in the previous chapter, fluctuations in each leader's attitude could be owing to factors specific to that particular leader or group. For example, the Sunday leader expressed great distaste during the seminar for taking surveys, which may be reflected in his 8-point drop in attitude from pre- to post-training survey. As the most spiritually mature and disciplined of all the leaders, and having led a group the longest, the primary Wednesday group leader's largest individual beginning-to-end attitude improvement (89 to 102) may be due to his consistency in reading the devotions and journaling responses to the reflection questions. Finally, the secondary Friday group leader's second highest pre-training attitude score (97/120) and largest individual pre- to post-training increase (97 to 111) may be due in part to his being the youngest and least experienced of the five at

being in—much less leading—an adult group including at times seven children under the age of six. His enthusiasm at the training seminar may have cooled somewhat over the twelve weeks as a result of this and other factors such as group meeting cancellations.

### **Goal 3: Resourcing**

The third and final goal of this project was to equip five men with a biblically and theologically sound resource useful in helping them gain both confidence and competence in spiritually leading cross-generational small groups. In the final segment of the one-day training seminar a habits and skills survey was given to the participants before they were introduced to the Leader Guide resource. Success of this goal was measured by comparing results from this preliminary survey and from the same survey taken again at the end of the twelve-week Leader Guide period. The null hypothesis for this survey stated that there would be no difference between pre- and post-test scores, and the research hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference between pre and post scores. Unfortunately, as table 4 below shows, the T-test for dependent samples did not reveal a statistically significant change in leader habits and skills between pre- and post-survey scores.

Table 4. Leader habits and skills survey results

| <i>Leader</i> | <i>Pre</i> | <i>Post</i> |
|---------------|------------|-------------|
| Sun.          | 63/120     | 72/120      |
| Wed. 1        | 63/120     | 79/120      |
| Wed. 2        | 41/120     | 55/120      |
| Fri. 1        | 83/120     | 80/120      |
| Fri. 2        | 77/120     | 81/120      |
| Avg.          | 65.4/120   | 73.4/120    |

As a measurement of self-perception, the scores in table 4 above show modest growth for four out of the five leaders with the secondary Friday leader showing the smallest improvement and the primary Friday leader showing a slight decline in confidence and competence. Again, though not statistically significant, it may be speculated that these results for the Friday leaders are due to a number of discouraging factors such as interruptions from children, inconsistent attendance when meetings were held, and four rather last-minute group-meeting cancellations due to sickness during the twelve weeks. Though the secondary Wednesday group leader had the lowest overall pre and post scores, he did have the second highest overall improvement after that of his co-leader. His low self-perception of confidence and/or competence may have been due to an imbalance in the number of group meetings he led compared to his co-leader.

Although, scientifically speaking, the intervention of the Leader Guide did not produce a statistically significant improvement in habits and skills ( $t_{(4)} = 2.319, p = .081 > .05$ ), neither did it significantly diminish leader confidence or competence. And, as with the data from the attitude survey, this survey's results, when examined closely, still provide useful information. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this survey's twenty questions covered the four traits of spiritual leadership presented in the second chapter and in the first module of the training seminar. Questions pertaining to these traits were arranged randomly on the leader version of the survey, but are grouped together and sequentially in this document's version found in appendix 7 and represented in tables 5 and 6 below.



Table 5. Four traits of spiritual leaders:  
Pre-project habits and skills survey

| TRAIT                 | Question | Sun. | Wed. 1 | Wed. 2 | Fri. 1 | Fri. 2 | Group Avg.<br>(out of 6) |
|-----------------------|----------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------------|
| <i>Devotion</i>       | #1       | 4    | 4      | 3      | 3      | 4      | 3.6                      |
|                       | #2       | 6    | 1      | 1      | 6      | 6      | 4.0                      |
|                       | #3       | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3      | 4      | 2.0                      |
|                       | #4       | 5    | 6      | 3      | 6      | 6      | 5.2                      |
|                       | #5       | 1    | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1.0                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 3.4  | 2.6    | 1.8    | 3.8    | 4.2    | 3.16                     |
| <i>Determination</i>  | #6       | 6    | 3      | 2      | 6      | 2      | 3.8                      |
|                       | #7       | 3    | 5      | 1      | 1      | 6      | 3.2                      |
|                       | #8       | 4    | 4      | 4      | 4      | 3      | 3.8                      |
|                       | #9       | 1    | 2      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1.2                      |
|                       | #10      | 5    | 4      | 4      | 3      | 6      | 4.4                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 3.8  | 3.6    | 2.4    | 3.0    | 3.6    | 3.28                     |
| <i>Self-Denial</i>    | #11      | 3    | 4      | 1      | 1      | 4      | 2.6                      |
|                       | #12      | 1    | 2      | 1      | 6      | 5      | 3.0                      |
|                       | #13      | 1    | 1      | 1      | 6      | 1      | 2.0                      |
|                       | #14      | 1    | 1      | 1      | 5      | 1      | 1.8                      |
|                       | #15      | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3      | 5      | 2.2                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 1.4  | 1.8    | 1.0    | 4.2    | 3.2    | 2.32                     |
| <i>Diligence</i>      | #16      | 4    | 5      | 4      | 5      | 3      | 4.2                      |
|                       | #17      | 5    | 6      | 1      | 5      | 5      | 4.4                      |
|                       | #18      | 5    | 4      | 4      | 5      | 5      | 4.6                      |
|                       | #19      | 1    | 4      | 1      | 6      | 5      | 3.4                      |
|                       | #20      | 5    | 5      | 5      | 6      | 5      | 5.2                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 4.0  | 4.8    | 3.0    | 5.4    | 4.6    | 4.36                     |

As these tables demonstrate, the order of strongest-to-weakest habit and skill related to the four leadership traits was consistent between the pre- and post-surveys. Questions on Diligence received the highest scores, followed by Determination and Devotion, with questions pertaining to the exercise of Self-Denial registering the lowest scores. This knowledge will prove valuable when creating leader-development tools in the future. Though diligence, determination, and devotion may be more visible traits and

therefore garner more appreciation or approval from others, self-denial is a key quality that must not be overlooked in the training of spiritual leaders. Again, though not statistically significant, it was encouraging to see that, though its score remained the lowest on both pre- and post-surveys, self-denial saw the largest overall improvement of the four leader qualities measured (from 2.32 out of 6 to 2.84 out of 6).

Table 6. Four traits of spiritual leaders:  
Post-project habits and skills survey

| TRAIT                 | Question | Sun. | Wed. 1 | Wed. 2 | Fri. 1 | Fri. 2 | Group (all five leaders) Avg. (out of 6) |
|-----------------------|----------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--|
| <i>Devotion</i>       | #1       | 3    | 5      | 2      | 4      | 4      | 3.6                                      |
|                       | #2       | 6    | 1      | 1      | 6      | 4      | 3.6                                      |
|                       | #3       | 1    | 2      | 2      | 2      | 2      | 1.8                                      |
|                       | #4       | 6    | 1      | 5      | 3      | 6      | 4.2                                      |
|                       | #5       | 2    | 3      | 2      | 3      | 1      | 2.2                                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 3.6  | 2.4    | 2.4    | 3.6    | 3.4    | 3.08                                     |
| <i>Determination</i>  | #6       | 6    | 4      | 2      | 6      | 6      | 4.8                                      |
|                       | #7       | 4    | 5      | 5      | 1      | 6      | 4.2                                      |
|                       | #8       | 4    | 5      | 4      | 6      | 5      | 4.8                                      |
|                       | #9       | 3    | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1.4                                      |
|                       | #10      | 2    | 1      | 5      | 3      | 6      | 3.4                                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 3.8  | 3.2    | 3.4    | 3.4    | 4.8    | 3.72                                     |
| <i>Self-Denial</i>    | #11      | 3    | 4      | 2      | 4      | 4      | 3.4                                      |
|                       | #12      | 3    | 6      | 2      | 6      | 3      | 4.0                                      |
|                       | #13      | 1    | 4      | 1      | 6      | 4      | 3.2                                      |
|                       | #14      | 1    | 2      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1.2                                      |
|                       | #15      | 4    | 3      | 1      | 2      | 2      | 2.4                                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 2.4  | 3.8    | 1.4    | 3.8    | 2.8    | 2.84                                     |
| <i>Diligence</i>      | #16      | 4    | 5      | 4      | 4      | 5      | 4.4                                      |
|                       | #17      | 5    | 5      | 4      | 6      | 6      | 5.2                                      |
|                       | #18      | 5    | 5      | 6      | 5      | 5      | 5.2                                      |
|                       | #19      | 4    | 4      | 1      | 5      | 6      | 4.0                                      |
|                       | #20      | 6    | 5      | 4      | 6      | 4      | 5.0                                      |
| Indv. Avg. (out of 6) | --       | 4.8  | 4.8    | 3.8    | 5.2    | 5.2    | 4.76                                     |

## **Strengths of the Project**

As the analysis of the survey data in the preceding section shows, this project had some strengths and some weaknesses. Before considering the weaknesses of the project it is important to note its strengths.

A key project strength was its first goal: assessment of leader competence and overall group health. Establishing a preliminary benchmark through the assessment survey provided a way of observing the success of the project's two planned interventions: leader training and resourcing. According to the scoring chart provided at the end of the member assessment survey (see appendix 4), the groups' pre-project average score (25.83) fell in the middle of the "average but stable" range (e.g., 21–30 out of 40). By the end of the project, the groups' average was still within that range (29.27), but much closer to the "very productive and has a chance of multiplying" range (e.g., 31–40). This is progress. Never in the seven years of Bridge Church's small group ministry had group and leader health been assessed in any way. While it is hoped that future interventions will enhance group and leader health even more, this project has proven that initial assessment is the necessary starting point.

The goals of training and resourcing leaders were also important to the groups and to the men participating. While certain leaders may have appreciated different aspects of the training and/or Leader Guide more or less depending on personality and group situation, post-project feedback suggests that without intentional and focused training or the collegiality of utilizing the same resource in their groups, the spirit of unity among the five leaders would not be as strong as it is now. The secondary Wednesday leader said that the one-day training seminar was the most beneficial part of the project

for him. He also said—as did the primary Wednesday and Friday leaders and Sunday leader, along with several group members asked to provide feedback—that having a group study, including discussion questions for homework, as a companion to the Sunday sermon series was very a helpful aid in applying God’s Word personally and in community throughout the week.

In terms of personal growth, the team aspect of going through the training seminar and twelve-week Leader Guide period with other leaders was important for maintaining leader morale. Hesitant to participate when initially asked and then expressing a strong desire to leave the project after the one-day seminar, with patient encouragement the Sunday group leader agreed to follow through and now continues on as an increasingly confident and competent group leader.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

While the goals of the project were strong and helped clarify and advance the overall ministry objective of developing men as humble, servant-hearted spiritual leaders, there were parts of the project that could have been stronger.

One weakness is that not enough face-to-face feedback and encouragement was provided for the five leaders during the twelve weeks. Though emails were exchanged, phone conversations took place, and face-to-face discussions between myself and individual group leaders occurred throughout the project period, there were no group leader huddles wherein the men as a team could share frustrations and insights while offering to pray for and encourage each other. Three or four such huddles would also have provided me with information useful for strengthening training and resources for future leader-development projects.

Accurately measuring the methodology of the goals proved to be another weakness of the project. Regarding the research instrumentation, small sample size may have been a contributing factor in not achieving statistically significant positive change in the attitude and habits & skills aspects of the project and also in the pre- and post-project assessments of the Wednesday group and its two leaders. To test this suspicion, I took the averages of the primary Wednesday leader and group's pre- and post-project assessment scores (appx. 28/pre and 32/post; see table 1 above) and added into the statistical calculator two more pre-project scores of 28 and two more post-project scores of 32, so as to avoid skewing the original averages. Doing so produced a statistically significant result ( $t_{(7)} = 2.472, p < .043$ ). Following the same procedure for the secondary Wednesday leader did not yield a statistically significant result until 7 pairs of averages (e.g., 28/pre, 29/post) were added to the original data set—his pre- and post-project assessment averages were simply too similar. However, this did yield a statistically significant result when four sets of “pre-training” and “final” averages (appx. 89/pre, 93/post; see table 3 above) were added to the original data set of five scores on the attitude survey ( $t_{(8)} = 2.669, p < .028$ ), and when only one set of pre- and post-project averages (appx. 65 (pre) and 74 (post); see table 4 above) were added to the original data set of five scores on the habits and skills survey ( $t_{(5)} = 2.84, p < .036$ ).

Though in no way intended to validate (i.e., make statistically significant) the original results of the surveys in question, this does indicate the importance of having a larger number of leaders participating in a project of this type. When pre- and post-project average scores are similar, a larger sample size is needed to achieve statistically significant positive change. By contrast, when pre- and post-project averages are

drastically different (as in the case of the biblical and theological knowledge survey), smaller sample size may still yield statistically significant positive change.

Lastly, the cross-generational dimension of this project was not adequately addressed. Though children and teens were engaged intentionally through Bible stories and songs (in the groups with young people) provided in the Leader Guide, participant feedback nonetheless indicates that this is still an area needing substantial attention and improvement. Because of a large number of children and a smaller, more confined meeting space, Friday group and leader feedback suggests that while children could still be included during the Kid Time portion, having an onsite baby-sitter watch the children during the adult discussion would have benefited adults and children. By contrast, feedback from the Sunday group and leader on the issue of children was far more positive given that group's larger more separated meeting space and also the presence of teen children who could supervise the younger children during the adult meeting. Though more could have been done to engage the pre-teens and teens in this group—and though they did join the whole group for the Bible story, song, and prayer time with the other children—parents of the teens indicated that even their presence and availability to provide oversight to the younger children was an important serving opportunity and growth experience for the teens and pre-teens.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

Given the aforementioned problem of small sample size, one thing I would do differently were I to conduct the project again is invite small groups and leaders from other like-minded local churches to participate in the project. Opening the assessment, training, and use of the Leader Guide resource to other leaders and small groups would

increase the sample size for the pre- and post-project assessment and—perhaps more importantly—the sample size of men participating, thus enhancing the likelihood of achieving statistically significant positive change in the attitude as well as habits and skills aspects. I believe that the participation of a group from another church could have been secured easily enough, having, as I do, a good relationship with the pastor of an American Baptist congregation in Perry and pastors of several area Southern Baptist congregations most of which having some form of small group ministry.

Along with increasing participation by including other groups and leaders, adding another small group (either from within the church or from another doctrinally similar church) as a control group for the surveys would be beneficial. Giving another leader and his group the same pre- and post-project group and leader assessment surveys for comparison to the research groups' assessment surveys, without that leader participating in the training seminar or using the Leader Guide resource, would likely provide a valuable perspective to the research findings.

Another important change would be to require co-leaders to split evenly the number of sessions taught. In the context of this project, one primary group leader would be asked to lead six of the sessions and to let his co-leader lead the next six, while the other primary group leader would be asked to alternate weeks with his co-leader. Co-leaders would be required to work out in advance an evenly divided teaching schedule factoring in any necessary absences for each leader. Though the members' assessment survey results indicate a perceived positive change in each secondary leader's competence, an even distribution of teaching/leading time would no doubt have provided for a more balanced evaluation of these groups and leaders, not to mention workload.

Finally, if the project were to be conducted again, I would need to better communicate its overall goals to the groups. While the leaders were informed on the project's aim, group member feedback suggests that, while the Ephesians study was beneficial, a more detailed explanation of how the project—and its approach to developing men as spiritual leaders—fits into Bridge Church's overall disciple-making strategy would help group members better perceive any project-related changes in their groups and leaders. For me to explain to each group the project and answer questions before starting the project would be a worthwhile change.

### **Theological Reflections**

Male spiritual leadership in the home and in the church is a biblical reality to which I was firmly committed prior to this project or this degree program for that matter, but never had its underlying theological significance come to such clear focus as it did during this course of study. While godly submission on the part of wives and Christ-like servant leadership on the part of husbands and fathers was formerly a matter of mere acceptance—"because the Bible says so"—I now see in this paradigm a reflection of the very nature and essence of the triune God. When men express biblical spiritual leadership within the home and church it is not just an exercise of God-given authority, but an exercise in godly affection as well. In male spiritual leadership God is not just providing relational or organizational structure for His people on earth; He is telling them the story of Himself and His love. When Moses instructs the men of Israel to teach their sons the covenant, he himself portrays the character of God to them and bids them—along with his successor Joshua—do likewise to the next generation. When Timothy is told to teach what he had learned to faithful men capable of teaching others also, Paul is himself



portraying the God who speaks truth to His people, and bidding Timothy to likewise pass on that picture—not just doctrinal information.

I want laymen to grow in knowledge of God’s Word, in teaching skill, and also in their ability to care for souls. However, while assessment, intentional training, and resourcing are needed for growth in these areas, the most important aim in any spiritual leadership development process is not mere growth in intellectual knowledge or practical ability but an ever-deepening awareness of and commitment to the inherent goodness of God’s design in headship and submission within human relationships, a goodness which flows directly out of the goodness of God’s own mutually-submitted, triune personhood.

I believe through this experience the men who participated in this project have gained a deepened reverence for God’s Word and love for His Church—as have I. Deriving principles for spiritual leadership in the twenty-first century from the lives of biblical leaders is a strategic and ongoing step toward building men into leaders who see the Bible as no mere self-help guide, but as a God-provided instrument of purification and conformity to the image of Christ. The process of leading their groups through a paragraph-by-paragraph study of Ephesians has helped them extend this elevated view and deepened appreciation of Scripture to the congregation. In a day and age of competing spiritualities, an unstated goal of this project was to ingrain in Christian men the truth that to God there is but one acceptable spirituality: biblical spirituality.

### **Personal Reflections**

The decision to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree was not made casually by my wife and I. Barely a year into a new role as the lead pastor of a church we had helped plant only a few years earlier in a secondary staff role, the burden of academics, I knew,

would be significant in many ways. First of all, financially: though we were fortunate to be debt-free, the added monthly cost did make money tight. Secondly, with two young children at the outset in 2011, and now three at the conclusion in 2014, my family time was diminished somewhat by the extra study-load each week. Thirdly—and this was the toughest part of the decision for me—I knew that while my studies in the Southern Seminary Biblical Spirituality program were all aimed at strengthening me as the leader of my local church, actual time and energy for leading and ministering to my congregation would be reduced, and they were.

Yet God has proven Himself faithful time and time again throughout this journey, not only through His Word but also through His people. When on more than one occasion I wanted to quit, a financial gift would arrive unexpectedly, an encouraging note would show up in the mail, or even a word from one of the men participating in the project of how much he appreciated my effort to help him be a better leader would supply the needed resolve to persevere. My faith in God and my hunger for the encouragement of His Spirit are stronger today than three years ago. My finances are in order, my marriage and family are intact, and the church I served is the church I still serve. Whereupon becoming the pastor of Bridge Church I felt I had to bear the full weight of ministry alone, I now rejoice to have five men beside me who desire the spiritual health and growth of our church as much as I do. For all of this I am immensely thankful!

Having had the opportunity to pursue seminary degrees at both the graduate and now doctoral level, I have come to see what a rare and wonderful privilege formal theological education is. I am truly grateful to God for a school like Southern Seminary and for professors like those under whom I have been blessed to study. But that being

said, more than ever I am impressed with the urgency of bringing rigorous theological thinking and training to laypersons in local congregational settings so that the saints might truly be better equipped for the work of ministry. The men who participated in this project are an example of how expository preaching, intentional training, and a teachable spirit can help refine the raw material of lay leadership into a more robust gospel force within the local church. Regrettably, I have not always seen nor always sought how best to apply my formal biblical and theological training in the church I serve, but this project has forced me to make that connection—and not just in the pulpit.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, while the project could certainly have been stronger in several respects, the experience of, first of all, taking a very close look at what God's Word says about men and their critically important role as spiritual leaders in the home and in the local church, and secondly, of applying those principles in a methodical manner to strengthen the leadership of the men of Bridge Church at Perry has been the most profoundly important undertaking of my ministry thus far. It is with a sharpened mind and a keener sense of what it means to be a humble-hearted servant leader that I will endeavor to apply the study, research, and writing skills gained in this project to further develop training tools and resources useful in building up the body of Christ wherever God may lead me to serve in gospel ministry.

To Him alone be all the glory.

## APPENDIX 1

### PERMISSION TO USE AND MODIFY THE SMALL GROUP ASSESSMENT

#### **Email 1**

On Tue, Mar 5, 2013 at 11:28 AM,  
Darin Avery <averydarin@gmail.com> wrote:

My name is Darin Avery. I'm a pastor and D.Min student developing a small group leader training curriculum. I would like to include your Small Group Assessment Tool as a preliminary way of gauging overall group and group leader health in our church. Do you have a formal process for granting permission to use this resource?

Thanks,  
Darin Avery

#### **Email 2**

On Tue, Mar 5, 2013 at 8:00 PM,  
Andrew Mason <mason@smallgroupchurches.com> wrote:

As long as the info about the site is on there I'm okay with you using it. I'd also love to get your feedback on the forum after you use it. However, please don't use this version. I've used it once and thought the scoring could be better. I'm not looking to change the questions and options, just the value. I have a pretty good sample size to improve the values now. I've been procrastinating about getting in there and changing it, but this will motivate me now :) I'll work on it tonight and get the new version online. I'll email you when it's up. Glad you found the site and are taking advantage of the resources Darin!

Andrew Mason  
Founder, SmallGroupChurches.com  
mason@smallgroupchurches.com

#### **Email 3**

On Wed, Mar 13, 2013 at 12:16 PM,  
Darin Avery <averydarin@gmail.com> wrote:

Andrew,  
I'm going to be using the survey for leaders AND group members. Because of this I felt I needed to modify most of the questions to pertain to members and not just

leaders. I also made some slight modifications to some of the response options. Attached below is a Word doc with these modifications. Do I have permission to make these modifications? Also, do you think they're worded such that the scores will be consistent?

Thanks,  
Darin Avery

**Email 4**

On Wed, Mar 13, 2013 at 2:20 PM,  
Andrew Mason <mason@smallgroupchurches.com> wrote:

Darin,

If you'd like to give the website site credit still, just mentioned that the doc is an edited version of an Assessment from the website. I would be interested to see your modifications from a learning standpoint too.

Thanks,  
Andrew Mason

**Email 5**

On Thurs, Mar 14, 2013 at 12:32 AM,  
Andrew Mason <mason@smallgroupchurches.com> wrote:

Darin, FYI #2 doesn't have a 10 point option listed (praying daily). Most of the member scoring looks [good] with the exception of a few...

#1 For the members I would score the first 3 options 5, 7, 9

#2 For the members I would score the first 3 options 4, 7, 9

#4 For the members I would score the first 3 options 3, 6, 8

#8 is tough because the invites are based on a sum total of the leaders and assistant leaders versus just one person. I would think you would need different metrics for one person taking it. A 10 point score for one person would be inviting 3-5 people for example (the concept is, that a brand new small group needs a core leadership team of 2-3 people that invite 15-25 people to the group to get at least 6-10 people out to the first meeting).

#9 is a tough one too. I personally don't expect the members to be studied up on a topic before they come, just the leader(s) facilitating the issue.

Interesting concept with the member angle though. I like what you're cookin up...

## APPENDIX 2

### ORIGINAL SMALL GROUP ASSESSMENT BY ANDREW MASON

1. How much time do you spend in daily devotions (ex: Bible reading,  
 None to very little (2)  
 5-15 min everyday (6)  
 20-30 min everyday (8)  
 30-90 min everyday (10)
2. How frequently do you spend time praying for the needs of your small group members?  
 None or very little (2)  
 Once a week (5)  
 Every other day (8)
3. How many assistant leaders do you officially have in your group?  
 One (7) What is their name? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Two (9) What are their names? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Three or Four (10) What are their names? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How often do you meet with your assistant leader(s) for personal development & planning (outside of the group meeting)?  
 Rarely or Not at all (1)  
 Occasionally (3)  
 Every other month (6)  
 Monthly or more (10)
5. Do you have a goal as to when your group is going to multiply?  
 "Why do I need to have a goal?"(0)  
 No, but I know I should have a goal (1)  
 Yes but it's vague regarding the timeline (3)  
 Yes, we have a goal with a date to multiply (10)
6. How often do you share the vision of multiplication with your small group and pray for it?  
 "Why do I need to share that with my group?" (0)

- I've shared it once (3)  
 I've shared it more than once, but not every time we meet (5)  
 I share the vision and pray for it every time we meet (10)
7. How often do you communicate with your small group members by phone, email, cards, or letters in order to encourage them (this can be from you personally or from an assistant leader)?
- Not at all or Sometimes (1)  
 Every other week (8)  
 Every week (10)
8. How many people have you and your assistant leaders invited to?
- 0-5 People have been personally invited (2)  
 6-9 People have been personally invited (5)  
 10-15 People have been personally invited (8)  
 15-25 people have been personally invited (10)
9. How much do you prepare for each small group meeting?
- Just before the meeting on the day of (4)  
 One day before (7)  
 Two days before or earlier (10)  
 Total (from this page only)
10. What level of transparency is seen during the small group?
- Sharing of personal ideas/opinions (5)  
 Sharing of personal feelings (7)  
 Sharing of personal struggles and/or sin (10)
- Add 5 bonus points if you're group is planning or has completed a community outreach event/project together.
- Total Score
- 0 – 59 = Needs an urgent overhaul. Setup a meeting with your small group coach and review your small group leader's training or attend the next training as a refresher.
- 60-69 = Group is barely surviving but will fizzle out soon without some immediate improvement. Setup meeting with Small Group Coach.
- 70-79 = Group is only average but it is stable. One or two adjustments can increase the group's momentum.
- 80-89 = Group is very productive. Your group has a chance of multiplying.
- 90-100 = Excellent and thriving. Multiplication is inevitable.

## APPENDIX 3

### PRE- AND POST-PROJECT SMALL GROUP ASSESSMENT – LEADER SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

This survey is designed to measure your perceptions of your leadership and your group's overall health for the purposes of a ministry project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky conducted by Darin Avery. You are asked to answer the following questions before and after you receive training and resources to strengthen your spiritual leadership of your small group at Bridge Church. All information and responses offered will be kept confidential; at no time will your name be used in this project. Participation in this project is voluntary; you may withdraw at any time.

**For each question, check the blank next to your selected answer.**

1. How frequently are personal devotions practiced?  
 Never or almost never  
 Once or twice a month  
 Once or twice a week  
 Daily
2. How much time do you spend in daily devotions?  
 0-5 min daily  
 5-15 min daily  
 20-30 min daily  
 30-90 min daily
3. How often do you spend time praying for your small group members?  
 Never or almost never  
 Once a week  
 Two to four times a week  
 Daily
4. How well do you balance time for different parts of a group meeting (e.g., prayer, socializing, meal/snack, Bible study, music, children's story (if applicable))?  
 Poorly – very unpredictable group flow.  
 Not very well – only hit some parts; other parts are hit and miss.  
 Fairly well – all parts included, but some parts feel rushed or tacked-on.  
 Quite well – group has balanced flow with adequate time for each part.



5. How often do you meet with assistant leader(s) for personal development & planning (outside of the group meeting)?
- Rarely or not at all
  - Every other month
  - Monthly
  - Every other week
6. How confident/knowledgeable do you feel when teaching the topic or Scripture your group is discussing?
- Not very confident or knowledgeable
  - Somewhat unsure and timid
  - Somewhat confident and knowledgeable
  - Very confident and knowledgeable
7. How often do you communicate with your group members by phone, email, cards, or letters (this can be from you or from an assistant leader)?
- Not at all or Sometimes
  - Monthly
  - Every other week
  - Every week
8. How many people have you and assistant leaders invited to your group?
- 0-5 People have been personally invited
  - 6-9 People have been personally invited
  - 10-15 People have been personally invited
  - 15-25 people have been personally invited
9. How much do you prepare (study, pray, etc.) for each small group meeting?
- Very little
  - Just before the meeting on the day of
  - One day before
  - Two days before or earlier
10. What level of transparency is seen during the small group meeting?
- Very little
  - Sharing of personal ideas/opinions
  - Sharing of personal feelings
  - Sharing of personal struggles and/or sin

## APPENDIX 4

### PRE- AND POST-PROJECT SMALL GROUP ASSESSMENT – MEMBER SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

This survey measures your perceptions of both your group's overall health and the strengths and weaknesses of your small group leader for the purposes of a ministry project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky conducted by Darin Avery. You are asked to answer the following questions both before and after we provide training and resources to strengthen the spiritual leaders of small groups at Bridge Church. Any information or responses that you offer will be kept confidential, and at no time will your name be used in this project. Participation in this project is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

#### **For each question, check the blank next to your selected answer.**

1. How frequently do you practice personal devotions?

- Never or almost never
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a week
- Daily

2. How much time do you spend in daily devotions?

- 0-5 min daily
- 5-15 min daily
- 20-30 min daily
- 30-90 min daily

3. How often do you spend time praying for fellow small group members?

- Never or almost never
- Once a week
- Two to four times a week
- Daily

4. How well does your group leader balance time for different parts of a group meeting (e.g., prayer, socializing, meal/snack, Bible study, music, children's story (if applicable))?
- Poorly – very unpredictable group flow.
- Not very well – only hit some parts; other parts are hit and miss.
- Fairly well – all parts included, but some parts feel rushed or tacked-on.
- Quite well – group has a balanced flow with adequate time for each part.
5. How often do you meet with other group members outside of the group meeting for personal development & accountability?
- Rarely or not at all
- Every other month
- Monthly
- Every other week
6. How confident/knowledgeable does your group leader seem when teaching the topic or Scripture your group is discussing?
- Not very confident or knowledgeable
- Somewhat unsure and timid
- Somewhat confident and knowledgeable
- Very confident and knowledgeable
7. How often does your group leader (or assistant leader/s) communicate with you by phone, email, cards or letters?
- Not at all or Sometimes
- Monthly
- Every other week
- Every week
8. How many people have you invited to your small group?
- 0 people have been personally invited
- 1 person has been personally invited
- 2-3 people have been personally invited
- 4 or more people have been personally invited
9. How much do you prepare (study, pray, etc.) for each small group meeting?
- Very little
- Just before the meeting on the day of
- One day before
- Two days before or earlier

10. What level of transparency is seen during the small group meeting?

- Very little
- Sharing of personal ideas/opinions
- Sharing of personal feelings
- Sharing of personal struggles and/or sin

**Scoring the Survey**

0 - 10 = Urgent overhaul needed.

11- 20 = Group is barely surviving but will falter without immediate help.

21- 30 = Group average but stable. Minor adjustments can increase momentum.

31- 40 = Group is very productive and has a chance of multiplying.

## APPENDIX 5

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE SURVEY

This twenty question multiple-choice survey was created by the author of this project to assess group leader knowledge of biblical principles of spiritual leadership from the Old and New Testaments. The survey will be given before and after the first module of the one-day leader-training seminar. Pre- and post-training survey results will be compared to determine a change in participant knowledge of biblical and theological principles of spiritual leadership as a result of the first module of the training seminar.

#### **Old Testament**

1. Once sin entered the human race in Genesis 3, God first spoke to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Eve
  - b. Adam
  - c. Michael the archangel
  - d. the Serpent
  - e. None of the above
  
2. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses instructs \_\_\_\_\_ to teach God's commands and covenant to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. parents / their children
  - b. mothers / their sons and daughters
  - c. Israel / the surrounding nations
  - d. None of the above
  - e. All of the above
  
3. Although a good military commander, Joshua ch. 1 seems to indicate that Joshua struggled with \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. decisiveness
  - b. diligence
  - c. determination
  - d. courage
  - e. All of the above
  
4. At Mt. Sinai with Moses, Joshua heard a commotion in the Israelite camp and...
  - a. was sent by Moses back to the camp to restore order.
  - b. sought guidance from God through prayer and fasting.

- c. remained on the mountain waiting for Moses.
  - d. wept before the Lord.
  - e. b and d above
5. Before Elijah was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot, Elisha asked:
- a. to inherit Elijah's mantle (the symbol of his prophetic ministry).
  - b. for power to perform twice as many miracles as Elijah.
  - c. for Elijah to intercede on his behalf before God.
  - d. for two times Elijah's spiritual power.
  - e. None of the above
6. When Eldad & Medad gave unauthorized prophecies in the Israelite camp, Joshua...
- a. had them brought before Moses.
  - b. sent soldiers to kill them.
  - c. rejoiced that God had spoken through them.
  - d. None of the above
  - e. a and c above
7. This spiritual leader said: "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- a. Elisha
  - b. Abraham
  - c. Noah
  - d. Jacob (Israel)
  - e. None of the above
8. Though different in many ways, Elijah and Elisha's ministries both included:
- a. the calling down of fire from heaven.
  - b. intense opposition.
  - c. raising the dead.
  - d. overseeing prophetic guilds where young prophets were trained.
  - e. All of the above
9. When Elijah called Elisha to be his prophetic assistant, Elisha...
- a. left his family and farm instantly.
  - b. unhitched his oxen from the plow and put them away.
  - c. asked for three days to make his decision.
  - d. killed his oxen and burned his plow.
  - e. None of the above
10. On the day Elijah was to be taken to heaven, he said to Elisha three times,
- a. "Wait here; the Lord is sending me ahead."
  - b. "Why are you following me?"
  - c. "Stand firm against Yahweh's enemies."
  - d. "I will return."
  - e. None of the above

## New Testament

11. Spiritual leaders in the community of the New Testament church are to be...
  - a. held to a higher standard of character and conduct than everyone else
  - b. held to the same standard of character and conduct as everyone else.
  - c. those who contribute the most financially to the church.
  - d. those who demonstrate the most spiritual giftedness.
  - e. only those eager to lead others.
  
12. One unmistakably male trait in Paul's lists of leader qualifications (1 Tim. 3 & Titus 1) is that a leader must...
  - a. "...either be single or have never been divorced from his wife."
  - b. "...be the father of children."
  - c. "...be a respectable man in civic affairs."
  - d. "...teach the Bible to his son."
  - e. None of the above
  
13. Jesus once told Peter, "Satan has asked to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed..."
  - a. "...for you, that you might overcome him."
  - b. "...for the Devil to be bound."
  - c. "...for you, that your faith might not fail."
  - d. "...for you, that you may receive courage."
  - e. "...for you, that you may not grow weary in doing good."
  
14. After His resurrection, Jesus reinstated Peter by commanding him three times:
  - a. "Preach the word!"
  - b. "Go and make disciples."
  - c. "Don't deny Me again!"
  - d. "Feed My sheep."
  - e. "Seek My face."
  
15. Though important, Paul tells Timothy that this activity is of limited value:
  - a. Teaching the Bible
  - b. Speaking in tongues
  - c. Physical exercise
  - d. Confession of sin
  - e. None of the above
  
16. After His resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times:
  - a. "Will you follow Me?"
  - b. "Do you love Me more than these?"
  - c. "Will you make disciples?"
  - d. "Are you willing to die for My name's sake?"
  - e. "Do you now believe that I am the Christ?"

17. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He predicted that Peter would...
- lead many to faith in Him
  - deny Him yet again
  - speak in unknown tongues
  - preach to thousands on the day of Pentecost
  - die an undesirable death
18. Timothy received his early scriptural instruction...
- in the rabbinical school of Gamaliel
  - as an apostolic apprentice of Paul and Barnabas
  - from his father who was the leader of a Jewish synagogue
  - from his mother and grandmother
  - All of the above
19. Which of the following IS one of Paul's instructions to the young leader Timothy?
- "Get for yourself a good wife, for she will be a help to you."
  - "Be discerning and always faithful."
  - "Don't worry if people look down on your youth."
  - "Rebuke the Devil and he will flee from you."
  - "Discipline yourself for godliness."
20. Paul told Timothy, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching and..."
- ...you will save both yourself and your hearers."
  - ...you will receive an unfading crown of glory."
  - ...false teachers will be put to shame."
  - ...no one will despise your youth."
  - a and b above.



## APPENDIX 6

### LEADER ATTITUDE SURVEY

The following survey was created by the author of this project and will be taken at the beginning and at the end of the second module of the one-day leader-training seminar. It focuses on participant attitudes toward various practical aspects of providing leadership to cross-generational small groups.

**Please answer the following questions regarding your role as a spiritual leader:**

1. Rate your level of enthusiasm for leading a cross-generational small group.

|             |     |                 |                  |      |              |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|
| Very<br>Low | Low | Somewhat<br>Low | Somewhat<br>High | High | Very<br>High |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|

2. Rate your level of general confidence in leading a small group.

|             |     |                 |                  |      |              |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|
| Very<br>Low | Low | Somewhat<br>Low | Somewhat<br>High | High | Very<br>High |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|

3. Rate your level of personal competence in leading a small group.

|             |     |                 |                  |      |              |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|
| Very<br>Low | Low | Somewhat<br>Low | Somewhat<br>High | High | Very<br>High |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|

4. Rate your general attitude towards preparing for your group meeting.

|                   |         |                     |                     |         |                 |
|-------------------|---------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Highly<br>Dreaded | Dreaded | Somewhat<br>Dreaded | Somewhat<br>Excited | Excited | Very<br>Excited |
|-------------------|---------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------------|

5. Rate how clearly you understand the importance of small groups and how they fit into the overall ministry of Bridge Church.

|                 |         |                     |                   |       |               |
|-----------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|
| Very<br>Unclear | Unclear | Somewhat<br>Unclear | Somewhat<br>Clear | Clear | Very<br>Clear |
|-----------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|

6. Rate your attitude towards having children in the small group setting.

|                      |              |                          |                        |            |                    |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| Very<br>Unbeneficial | Unbeneficial | Somewhat<br>Unbeneficial | Somewhat<br>Beneficial | Beneficial | Very<br>Beneficial |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------|--------------------|

7. Rate your level of confidence in your ability to teach the Bible to your group.

|             |     |                 |                  |      |              |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|
| Very<br>Low | Low | Somewhat<br>Low | Somewhat<br>High | High | Very<br>High |
|-------------|-----|-----------------|------------------|------|--------------|

8. Rate your level of awareness of helpful Bible study resources.

|                 |         |                     |                   |       |               |
|-----------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|
| Very<br>Unaware | Unaware | Somewhat<br>Unaware | Somewhat<br>Aware | Aware | Very<br>Aware |
|-----------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|

9. Based on your past practice, how important is developing an assistant group leader to you?

|                     |             |                         |                       |           |                   |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Very<br>Unimportant | Unimportant | Somewhat<br>Unimportant | Somewhat<br>Important | Important | Very<br>Important |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|

10. Based upon your personal practice of leading daily family worship in your home, how important is it to train group members in this discipline?

|                     |             |                         |                       |           |                   |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Very<br>Unimportant | Unimportant | Somewhat<br>Unimportant | Somewhat<br>Important | Important | Very<br>Important |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|

11. Rate your attitude toward singing in your small group meeting.

|                     |         |                     |                      |          |                      |
|---------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly<br>Against | Against | Somewhat<br>Against | Somewhat<br>in Favor | In Favor | Strongly<br>in Favor |
|---------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

12. Rate your level of awareness of helpful group worship resources.

|                 |         |                     |                   |       |               |
|-----------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|
| Very<br>Unaware | Unaware | Somewhat<br>Unaware | Somewhat<br>Aware | Aware | Very<br>Aware |
|-----------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|

13. Rate your level of openness towards bringing new people into your group.

|                |        |                    |                  |      |              |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|------------------|------|--------------|
| Very<br>Closed | Closed | Somewhat<br>Closed | Somewhat<br>Open | Open | Very<br>Open |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|------------------|------|--------------|

14. Based on past practice, what has been your attitude toward leading your group to be involved in community outreach or missions projects?

|                     |             |                         |                       |           |                   |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Very<br>Unimportant | Unimportant | Somewhat<br>Unimportant | Somewhat<br>Important | Important | Very<br>Important |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|

15. Based on your past practice, how important is praying regularly for your small group members outside of the weekly group meeting?

|                  |             |                      |                    |           |                |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very Unimportant | Unimportant | Somewhat Unimportant | Somewhat Important | Important | Very Important |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|

16. Rate your attitude toward the eventual multiplication of your small group.

|                  |             |                      |                    |           |                |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very Unimportant | Unimportant | Somewhat Unimportant | Somewhat Important | Important | Very Important |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|

17. Rate your attitude toward developing apprentice leaders outside the group meeting.

|                  |         |                  |                   |          |                   |
|------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Against | Against | Somewhat Against | Somewhat in Favor | In Favor | Strongly in Favor |
|------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|

18. Rate your attitude toward personal evangelism and witnessing.

|          |     |              |               |      |           |
|----------|-----|--------------|---------------|------|-----------|
| Very Low | Low | Somewhat Low | Somewhat High | High | Very High |
|----------|-----|--------------|---------------|------|-----------|

19. Rate your attitude toward encouraging group members to give proportionally of their financial resources to the church.

|                  |         |                  |                   |          |                   |
|------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Against | Against | Somewhat Against | Somewhat in Favor | In Favor | Strongly in Favor |
|------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|

20. Based on past practice, how important is leading your group to meet needs in the group, church, or local community by sharing material resources?

|                  |             |                      |                    |           |                |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very Unimportant | Unimportant | Somewhat Unimportant | Somewhat Important | Important | Very Important |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|

## APPENDIX 7

### LEADER HABITS AND SKILLS SURVEY

This survey was created by the author of this project to assess leader skills and habits. This survey will be taken before being introduced to the Group Leader Guide resource at the end of the one-day leader-training seminar and again after the twelve-week Group Leader Guide period to assess a change in personal leadership habits and skills as a result of using the Group Leader Guide. This survey examines each leader's growth in the four principle areas of spiritual leadership presented in module one of the training seminar: devotion to God, determination in the face of opposition, denial of self, and diligence in teaching and conduct. Questions will not be categorized as they are below in the actual leader survey; they will be mixed in order to promote unbiased responses.

**Please answer the following questions regarding your habits and practices as a cross-generational small group leader:**

#### **Devotion to God First**

1. In the past three months how often have you spent at least 15 minutes in personal spiritual disciplines (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, journaling, etc.)?

|       |             |              |                          |                        |       |
|-------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Never | Once a week | Twice a week | Three or four times/week | Five or six times/week | Daily |
|-------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------|

2. In the past three months how many times per week have you spent at least 10 minutes intentionally leading your household in family devotions?

|       |             |              |                          |                        |       |
|-------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Never | Once a week | Twice a week | Three or four times/week | Five or six times/week | Daily |
|-------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------|

3. In the past three months how many verses of Scripture have you memorized?

|      |     |              |              |              |               |
|------|-----|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Zero | One | Two or three | Four or five | Six or seven | Eight or more |
|------|-----|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|

4. In the past three months how many worship services have you missed for reasons other than sickness or other emergencies?

|              |      |       |     |     |      |
|--------------|------|-------|-----|-----|------|
| Five or more | Four | Three | Two | One | None |
|--------------|------|-------|-----|-----|------|

5. In the past three months you incorporated singing into your group meeting...

Never      Once      Twice      Three or four times      Five or six times      Weekly

**Determination in the Face of Opposition**

6. In the past three months you led your group to do an outreach project...

Never      Once      Twice      Three times      Four times      Five or more

7. In the past three months how often have you led your group to pray for strength amid spiritual attacks on those within or outside the group?

Never      Once      Twice      Three or four times      Five or six times      Weekly

8. In the past three months how many times have you cancelled group meeting?

Five or more      Four times      Three times      Twice      Once      None

9. In the past three months what has been your response to spiritual opposition originating within the group or outside the group?

Fear & Retreat      Doubt & Discouragement      Anger & Resentment      Prayer      Seek Encouragement      Fight w/ Truth

10. In the past three months how often have you cut your preparation time for group short because of a distraction that was not an emergency?

Weekly      Five or six times      Three or four times      Twice      Once      Never

**Denial of Self**

11. In the past three months how frequently have you prayed for your group members outside of the group meeting per week?

Never      Once a week      Twice a week      Three or four times/week      Five or six times/week      Daily

12. In the past three months, how often have you met with your assistant group leader(s) outside the group meeting for spiritual encouragement?

Never      Once      Twice      Three or four times      Five or six times      Weekly

13. In the past three months how often have you contacted each adult member of your group outside of group meeting and Sunday morning worship?

Never      Once      Twice      Three or four times      Five or six times      Weekly

14. In the past three months you led your group in a time of confession of sin...

Never      Once      Twice      Three or four times      Four or five times      Weekly

15. In the past three months how often have you relayed group-related information or encouragement to your group via email or social media?

Never      Once      Twice      Three or four times      Five or six times      Weekly

**Diligence in Teaching and Personal Conduct**

16. In the past three months how much time per week have you spent preparing to teach the Bible to your small group?

No prep      1 to 5 min.      5 to 15 min.      15 to 30 min.      30 min. to 1 hour      1 hour or more

17. Describe your group's Bible discussion time for the past three months?

Surface only      Shallow      Somewhat shallow      Somewhat deep      Deep      Very deep

18. In the past three months how would you describe the level of your whole group's engagement in spiritual discussion?

Totally Unengaged      Unengaged      Somewhat Unengaged      Somewhat Engaged      Engaged      Everyone participates

19. In the past three months how often have you connected with the pastor or another church leader for encouragement or equipping for leadership?

Never      Once      Twice      Three or four times      Five or six times      Weekly

20. In the past three months how helpful have you found the Sunday sermon to be in preparing you to better teach your small group?

Very unhelpful      Unhelpful      Somewhat unhelpful      Somewhat helpful      Helpful      Very helpful

## APPENDIX 8

### SAMPLE WEEKS FROM LEADER GUIDE RESOURCE

#### **Week 4 – “Built Together” Ephesians 2:11-22**

#### **Memory Verse** – Ephesians 2:13

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off  
have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

#### **Leader Tips**

- “He is our peace.” (2:14) – “The death of Christ, which he suffered for our sins, has united us to God. No one who takes delight in sin can be at peace with him. Because this peace is bestowed equally on both Jews and Gentiles, neither one has any reason to think himself better than the other, especially since the Holy Spirit is given equally to them both.” (Desiderius Erasmus, in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, p. 293).
- Unity between Christians is not only possible through Jesus’ blood, it is to be pursued, preserved, protected, and prized. In this week’s focal text God is portrayed as the great Unifier of all peoples under the banner of Christ, and it is ultimately His effort that creates, preserves and protects unity between believers of all different backgrounds. Yet, as 4:1-16 vividly demonstrates, every Christian is responsible to pursue and maintain unity within the body of Christ as well.

#### **Starter Questions** (5-10 min.)

1. Is unity always to be preferred over division? Explain.
2. What place (if any) does the notion of “agreeing to disagree” have in the body of Christ?

#### **Opening Paragraph**

Unity is a lovely notion. It is far more pleasant to imagine living in unity than in hostility with others, but unity always comes at a price. Christ alone makes true unity with others possible in the spiritual realm, as well as in the ethnic/racial realm. Paul, a Jew’s Jew, wants particularly Gentile Christians to know that they are in no way second-class citizens in God’s kingdom behind the Jews, and that apart from God’s grace in Christ, Jew and Gentile alike stand condemned.

#### **Week 4 Group Discussion Questions (30 min.)**

1. How are vv. 11-12 similar to vv. 1-3? How are they different? What point is Paul making by having his audience “remember”?
2. What’s the point Paul is making about the Jews by calling them the “so-called” (or “what is called”) circumcision in v. 11? (See Rom. 2:25-26). Does this apply to modern Christians in any way? If so, how?
3. According to v. 13, what effect does the blood of Christ have for the Ephesians? Why is this important?
4. Why did the law of commandments have to be abolished in order for one new man to be made in place of the two?
5. In vv. 19-22 Paul uses a lot of construction imagery. What does Paul mean by “the ‘foundation’ of the apostles and prophets” in v. 20?
6. What does being part of a ‘dwelling place for God’ mean to you? Share with the group.

#### **Kid Time (10 min.)**

- **Themes from Eph. 2:11-22:** Remembering how “lost” we were like before Christ; Jews and Gentiles; unity through Christ’s blood; making God’s Word is our foundation.
- **Story** – The Woman at the Well – about how Jesus didn’t care about one’s ethnicity; shows a lady who was lost spiritually, how finding Jesus totally changed her life making her want to tell others about Him. (See *The Children’s Bible in 365 Stories*, #285 “The Woman who Came for Water,” pg. 325).
- **Song** – “Jesus Loves the Little Children”

#### **Devotional**

##### **Week 4, Day 1 – Therefore Remember**

If you’ve been a Christian for a while it can become difficult to remember what your life was like before coming to faith in Christ. Granted, some may wish they could forget those years entirely with all of their associated pain and poor choices. As we age forgetfulness becomes easier and easier, but unfortunately we don’t get to choose what to forget and what to remember. For many, memory is an equal mixture of good and bad, and, for Christians, that’s okay!

Believe it or not Paul actually commands the Ephesian Gentile Christians to intentionally remember and reflect upon their pre-converted condition, how in the not-so-distant past they not only lived for the sinful desires of their flesh but were hatefully branded by the Jews as “uncircumcised” (2:11).



There's a two-fold lesson here for us that has a particular evangelistic application. First of all, unless we frequently remember and reflect on what it means to be lost (the hopelessness, the despair, and even the fleeting pleasure of enjoying sin), we won't be motivated to urgently share the good news and call others to trust in Jesus. Secondly, unless we keep in mind that many so-called Christians—including perhaps ourselves at times—tend to view unbelievers as lower forms of life, we will not be motivated to share the gospel in loving ways.

Thankfully, the indwelling Holy Spirit sees to it that we don't forget everything. As spiritual leaders, we need to challenge others to pursue the spiritual discipline of remembering their lostness for the sake of the lost *and* for a fuller worship of God's glorious grace in Christ!

### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. Are there parts of your pre-Christian past you'd like to forget? Why/why not?
2. When you and other believers talk about unbelievers, what is the general tone of the conversation?

### **Week 4, Day 2 – Separated from Christ**

Few things panic a child more than realizing they have been separated from their parents. I still vividly recall a dream I had as a child: Dad and I were at a playground and I wanted to go down a long slide by myself, so I climbed the ladder and down I went. When I got to the bottom it was dark, the playground was empty and my dad was nowhere to be seen.

To follow up yesterday's devotional thought about the importance of remembering our lostness, it should go without saying that the most important feature to remember about our lost state is not the personal pain or relational discord that may have existed between us and other people during that time, but the horror of separation from our Creator! Paul says, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ" (2:12). Indeed, people can't be saved until they realize that their sin has left them utterly cut-off from God.

Apparently, I cried out during my dream and woke my dad up. Years later I asked if he remembered coming to my room that night. He couldn't recall it, but in my half-conscious state I remember him assuring me, "I'll always be there for you, son." Unity in the body of Christ is very important—as we will soon see in Ephesians—but true *unity* with others isn't possible apart from a deep awareness of one's *union* with God through Christ and His ever-present indwelling Spirit.

### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. Were you ever separated from your parents as a child? Were you ever separated from your children as a parent? Describe the feeling of each. Which was worse?
2. Write a prayer for someone (by name) who you see as being cut off from God.

### **Week 4, Day 3 – Brought Near**

In this passage Paul writes about the tension, alienation, and even outright hostility between two ethnic groups and the beautiful way God brings Jew and Gentile

together in Christ. He says: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off (Gentiles) have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (2:13).

But to what or to whom have the Gentiles been brought near? Yes, the Jews (the commonwealth of Israel), but more than that; they’ve been brought near to the blessings and benefits of the Jews: “the covenants of promise,” to true spiritual hope, and, most importantly, to the God of the Jews from which all of these blessings flow (2:12).

I recently gave blood at a community blood-drive. It’s humbling to think that perhaps someday an injured or sick person may be saved by my blood flowing through their veins. Were I ever to meet that person all external differences would appear totally irrelevant in light of the fact of our shared blood. Common blood creates an inescapable nearness. Without the sacrifice of Christ we could never know nearness with God or with other believers. If you’re aware of any hostilities within the group of Christians you lead spiritually, help bring them near to one another by calling attention to the common blood of Christ.

### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. Are you aware of any hostility between yourself and another believer?
2. In what way(s) might this hostility be hindering you and the other person(s) spiritually? What will you do about it?

### **Week 4, Day 4 – One New Man**

Some may criticize Christians for holding onto a set of beliefs that have remained essentially unchanged for two millennia and for taking our cues from an ancient Bible. While much of this criticism comes from secular society, sadly, a lot of it comes from those who claim to be Christ-followers yet embrace what is known as ‘cultural Christianity’—a watered-down, limp-wristed version of Christianity which finds its relevance in valuing what the surrounding culture values.

As Christian disciple-makers, ours is the hard task of standing where it’s less and less culturally acceptable to stand—and of leading others to do the same—no matter what the cost. One of the church’s greatest witnesses in a culture and age marked increasingly by hostility between all different kinds of people and groups is the unity that believers have with one another in spite of what may appear to be irreconcilable racial, ethnic, cultural, economic, or even political differences on the outside. Paul describes this as God creating “[in Christ] one new man” (2:15). Essentially, Paul is saying that God is making, in Jesus, a new humanity, a new mankind who traces its ancestry not to a tribe or chief, but through belief in the risen Christ.

Don’t be rattled or humiliated when people call your Bible “outdated” or your Christian faith “old news.” Of course it’s old, but it’s always good! And those who believe are being made new. Assure those you lead that cultural disregard for God and disbelief are anything but new!

### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. Describe your understanding of Christianity’s cultural relevance.
2. What is one particular way you can pray for your group members to be culturally relevant Christians? Write that prayer down!

### **Week 4, Day 5 – Built on the Foundation**

One of my proudest moments in school came in 8<sup>th</sup> grade science class. The assignment was to build a bridge entirely out of toothpicks that could support an increasing amount of weight added to a bucket to be suspended from the middle of the bridge. The more weight the bridge held, the higher the final grade!

The teacher gave us a few standard size dimensions to work within, but the design of our bridge was completely up to us. Even with no engineering background, I knew that balance was key. Every part of the bridge floor had to be exactly the same distance from the foundation upon which it was built, so I spent hours measuring every piece for consistency before firmly attaching them to the cardboard base. When the moment of truth arrived, what many—even my teacher and I—thought to be an intricate but possibly flimsy design held up all the weight (something like 10-12 lbs).

Paul says that the church, “the household of God,” is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone” (2:19-20). Imbalance and the danger of collapse in the church and in the Christian life come when we fail to align ourselves with the foundation of Scripture, which is held together in Jesus Christ. As you live and lead by example, make sure your life is built squarely on God’s Word! What a tragedy it is when those who lead the people of God collapse because they have built themselves up on the wrong foundation!

#### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. In what particular area of Bible knowledge would like to grow and/or help others grow? Why that area?
2. As you pray for God to help you grow, write out a few concrete action steps you can take to strengthen your biblical foundation for the benefit of yourself and others.

### **Week Six – “Rooted and Established in Love” Ephesians 3:14-21**

#### **Memory Verses – Ephesians 3:20-21**

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

#### **Leader Tips**

- “...from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named...” (3:15) – “The Greek word *patria* (e.g. patriarch) here translated as “family” normally designates a social grouping (tribe, clan, household) with a common ancestor (e.g., Ex. 12:3; Num. 32:28; 1 Chron. 23:11). The term can also refer to social groups that are not related by blood (e.g., Ps. 22:27).” (From *Ephesians*, Stephen E. Fowl, p. 117). It’s important to note that Paul isn’t just referring to biological

families, but primarily to the spiritual family of the local church which does indeed have a common spiritual Ancestor: “the Father” (v. 14)!

- “...rooted and established in love...” (3:17b) – “In order to stress the foundational nature of the love that Paul envisions, two metaphors, one botanical and the other architectural are closely linked: *rooted and established in love*. Love is the soil in which believers are rooted and will grow, the foundation upon which they are built. ... Already in Ephesians God’s love has been shown to be the source of our salvation (2:4; cf. 5:2, 25), while later in this prayer Christ’s love is specifically mentioned (v. 19). God’s love in Christ provides the motivating power that enables believers to love others, and this prayer anticipates the [love-related] exhortations of the following chapters (4:2; 5:2).” (From Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, p. 260).

## Lesson Guide

### Starter Question:

1. What is your normal physical posture in prayer? Do you think one’s physical posture in prayer matters to God? Why/why not?

### *Read this paragraph to the group*

Predestination is a prominent theme in Ephesians, but so is prayer. Paul wants the Ephesians to embrace the reality of predestination for the sake of spiritual assurance of salvation by God’s grace alone, but he also clearly wants them to know that fervent intercessory prayer on man’s part is fully compatible with predestination on God’s part. Like Moses in the Old Testament, though not completely aware of how, Paul knew that prayer *by* His people *for* His people moves the heart of God. The lesson for us in this is massively important!

- *Have someone read Ephesians 3:14-21 aloud.*
- *Open with prayer.*

### Week 6 Group Discussion Questions

1. To what reason is Paul referring when he says, “For this *reason* I bow my knees before the Father” in v. 14?
2. Even though God is in complete control of every detail in the universe, why is it still important that Christians pray for one another?
3. What one petition does Paul make to God on behalf of the Ephesians in this passage? Of all the things that he could ask of God on their behalf, why do you think he asks for this?
4. What is Paul talking about when he uses the dimensional terms in v. 18: “what is the breadth and length and height and depth”?

5. Paul mentions the “fullness of God” here in v. 19 and earlier in 1:23. What does he mean by the phrase “filled with the fullness of God”? Why is it so important that the church experience this fullness?
6. What’s one practical application of this passage in your life and/or church?

### **Kid Time**

- **Themes** – Praying for the saints//wanting the saints to know the extent of God’s love//being filled by God alone.
- **Story** – Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Nothing tells how deep the love of Christ is like the story of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection.
  - a. *The Story for Children* – “Sneaky Schemes and a Disloyal Disciple”; “The Crucifixion”; & “Angelic Encounter.”
  - b. *The Children’s Bible, In 365 Stories* – Story 327: “Arrest in the Garden”; story 330: “Jesus Stands Trial”; story 331: “The Road to Golgotha”; story 332: “Jesus on the Cross”; & story 333: “He is Alive,” or...
  - c. Pick a good Easter book that is appropriate for your group’s age level
- **Song** – “Oh How He Loves You and Me”

### **Devotional**

#### **Week 6, Day 1 – I Bow My Knees**

It’s hard to imagine a more humiliating position than to be on one’s knees. My mind imagines a scene from one of those mobster movies in which a wise guy makes some poor snitch or double-crosser get down on his knees before shooting him or doing him in with a golf club. The whole point is to humiliate and degrade the victim and to demonstrate dominance.

Paul is so intent on the Ephesians not losing heart (faith) that he willingly—and we may presume frequently—assumes the humble, self-degraded position of kneeling before God, pleading, not for his life, but for their life and spiritual strength. Spiritual leadership is not a call to prominence or dominance but to humility and self-surrender. Just as Paul knew he personally was not capable of giving or ensuring the spiritual strength that the Ephesian Christians needed to not lose heart, you and I owe it to those we lead to bow our knees before God on their behalf.

Physical posture in prayer matters. Of course, God looks at our hearts; but what do our bodies say to God about the condition of our hearts? If we never kneel, are we truly humbled? If we never bow our knees, is God truly dominant over us?

#### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. How much importance do you attach to your physical posture in prayer?
2. Have you ever felt “unspiritual” compared to Bible figures or the prayer habits of others you know? Do you think that feeling is justified? Why/why not?

### **Week 6, Day 2 – Strengthened in the Inner Being**

It's impossible for finite creatures such as us to know exactly *how* the Holy Spirit fills believers in Christ; God's ways are higher than ours (Is. 55:8-9)! But it is possible to know *if* the Spirit has filled a person. The tell-tale mark of the Holy Spirit's presence isn't speaking in tongues, performing miracles, or prophesying; it's power. *Well, you ask, how will I know I have the power of the Holy Spirit unless it manifests itself in some visible, external way?*

This is a good question. It's worth noting that Paul doesn't name a particular external 'sign' of the Spirit's presence or power, but he does talk about internal evidence. In v. 17 he says the first evidence is Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith. Sincere faith in Jesus is internal evidence of the Spirit's presence and power, and that faith will surely manifest itself in external actions. He also says another evidence is 'comprehending with all the saints the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (vv. 18-19). Paul says that fully comprehending the love of Christ must and only happens in the community of 'all the saints.' The Spirit's power begins in our inner being, but always moves us towards Christ, first by faith, then by comprehending His love in the company of other members of His body.

Spiritual leaders are to be on the leading edge of expressing both faith and love in the body of Christ. We don't have to be able to explain it completely; but our lives must prove the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. Have you ever doubted the Holy Spirit's presence in your heart? What got you past the doubt?
2. Take a few moments and reflect on a time when you comprehended the love of Christ in a way that 'surpassed knowledge.'

### **Week 6, Day 3 – Rooted and Grounded in Love**

What's the opposite of being rooted and grounded? Freedom, right? Many young people in our culture might see rootedness as the unfortunate state of being tied to a particular locality, unable to escape tradition in order to discover the bigger and broader world. Similarly, being 'grounded' hearkens back to the days of youth, perhaps bringing home a bad report-card and a loss of social privileges until improvements are made, etc.

But this isn't the kind of rootedness and groundedness Paul is talking about. He envisions fruitfulness in the Christian life as something more akin to flying a kite. Unless tethered by a string to a relatively heavy and stationary point on the ground, a kite will simply drift, however gradually, down to the ground and will cease to fulfill its purpose of flying and thereby bringing pleasure to the one flying it. Christ is the one to whom we as Christians are tethered by grace. Our love for one another flows through our love for Him and His love for us. His unbreakable love for us keeps us from drifting ever downward in the death of self-absorption. Freedom for the kite is not in being cut loose, but in being held tight—firmly anchored.

#### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. What are the things/people/ideas that keep you 'grounded' in a bad way?

2. What are the things/people/ideas that keep you ‘grounded’/ ‘anchored’ in a good way?
3. Do you see these at work in your group for good and bad? Pray for those grounded in the wrong ways.

### **Week 6, Day 4 – Filled with All the Fullness of God**

I don’t know about you, but when I sit down to a meal, I don’t intend to get up until I’m full. I’m certainly not advocating gluttony, but—even though eating until one is full may contradict all the popular dieting and weight-loss theory—food is intended to fill us and satisfy our physical hunger. Think about all the biblical accounts of God supplying food: manna for His people in the desert, ravens bringing food to the prophet Elijah, Jesus feeding the multitudes and instituting the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament—too many to name here.

Food is wonderful, but there is a spiritual fullness much to be preferred even to the richest of food and sometimes may not be obtained without denying ourselves physical food for a while. Jesus didn’t succumb to Satan’s tempting offer of bread as He fasted in the wilderness for forty days; He chose rather to be filled with the fullness of God. Luke tells us that after this Jesus returned “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk. 4:14) to begin His public ministry.

In this one paragraph in Ephesians (i.e. 3:14-19) Paul references the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is praying that the Father through the power of the Spirit might give these believers the all-surpassing knowledge of the love of Christ. Now that’s being filled with the fullness of God! Imagine the impact of a life, a small group, a church family this filled—what a satisfying picture!

#### **Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. Describe your current level of spiritual satisfaction or fullness. Have you felt more ‘full’ spiritually in the past? If so, why has your level of spiritual satisfaction declined?
2. How willing are you to set aside earthly/physical types of filling in order to pursue more spiritual filling for yourself and for those you lead?

### **Week 6, Day 5 – To Him be Glory in the Church**

Picking up yesterday’s thought on spiritual satisfaction, one of my heroes in the ministry, John Piper, has famously said: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” This is truly one of those rare sayings to which people can return again and again as an inexhaustible spring of refreshing truth. Think about it: if God’s ultimate desire and aim is to be glorified, then He must see to it that those from whom He wishes to receive such glory are supremely satisfied in and by Him.

One of the strongest sources of satisfaction that people have is the satisfying feeling of control or power. God doesn’t want His children to live weak, powerless lives. However, He doesn’t want us to settle for a merely human kind of power and control, both of which are ultimately deceptive to ourselves and manipulative and abusive towards others. So He gives us power through His Spirit (“power through his Spirit in the inner being” v. 16), one of whose fruits is true self-control (Gal. 5:23).

We can and will never control God—He doesn't need to be controlled. But by His grace, He gives us the Holy Spirit who enables us to experience the satisfaction of controlling ourselves. The primary response of self-control is fully satisfied glorification of God. Spiritual leaders are spiritually satisfied in God and lead others to be likewise satisfied.

**Personal Reflection Questions/Prayer Guide**

1. Do you find it easy or hard to believe that your level of worship *to* God is directly proportional to your level of satisfaction *in* God? Why?
2. Read Galatians 5:22-23. If you were to rank each of the fruit of the Spirit from most to least visibly evident in your life, where would self-control fall? Why do you think so?



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## ABSTRACT

### TRAINING MEN AT BRIDGE CHURCH, PERRY, OHIO, TO SPIRITUALLY LEAD CROSS-GENERATIONAL SMALL GROUPS

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This project sought to equip laymen at Bridge Church, Perry, Ohio, to give effective spiritual leadership to cross-generational small groups. Chapter 1 gives the purpose, goals, ministry context, project rationale, definitions, limitations and delimitations, and a description of the research methodology. Chapter 2 provides a biblical and theological basis for developing core character traits and skills of spiritual leaders. Chapter 3 examines historical and contemporary theoretical approaches to the intentional training of spiritual leaders, gleaned key principles for improving leader knowledge, attitude, and skill. Chapter 4 describes the execution of the project including training and resources provided to leaders, research instruments for measuring success, and a description of the activities undertaken during the fifteen-week project period. Chapter 5 offers an evaluation of the project's purpose, goals, strengths and weaknesses, and what things the author would do differently. The chapter closes with the author's personal and theological reflections on the project.

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