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# The Last Judge: Shepherding and Parenting the Church and Laity through a 21st Century Family Dynamic

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

THE LAST JUDGE

SHEPHERDING AND PARENTING THE CHURCH AND LAITY THROUGH

A 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY FAMILY DYNAMIC

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

KEVIN ANTHONY WADE

PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 2018

Portland Seminary  
George Fox University  
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 15, 2018  
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All Scripture references are from  
The New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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## **DEDICATION**

To Callie

my best friend, my bride, my blessing  
my ride-or-die, my rib, the reason behind all of my smiles,  
the melody in my 10-bar morning song  
Thank you for putting up with all of my little quirks  
and pushing me to stay focused on all our goals.

To my Carrie Mae and Isaac Lawson

The gift of in-laws is sometimes clouded.  
You guys gave me the best woman to ever walk this earth and  
supported me through all of my endeavors in ministry  
I love and thank you.

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Last Judge: Shepherding and Parenting the Church and Laity Through A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family Dynamic**

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The purpose of this paper is to develop a solution to certain items ailing the church, removing boundaries where trusting and believing in the church family abounds. Through the five years of creating the context of this paper, the objective was established to first become successful in teaching and promoting spiritual behavioral change. During this five year period, I used five of my seven daughters, and 27 participants in the Young Adult Ministry as the sample church family for conceptualization of a reasonable model for my argument.

The use of the information within this paper is not for a particular denomination, but for those pastors and his church family that desires to create a stronger foundation of trust and an assured support system among the church family, without negatives associated with political rhetoric blurring the lines between leaning into Christ and deconstructing areas where each congregant seeks to keep building walls. Section I examines the areas where the lines of the secular business model has become the norm of the church. Section II provides steps in creating stronger spiritual formation and church familial connections. Section III describes the resources used in creating this paper and the artifact, *The Last Judge: A Pastor's Aid for Parenting and Shepherding the Church Family and Laity Through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family Dynamic*.

## INTRODUCTION

“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man. (Proverbs 24:33-34)”

“But when He (Jesus) saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)”

For most people, questions of order and government are often of primary interest. Organization and leadership are central concerns in any democratic and bureaucratic-rational society. This central concern is also the case in church life, which is more democratized and bureaucratic than in previous times. In our social and religious arrangements, we prize order: it is not simply a preoccupation but a virtue, not only a means but an end. We are also fascinated by the issue of leadership, with chains of command, lines of authority and so forth. The idea of authority is a key sociological category in any discussion of government. It has to do with the way power is going to be interpreted by the congregant, and communicated from the leader/pastor.<sup>1</sup>

The issue with the “ripe field” of future leaders, supervisors, and elected officials is the lack of being prepared and being humbled. The “ripe field” comes from the missing approach of the parent, and those teaching and mentoring youth and young adults. Most in this ripe field do not understand the art of patience, nesting, legacy, and budgeting time to be a constructive and proficient role model.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Banks, *Church Order and Government: in Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 131-137.

Proverbs chapters 6 and 24 offers a detailed warning to the believer when it comes to being the proverbial light on the hill, and taking care of those items poured into the life of the Children of God. The writer notes that the person who owns the overgrown fields and broken-down walls has taken every possession for granted. Complacency and procrastination can become an addiction when certain levels of success are reached. If we consider one thing, everyone knows who this person is because his actions and life are on full display. Everything in the pastor's life is on the table when it comes to pastoring, shepherding, and parenting the flock God has afforded in his or her life.

The first portions of this dissertation will delve into the issues and problems of the pastor of the church treating the position of pastor in the same manner a Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.) handles any business. The second portion will explain with the contextual reasoning behind a move from the pastor-C.E.O. to pastor-shepherd and pastor-parent.

**SECTION I**  
**THE PROBLEM**

### **Issues, Innuendos, and Ignorance**

The senior pastor of the small church, First Regional Christian Benevolent Church, which has a congregation consisting of 356 members has fallen behind in his studies, visitations, and has missed several Sunday services over four months, without explanation. Pastor Walker refuses to discuss the details of his disheveled look and the absence of his wife during community outings. Some members speculate several circumstances: an impending divorce, drugs, and alcohol, womanizing, and thoughts that the pastor is church hunting.

There have been several complaints of repeated sermons and bible study lessons falling short of being compelling and informative as they have been in prior years. The ministers and laity have not been trained and taught to step up at a moments' notice, and lead the worship service. They do what they can do on that "step-up" Sunday. The actions of Pastor Walker are spiritual damaging and abusive to those members who have not matured enough to "step around" the gossip and pain and remain focus on the call of Christ Jesus. There is a way to retain and train staff in the organization that will be fruitful, and the leader/pastor can stay in touch with the thinking of the staff is open and direct communication.

In his defense, Pastor Walker's only statements to the staff concerning his lackluster study habits and decisions to use old sermons are less than admirable and are seen as mean-spirited. His comments are soul destroying as he states, "God called me to pastor this church in the manner as I see fit for the flock. I do not have to answer to any of you until God requires me to explain how I am moving." The travesty of righteousness

is a classic example of majoring on minors.<sup>2</sup> There are hidden issues in the life of the pastor and is exemplified in the negatives on display through his relationship with God. There is a known point in the ministry where the personal relationship between the leaders, laity, and pastor and God needs renewing or refreshing. With an inordinate lack of communication between husband and wife, and then God and leading couple in the church, the spiritual breakdown starts to manifest in physical form as evident in Pastor Walker's visible actions.

The following list details areas I believe the failures begin with the leadership of the church and the staff, volunteers, and the congregants:

Unattached Leadership - the pastor-C.E.O. is hands-off, and the staff is centrally uncommitted and unplugged from integral conversations and strategies. It is unacceptable for a pastor to believe the leadership of the church is a solo position. Laity must be plugged-in to every effort of growth so they can "feel" connected and a vital member of the team.

Unchallenged Leadership – the pastor-C.E.O. must remain open and creative. If the spiritual imagination is not from all sources, a staff member will become bored in their positions and seek out other opportunities. Not one person on earth wants to work every day and not enjoy the things they've signed up to experience.

Unappreciated Leadership – the "pat-on-the-back" attitude must remain at the doorstep when it comes to working in the church. Yes, folks want accolades, but those cannot override the work of the church, the growth of the staff and the esteem of the church family. The pastor's business-leading attitude cannot be a boundless example than

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<sup>2</sup> Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse* (Chicago, IL: Intervarsity Press. 1993), 88.

that of Christ's. The place of recognition must be doled out to the entire staff. Focusing on one individual will cause too many areas of dissent.

After going through this short list, the option above all is staff and church retention with a focus on creating that "white space" where members and staff love being around a pastor-parent type.

The story also illustrates that the clergy sometimes carries out spiritual abuses and that the victims of this type of exploitation are not always laypeople. It may work the other way around, depending on who has the power. In many churches, the so-called clergy has the power. But in some "congregational" or elder-led churches, the laypeople have the power to abuse the hired minister.<sup>3</sup> Either the command structure is of the corporate modeled church.

The pastor of our story held a meeting with the church's deacons and laity and made statements in the following context:

- I do not feel that my private life has any direct actions upon the church or this congregation, which needs explanation outside that this is a family issue.
- I will continue to advise you as God allows and teach/preach on Sundays as I have for the last 30-plus years.
- For there to be sustained successes, there should be some type of personal boundaries that the deacons and laity do not cross when it pertains to one's personal life.

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<sup>3</sup> Blue, *Healing*, 88-89.

- My relationship with my wife is not for church inspection and verification. If we were to have any issues that will hurt the church, we would address those items before the elders.

Each statement fits into one of the three bulleted points listed and each show an air of arrogance and selfishness, right?

The issue creating negatives in Pastor Walker's life is the lack of attention to those things that are important and emotionally and spiritually driven is the health of the church and the legacy he should be planting. He has not been open to communicating. He decides to control the total conversation and his level of ethics that should be the example for others to follow means that this church will suffer the same fate of closure as other churches in the United States. If issues cannot be talked about in legitimate ways, they will be conversed about in illegitimate ways. What occurs is the improper venting of frustrations, growing mistrust, and a falling away from the Gospel. Though gossip temporarily relieves tensions and fosters the feelings of intimacy and unity, ultimately it slowly poisons the church family.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Blue, *Healing*, 73.



## Standing Correctly

Some believe the best approach to a difficult conversation is silence. Often, but not in a great deal of the time is silence the correct move. However, I do agree with this approach when the emotional atmosphere becomes turbulent. The church has become notoriously silent because conversations and themes suggest changes in society. Many church leaders are refusing direct dialogue based on improper or a lack training in communication with an adversary, let alone working with others who are destined to become future leaders. The internal challenge in a pastor is always the fear of being replaced by someone they have trained or taught. This fear creates a desired push for stronger boundaries and authority.

In church and the secular world, we use the word ‘authority’ in different ways; some positive and some negative. We use it in secular senses. We say of a great footballer that he stamped his authority on the game. Or we say of a great musician that he or she gave an authoritative performance of a particular concerto. Within more structured social gatherings the question ‘Who’s in charge?’ has a particular function. For instance, if someone came into a lecture-room and asked ‘Who’s in charge?’ the answer would presumably be either the lecturer or the chairman; if any. If, however, a group of people went out to dinner at a restaurant and somebody suddenly came in and said, ‘Who’s in charge here?’ the question might not make any sense. We might be a bit puzzled as to what authority might mean in that structure.<sup>5</sup> Within a more definite structure, however, such as a law court, a college, or business, the question ‘Who’s in

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<sup>5</sup> N.T. Wright, “How Can the Bible be Authoritative?” accessed October 22, 2016, [http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_Bible\\_Authoritative.html](http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Bible_Authoritative.html).

charge?’ or ‘What does authority mean here?’ would have a very definite meaning, and could expect a fairly clear answer. The meaning of “Authority,” then, varies considerably according to the context within which the discourse is taking place. It is important to realize this from the start, not least because one of my central contentions is going to be that we have tended to let the word ‘authority’ be the fixed point and have adjusted ‘scripture’ to meet it, instead of the other way round. When people in the church talk about authority, they are very often talking about *controlling* people or situations. They want to make sure that everything is regulated properly, that the church does not go off the rails doctrinally or ethically, that correct ideas and practices are upheld and transmitted to the next generation. ‘Authority’ is the place where we go to find out the correct answers to critical questions such as these. This notion, however, runs into all kinds of problems when we apply it to the Bible. Is that really, what the Bible is for? Is it there to control the church? Is it there simply to look up the correct answers to questions that we, for some reason, already know?<sup>6</sup>

One of the greatest challenges the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Christian faces is the rapid growth of information and communication technologies. With all the vast advancements in our capability to “connect” with one another is affecting our ability to relate to face to face.<sup>7</sup> Martin Buber once said, “God is not here or there, to be possessed, but is everywhere, to be met. It is only WE who are not always there.” This quote can be attributed to the leader and laity not communicating on a personal level. The question can be posed to the lack of accountability and ethics in the living example the pastor should exude in all areas

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Mark W. Scarlata, “*Am I my Brother’s Keeper?*” *Christian Citizenship in a Global Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 23.

of his / her life. Should the pastor be open and visible to the congregation where personal and professional life is blurred?

“People are desperate to follow the “thread of the star track.” But first, the morning stars must appear. Robert Louis Stevenson, who was seriously ill as a child, recorded an incident in his journal. He was seated by an upstairs window at nightfall, watching a lamplighter light street lamps below. His nurse came into the room and asked him what he was doing. “I’m watching a man make holes in the darkness,” he replied.<sup>8</sup>

No matter how much we feel the need of offices or symbols of authority to improve our image and bolster our confidence, Jesus will not allow them. The only way to prominence in the kingdom of God is through humble service. And this seeking greatness through humble service alone has eternal consequences. “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Mt. 23:12).<sup>9</sup> The song says, “*Let my little light shine.....*” the question can be asked to many pastors, “What light are you shining to break the darkness of the congregant’s world?”

The story exemplified is sadly the paradigm of many in the leadership of many congregations and churches across the world. The mirroring the corporate model of leadership dims the light that the office of pastor should exhibit. Pastors are to be that morning star for the area they have been placed by God, and voted in by that church body. Projection and preparation are essential areas that church leader must be painfully aware and readily use every avenue to create space and advantages toward creating solid lines of communication between the congregation, leadership team and the church leader. Sun Tzu states, “The enlightened leader is heedful, and the good leader is full of caution.

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<sup>8</sup> Leonard Sweet, *AquaChurch 2.0, Piloting Your Church in Today’s Fluid Culture* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook), 56.

<sup>9</sup> Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse*, 51.

This the way to keep a country (church/community) and an army (congregation) intact.”<sup>10</sup>

Most of all, the church leader has to create space enough for all involved to take something from the journey of growing up and out after each conflict is extinguished.

Leaving a legacy and making an impact on a community or the members of a church group, the leaders must openly give a lot of themselves on this particular journey. In the following pages, discussion on the role of the leader’s legacy and the impact it has on the laity’s resilience, esteem, and fortitude establishing the need for change and a break from the current role used by the pastorate.

Fellowship is a unique sense of internal unity which are acts openly displayed through outward expression. All fellowship is a central catalyst of the Christian life. Believers are to come together in love, faith, and encouragement. It is the essence of *koinonia* (fellowship). This essay will present the rhetorical strategies of growing the leadership in the church body and offer the dynamics of abandoning the “Corporate Model” where the dynamics of growth developed through the principles of parenting a child and shepherding a flock. Though it may seem out of bounds, the business model does not fit into the relationships of the leader and the congregant.<sup>11</sup>

The ideals of the corporate world fall short of being useful when it comes to open communication between pastor and laity and then congregant. The pastor-C.E.O. seeks results and not reconciliation. This posture can create great programs, but not future leaders to replace the current pastor with the heart of Christ as their first choice.

Two goals a leader utilizes to grow volunteers and laity to gain; Self-Esteem and Self-Discipline:

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<sup>10</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Mineola, NY: Filiquarian Publishing 2006), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Content Team, “Business Ethics Training,” August 2016, accessed October 25, 2016, <http://www.nyse.com/governance/learning-solutions>.

- People who like and appreciate who they are will develop self-discipline as a favor to themselves.
- People who value themselves use three communication methods to interact with others throughout their days.<sup>12</sup>

They tend to apply the goal setting techniques: One Minute Goals, One Minute Praising, and One Minute Reprimands. In short order, they do not spend a great deal of time dwelling on any one issue. They seek solutions based on their growing Self-Esteem and Self-Discipline.

The Corporate Church Model does not offer an open-air agenda to building relationships through fellowship and discipleship, which can grow the individual to become an operational leader of family, community, and church. The change from the postmodern church in my belief will be a return to the Apostolic model; becoming the guiding force of hope to those who do not understand the priorities of seeking higher ground in a sinking society. The Corporate Model does not teach reconciliation and recovery from heartache and loss as a quality through leadership/followership. Education of the laity and training the congregant to step around financial hardship are the main distractions in reaching the youth and young adults. In a struggling community, it will be beneficial to show them the light of Christ and all the accomplishments gained after a fellowship with Him, along with other determined believers is set in place.

In Robert Jewett's book, *Shame Factor*, the terms of shaping and molding the lives of the congregation, are embedded in the actions used by the leaders in their

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Blanchard, *Putting the One Minute Manager to Work* (New York: The Berkley Book Group, 1988), 43.

theology. Their attempts to support the need for a rational and open relationship with God and then showing the areas of happiness, identity, self-worth and dignity can mature.<sup>13</sup>

Finding common ground between the leaders' planned agenda and congregant's daily struggles are the things, which create the space for fear and shame before a conversation on self-esteem and self-discipline have solid footing. The adage states, "Time heals all wounds" cannot be the church model. Healing, reconciliation, and training must take place within a cycle of an Apprenticeship Model. Jesus' Apprenticeship Model designed on a three-year cycle that the Apostles modeled into the Early Church.<sup>14</sup> In this three-year model, one can see the hands-on, open-air approach sets the foundation for growth and healing from shameful life events which cultivated the apprentice and solidified the leader as the parent, the shepherd, and the pastor. Corporate Modeling is the activity of creating firm business processes and models where the current process toward business growth can be measured, analyzed, or improved to ensure a limitation on negative-outside dynamics interfering with business productivity. The Apprenticeship Model designed by Jesus takes into account those negative-outside factors and uses them as a catalyst for interpretation and increase for personal growth and prosperity.

Leaders in today's church model regularly use an Apprenticeship Model with a cyclic pattern of three to five years; with the fourth and fifth years dedicated to a reach one – teach one pattern. The fourth and fifth year is the African Model of Each One – Teach One. The idea of small groups does not qualify as a leadership model. Estimations

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Jewett, *The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 100-103.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Hartog, *The Contemporary Church and the Early Church: Case Studies in Resourcement* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 27-29.

of that 60% of the people associated with the small group setting, do not have the aspirations, or set qualities to become leaders in the church. They are stronger disciples and are equipped in performing the African Model pushing the youth and young adults to grow in their talents and calling for church ministry and community growth.

Hartog provides the following discussion, which gives credence to my belief of returning to the Apostolic Church Model:

- Allegiance – the status of the Christian is “to be in the world, but not of the world.” Who one is does not necessitate validation from society, as it shows in the association they ascribe.
- Familial – the connection between believers is constant and pliable through destructive situations and circumstances.
- Missionary – the uneducated, unsophisticated laymen are more active in sharing the Gospel and the purpose found in belonging to the church because the message and plan are resonating on various levels in their daily lives.<sup>15</sup>

The images carried through the minds of the congregant and laity seeking to display the voice of the Gospel message, face what Lewis and Amini define as Solitary Confinement. They describe a need for personal filters being understood and overcome by the discussions and lessons created by those in leadership. They further explain anything given in the way of information or education direction must contain a strong element of emotional relevance. It also sets patterns of social conventions open enough to classify

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 29-31.

“community tribal speak” and “community taboos” where the church and leadership are concerned.<sup>16</sup>

The leader’s/pastor’s agenda in the above-listed terms should transition to bi-vocational. In no short movement, this parent-type must create an area where the definitions are rewritten to actively engage those who are unable to apprehend change and growth. The agenda is to grant liberation and freedom to those who have aspirations to ascribe to the leader’s example.

Allegiance in today’s terms means advocating one specific church building as the rightful heirs to understanding the Gospel Story and the membership to this one locale sets one into a select status in the community. In these terms, the leader/pastor has taken on an image that is akin CEO or president; his word and rule is final.

Familial can suggest the stark differences displayed in the Household Codes of the Colossians and the isolationist-feel associated with the megachurch or arena church. The connection only exists when services are in full bloom and the drive to create disciples is momentary.

Missionary being equated with a journey overseas and having limitations to financial support offered by the church. The mission of the American church finds itself lacking in taking control of the “ripe fields” within its borders, thus leaving orphaned and homeless in the wake of globalization.

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis Thomas, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A Generational Theory of Love* (New York: Random, 2000), 54-55.



### **The Grass Looks, What?**

The following paragraphs will discuss the motivations for the creation of a move to the Pastor-Parent leadership style. Exemplified over years of inaction by several mega-church pastors versus those of “store-front” and small church pastors during several natural disasters, it is evident the heart issue of the community is not on the top of the list. The latter reached were recorded giving out personal space to victims of the disasters, while the first held news conferences to discuss a need to protect their business investments in the building on the campuses. The personal investment given in blood is the foundation presented as a call for the Pastor-Parent leadership style to be accepted. I ascribe to this leadership style because of a belief that a person is grown from the heart long before maturation reaches the cognitive stage.

And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded. And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the Lord, that was before the porch of the Lord. II Chronicles 15:1-8 KJV

The substance of this dissertation is directly taken from the Apostle Leadership Model set in the example of Jesus’ ministry. And the Household Codes discussed by the Apostle Paul (Colossians 3:18 - 4:1, Ephesians 5:22 - 6:9, I Timothy 2:9 - 15, Titus 2:2 - 10, I Peter 2:13 - 3:7). The interpretation is discussed in later sections provide details as to the

directions taken in the development of patterns to create the Pastor-Parent. In a vast difference, the Pastor-C.E.O. to the Apostolic Model, its core has a greater percentage of its drive set on productivity and capital. Discovered in a Skyped Roundtable Discussion with several pastors, the conversation pushed buttons on personal cues along emotional ties to the leadership styles that were the center focus of this dissertation. It is as if one has gotten to the fence described in Proverbs 24 and lost hope in restoring all the beauty that once was there.

As a group of church leaders, we need to move away from the concept of right and wrong, better and worse, in finding ways to do church. Different styles will produce different results. Until we come up with a reliable and valid way to measure spiritual development (probably never), we have no way to know which style is better.<sup>17</sup> Pastor Dan Ward, The Crossings Church

The area of concentration is toward the Pastor-Parent leadership style. It is believed lasting effects from experiencing and being train/taught in this model will be orally passed down through familial generations.

Pastoral work is concerned with the Gospel of God's redemption in, though, and as Christ Jesus. Pastoral work by definition connects the Gospel Story, that is, the truths and realities of God's saving economy, with actual lives and situations of the people. In other words, pastoral work is at tall points guided by biblical and theological perspectives, and these biblical perspectives, properly rooted in the Gospel of Salvation are discovered to be inherently pastoral.<sup>18</sup>

Wong's statement above provides credence in the undertaking to voice the need for a return to the model created by Christ and suggested in this the pages of this dissertation. As in Dan Ward's lean toward the Pastor-CEO style, displays the notion some in leadership have a keen desire to view immediate results and equate them to spiritual growth. The question that arises from Ward's suggestion, "we need to move away from

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<sup>17</sup> Kevin Wade, Wade's Pastoral Round Table. Skype Meeting held on February 28, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Wong Sang Lee, *Pastoral Leadership: A Case Study, Including Reference to John Chrysostom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 8-10.

the concept of right and wrong, better and worse, in finding ways to do church” is from an ideology based in productivity. Wong underlines the importance of unity and harmony in the pastoral leadership role. By contrast he acknowledges the five elemental classes needed in reaching harmony and unity from the pastor, laity and the church family by having detailed contact between the church family and laity.<sup>19</sup>

In the story example on the previous pages, the conversations were autocratic. Those listening to the words of that pastor had no hope of gaining any insightful instructions. The conversational tone of this dissertation is different from others and is not intended to cause any level of alienation. Opportunity for discourse around the need for the church to return to the Apostolic Model is open. Questions concerning societal created limitations on what leadership style to be central to the Gospel Story are answered if each party is willing to listen to all sides before remaining settled on the style they have previously ascribed. These details of these societal limitations on the church will be assessed in following chapters. In other words, the doors are open to discussing any variation currently used and why the reader feels one or a combination in a specific area of leadership is advantageous than the Apostolic Model.

I disagree with Dan a little, though I think fundamentally we'd agree. I do think there are wrong ways to lead a church—specifically, self-centric ways that uphold the pastor over and above the Spirit. We work for God and as such nurture his people. I think all too often pastors make the mistake of thinking the church serves the needs of the pastor. Simply put, as long as pastors are listening to the Spirit, I think any model can work.<sup>20</sup> Pastor Mathew Wimer, Springfield Faith Center

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 134-135.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin Wade, Wade's Pastoral Round Table, Skype Meeting held on February 28, 2018.

The leadership table above provides the consideration used choosing for the Pastor-Parent style of leadership over that of the CEO-style church leadership. The Pastor-Parent is based in the Apostolic Model and intertwined with spiritual/morals of the Household Codes. One can surmise it has been created on a matter of the heart. An issue of the heart is both spiritual with the church family and physically emotional with the

	Definition	Component of Empowerment	Component of Edification	Heart Reconciliation
Leadership Style				
Lassiere-Faire	Hands-off leadership. Allows group members to make the decisions	Leaders have little personal influence	Provides the least possible guidance to subordinates.	None
Democratic	Members of the group take a more participative role in decision making	Provides an empowered group	Provides encouragement to be a shared experience	Only on a group related level
Free Rein	Members function on own and prove their worth through accomplishments.	No specific supervisory criteria offered	Provides no guidance or encouragement	None
Autocratic	All decisions and achievements are given to the leader	Provides strong motivation and satisfaction to the leader	Provides low moral support and allows conflicts among subordinates	None

congregant. Investigation of several leadership styles, the answer attained from the table above is Pastor-Parent. Again, the Apostolic Model has its strength in intertwined in the details listed for the family members within Household Codes. Within both, no one is subservient to the other. Each role listed in the Household Codes has a distinct job to accomplish to be successful while shoring up the others in the church family (exampled in Colossians 3:18 - 4:1, and Ephesians 5:22 - 6:9).

The correlation between the Apostolic Model and the Household Codes are solid and connected in the spiritual formation (internal) that flows through and into the cognitive/physical growth (external) of each individual. The discovery is based on simplification and understanding that any component of a leadership model has its fibers

congealed by a distinct moral code of conduct. When an objective look is on Household Codes, one can see the Apostle Paul interjects the need for personal investment at all levels of the family, and the employee (slave).

I don't think either of those describes how Jesus led the disciples. But if we look into the purpose of those 2 roles: a CEO grows the organization, while a parent grows the individual. Some people care more about expanding the building and filling all the seats. Others care more about expanding and filling the spiritual lives of the people who are already there.<sup>21</sup> Pastor Sarah Forti, Lebanon United Methodist Church

In the book, *Feed My Sheep, Lead My Sheep*, the author details the foundation of the Apostolic Model; being empathic in all things about the church family and small group. The structure provided in this book supports the efforts held in my dissertation. He offers the following insights:

Small groups of people within larger groups of people tend to gather or congregate based on interests or roles and functions and set themselves apart from the rest. Eventually these groupings of people collect other groups of people around them and develop sub-cultures and sub-structures that support their reason for being. This is the way groups grow. If the leaders of groups do not set the tone and get out and mingle among *The Whole* of the group, then the members of the group are less likely to do the same. People tend to settle into what is familiar and comfortable. This habit of “walking around” is one of those practices that will not naturally present itself. It takes time and a disciplined commitment. . . . . What this tells us, as leaders, is that we need to be intentional about it and consistent.<sup>22</sup>

Personal desires, morals, and ethics have varying levels of each component of the leadership styles previously discussed. When it comes to the Apostolic Model, the kenosis is evident in the standards of mentoring and shepherding of the Pastor-Parent leadership style. The best example to increase real life relevance is the artifact associated with this dissertation. It will allow the church leader, laity, and church family to discover areas of discussion that will enhance their experiences within the Apostolic Model.

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<sup>21</sup> Kevin Wade, Wade's Pastoral Round Table, Skype Meeting held on February 28, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Medland Johnson and N. Thomas, *Feed My Sheep, Lead My Sheep: A Handbook of Leadership Formation for Individuals and Groups* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 127-128.

Webster Wallace stated in the book, *Christ Will Build His Church*, “For someone to aspire to become a pastor, he (she) has to have the burden put upon him (her) by God. This desire must come from God, because we are not able to do so in and of ourselves”<sup>23</sup> furnishes the substance behind the Christian character the leader in the church seek to qualify their callings.

I do understand that there will be considerable pushback on this method, and the conversation will lean to “Who is right?” or “Who should be called to set the standard?” The answer to both has always been Christ Jesus. The “Gray Area” in discussing the church leadership issue is the church finds itself focusing on the world for leadership; while only seeing Christ’s example of leadership in the peripherals.

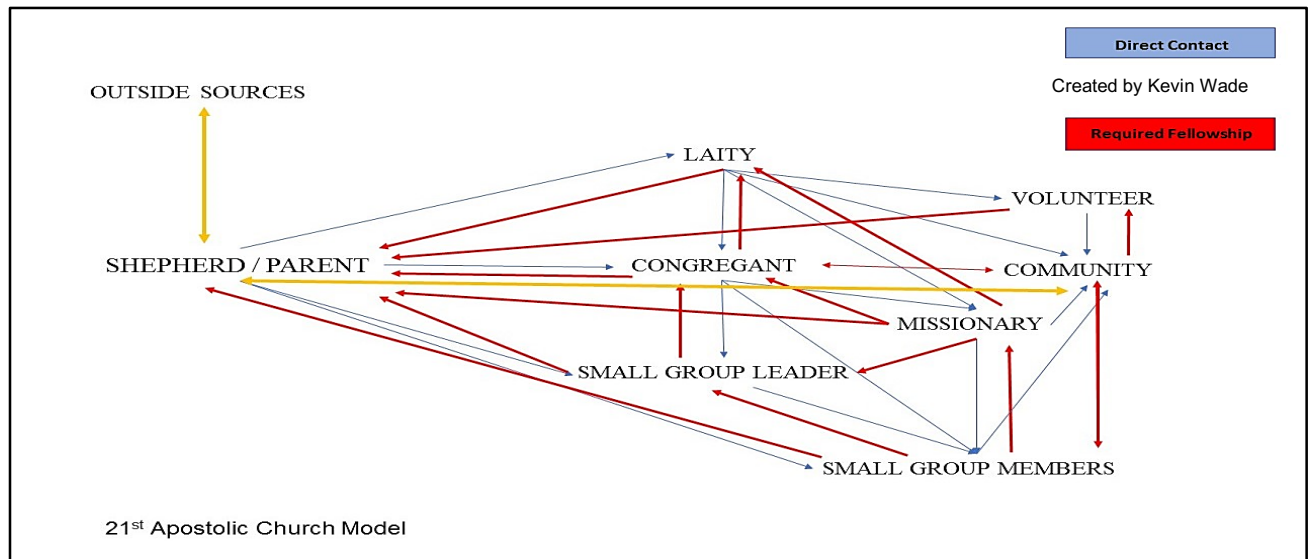
### **Press On**

The charge of the pastor and leaders of the church is to be an advocate for missions. The support of the mission of spreading the Gospel should fully support the actions resembling a parent-child or shepherd to flock relationship. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, Ignatius of Antioch declared that all fellow laborers in the ministry should, “Press on in your course and exhort all men, that they may become saved and changed by the Gospel story.”<sup>24</sup> Jesus’ days on the earth transformed the image of the cross from a weapon of terror and symbol of defeat, used to oppress and control, into an image of God’s reign over the powers of the world. The cross is converted into a symbol that exposes the wickedness of mankind. Jesus spoke defiantly about the cross not being a path to success,

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<sup>23</sup> H. Wallace Webster, *Christ Will Build His Church: But What is My Role?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 65.

<sup>24</sup> Edward L Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 31-37.



but and lifelong agenda of entirely trusting God.<sup>25</sup> The transformation at the cross is the area where the pastor-parent is to stand in, model and begin scheduling the life's journey for his replacement and the congregation.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Apostolic Church Model below is an elliptical journey for the pastor/leader with two external components as the continual catalyst for church growth while leaving the door open for those who inspire to become leaders.

The graph I constructed below represents an active Apostolic Model.

The liberation within this model patterns the freedom of self and the emotional relevance needed to solidify the Household Code. To affirm that liberation is an expression of the image of God is not only who God is but also who we are and who the people in the congregation and community are. Liberation is knowledge of self; it is a vocation to affirm who we are fashioned to become.<sup>26</sup> The central focus on the rollback of the attributes of the office of pastor is a direct move on viewing and then changing the experiences of shame within the life of the congregation, which is the center of the

<sup>25</sup> Luke Kammrath, *Follow Me: The Way of Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 112.

<sup>26</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 134-135.

Apostolic Model above. It is a needed adjustment when looking at the relationship between the pastor and the laity and how their approach is to the congregation (church family).

Fundamental to interpreting the relationship between the Apostles and their disciples, and to the churches they founded are metaphors and analogies drawn from family life. Not surprising, for it is the primary language for the relationship between God and his people. Just as God is viewed as “Father” and believers as “children,” so Paul describes himself as a “father” to his “offspring” in the faith (voiced in 1 Corinthians 4:14–15; 2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:11). None of this should be viewed as a patriarchal, even purely paternal, affair but as a parental one. Paul also speaks of himself as a “mother” who suffers labor pains (Gal 4:19) and as a nurse who cares for her charges (1 Thessalonians 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 3:2).<sup>27</sup> Instructions to Timothy in the Pastorals (1 Tim 5:2) retain this Pauline emphasis.

Though this cluster of metaphors emphasizes the affectionate bond between Paul and his converts, we should not psychologize this as we tend to do in speaking of families today, nor fail to remember the greater influence fathers then had upon their children. Involvement on this level allows them a considerable degree of autonomy. In the best-listed example, the Apostle Paul does not treat authority, then, as something official or sacral. He views it primarily in relational and functional terms. This does not entail a childlike dependency of the churches upon Paul. He urged them to “grow up” in Christ and become adults in the faith (I Corinthians 14:20).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> R. Banks, *Church Order and Government: In Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 133.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.



The definitions below are some barriers I have discovered which can cause the pastor-C.E.O. to become less applicable when it comes to working with the laity, volunteers, and the congregation. They are the labels displayed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Apostolic model on the previous page. Access and visibility shown by through the training of Jesus toward His disciples should be the aim for the pastor/leader who chooses to pick up the program offered at the end of this dissertation.

### OUTSIDE SOURCES

Direct Contact - is the area where some pastors remove themselves from open conversations and rely on staff to deal with everyday situations. I believe that limiting the exchange and the emotional connection may develop damaging outcomes in the growth potential of each member of the church family.

Outside Sources – the potential growth of the church and its membership relies on how connected the pastor is to the community and the local social happenings and gatherings. The pastor, on most occasions, must remain apolitical when it comes to teaching and preaching. There should be an understanding given to when outside information is to be delivered and how it corresponds to the Gospel Story, how the congregants are to face upcoming challenges from political and social attacks, and how the pastor and staff are the support system needed by each member. In short, the pastor should possess a connection, but not connected in such a way he or she loses their focus on the calling of shepherding a flock into a higher standard of spiritual living.

### DIRECT CONTACT

Required Fellowship – this portion of the pastor having some issues that result failures in some programs is the miscommunications between the pastor, laity, and missionaries. Communication is the foundation of fellowship, spiritual formation, and it allows the development of trust on various levels.

Taking a serious investment, the congregant must welcome the belief and the leadership's persuasion of the investing in self-esteem building and the growth of identity. They must also see value and worth in their participation in the church and community. The leader becomes involved in all portions of growth. Jewett discusses Wesley's therapeutic model as a doorway to allow the relationship with God and the benefits of that relationship for happiness and healing from guilt and shame.<sup>29</sup> Within the model displayed in this paper and the contemporary sense of this century, relationships are the most important source of all healing and fostering hope and happiness in the church.<sup>30</sup>

**REQUIRED FELLOWSHIP**

In the dialectic of freedom and the oppressiveness of shame and hurt in regards to political praxis, a theological view of liberation emerges.<sup>31</sup> The leader/pastor is now taxed to generate a pattern which allows for a different model of self to emerge. Jewett and Cone's books create open discussions on the role of the church, the congregant, the knowledge of SELF and how open interaction stifled by an oppressive society. The picture of *SELF*- has a transition of one filled with self-admiration and narcissism. Community and the need to model any portion of the Household Codes are non-existent.

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<sup>29</sup> Jewett, *The Shame Factor*, 106-108.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 135.

The Apostolic Model presented shows the middle catalysts as being the Parent/Shepherd, Congregation, and Community. They represent the need for social intercourse, a community filled with hope and social support groups which are actively pursuing growth from an outside source for information and the need to fulfill the altruistic call in life. Social intercourse is the defining and needed movements of verbal and emotional interactions between individuals bonding in fellowship.

### **Emboldened Priorities**

A message, which speaks to the issues of liberation, acceptance, and freedom and gives insight into where a person in need may find validation is Matthew 3:16-17: “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, the heavens opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from Heaven said, ‘this is my son, whom I love; with him I am well-pleased.’”<sup>32</sup> The importance of parental validation and verbally accepting their child’s achievements speak volumes in the areas of self-esteem and self-worth. The transitions offered by the leader must mirror the actions of the father to the son in the above verse to solidify the significant gestures required in creating a space where all involved in the ministry can ascribe to the pastor’s vision and scheduling.

1. Relationship – direct, open communication and ownership sheds light on the aspect of family.
2. Loyalty and Affection – displays of faithful actions will generate the same actions in return.

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<sup>32</sup> Mark E. Strong, *Church of the Fatherless* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. 2012), 154-155.

3. Delight / Joy – genuine happiness from any successes can attribute to the healing process and solidify the fellowship among the church family.

As a matter of being bi-vocational, the leader/pastor creates the space in which the congregant can find support and refuge in the relationship and the building used as a sanctuary. The leader/pastor has to step out of his role as facilitator and become a member of the change process. Support of others is vitally important. The congregant cannot feel that they are alone in their quest to leave the anchors of pain, but find encouragement in knowing that the pastor is not above the pangs of life. In some instances, the men and women of the congregation need others in the mission, small group, congregation, and laity to aid them in unraveling the layers of hurt and pain. Encouraging or providing avenues through the Apostolic Model previously presented can aid in the areas of non-growth.<sup>33</sup>

In Acts 3:1-10, describes one of the first miracles from the Early Church's foundation. Peter and John are going to the temple to pray, and they come to the gate called Beautiful, where a beggar, lame from birth, asks for alms. Peter, telling him to look at them, confesses he has no money, but what he has he will give. Then Peter commands, "In the name of Jesus Christ, walk." He gives him a helping hand, and the man leaps up, healed. Then walking and leaping and praising God, he accompanies them into the temple. This brief encounter shows how one who is not a church official can heal after a vision and be commissioned by the leadership of Christ Jesus. The healing is connected to the understanding of limitations and desires imposed by outside sources. The limitations were spiritual and physical, while the latter being placed from societal

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<sup>33</sup> Strong, *Church of the Fatherless*, 157.

stereotypes. The spiritual limitations created by the blind man who was broken by the tags placed on him from birth.<sup>34</sup>

The corporate church model, if established in the Early Church could not have reached out to the young man at the gate, and not been as transformative as the Apostolic Model used as the model proposed in this paper. There is a family element in which Peter took an empathic stance in his approach to this young man. The mission taught by Jesus was to reach out and lift up.

One of the last modern movement in the American church was Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism was formed in an era of rapid social changes and notable attitudinal shifts, the church has always been challenged to investigate and express its self-understanding in a fashion that is faithful to the tradition of the Pentecostal movement. To stay relevant, the Pentecostal, Baptist, and Evangelical churches should carefully receive insight from the ingenuity and strategy of some secular disciplines. The Pentecostal ecclesiology by any stretch of the definition is missional. The mantra of missional ecclesiology is that without a mission, a church (any church) is not a church. In most areas of 21<sup>st</sup> Century church, there is a lost connection to the theological body in regards to mission and purpose.<sup>35</sup>

A return to the Early Church model would mean a total shift from the commercialization of the body and an open move to accepting failure and focusing on the how's and why's churches are closing, and Millennials are leaving and not returning.

Jesus' ministry was the embrace of the marginalized of society and the coming of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:40-45 and Mark 5:1-20). This was good news for those who had been shunned by some in society but welcomed in the Early Church.<sup>36</sup> The loss of the missional component has been the Achilles heel in sustainable and the downfall of congregational size in U.S. churches. Whereas, the previously proposed Apostolic model

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<sup>34</sup> Edward L. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 18-20.

<sup>35</sup> David Pafford, *The Last Disciple* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 2-5.

<sup>36</sup> Strange, *Children in the Early Church* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 1996), 48.

clarifies the role of the pastor/leader into parent and shepherd falls in line with Jesus' three-year' apprenticeship example. The widest known capitol to any business or any church is the people. If the organizer does not adequately nurture their people, they eventually will lose hope and leave.

Relating the church to the world is the base element of any forward-thinking pastor when the agenda is to move from the corporate model. The breakdown falls into four categories of Christ-related strategies:

- Christ and Culture in Conflict – breaking traditions in the church to meet people where they are and offer them hope.
- Christ Accommodating Culture – the approach is to adapt the message of the church to current cultural conditions and make the Gospel relevant.<sup>37</sup>
- Christ Transforming Culture – a belief which states only using God's word can change the societal flow, political stance and family dynamic.
- Christ and Culture in Tension – the move of the church to embrace the tensions from the secular and religious and have them work in creative ways to resolve the failures in connecting, but allowing the Gospel to override the other.<sup>38</sup>

The base issue in the corporate church model is the lack of a right-hand strategy to offer a kingdom-centered idea of grace. Instead, the schedule is to move to the next big thing and not shore up those who are still marginalized in the community and hurting from broken and dying relationships. This strategy is where the concept of the parent/shepherd comes

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<sup>37</sup> Russ Moulds, *A Teacher of the Church: Theology, Formation, and the Practice for the Ministry of Teaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 34-36.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-36.

to fruition. The church family and the means of working with Christ Strategies and resolving the tensions any congregant may face when leaving one dynamic and being introduced to the other, is the ability to teach, love and disciple. The ministry must be natural and peculiar when the object is to increase the number of people being adopted into the family. The descriptions associated with a parent or shepherd illustrates the character traits of a person who has an open nature for those under their care. This usually means the parent will love on those in their children's circle of influence and seek ways to create those white spaces for them to join in with familial fellowship (Social Intercourse). The shepherd's role is that of protector and provider. The nature of the shepherd is to display a constant level of love that will allow for right and left-hand treatments of those in the flock.

### **Mode of Conflict**

The consummate leader cultivates the moral law, and strictly adheres to method and discipline; thus it is in his power to control success.<sup>39</sup> The flow of this paper is to search out and understand the basic principles of building and sustaining a team of individuals in the congregation, who can become a dynamic team and understand the processes required to gift the church/community with beneficial and long lasting avenues toward self-improvement. The battle for the community's growth and the fruitful, forward movement of the congregation must be set in the church leader's train of thought as being winnable and always on the cusp of success. In this, the church leader and the leadership group never fatigues of wanting to work and put "some skin in the game" for the pending victory. Those things projected by the leader through non-verbal

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<sup>39</sup> Tzu, *The Art of War*, 18.

communication (body language) can either set the congregation on fire when dealing with conflict and challenges or make the church leader's time there; short and unbelievable.

If the leader/pastor has a focus on building a strong leadership team, then that leader must first work toward determining the cause of the conflict. In every instance, there must be an active determination to avoid "the blame game". Focus on clarifying the goal, resolving the conflict and moving the team toward a viable solution in the shortest time frame allowable to ensure a concrete foundation after the current leadership has left.<sup>40</sup>

Crashing the mode will consist of removing or slowing the following:

- Ineffective communication – talking about issues which are off-topic
- Personality clashes – allowing things to become and remain personal
- Adversarial approaches to the power struggle – not identifying the "BOSS"

Intentionality is critical. Not that the discussion will be about faith and faith alone, but the team will be just connecting and talking about life. Some people can be direct; others are more relationally soft in their communication. As Comer discusses in his dissertation, there are three lines of spiritual dialogue which must be addressed to calm the growth in the areas of conflict.

1. Story-Line – have the team share personal stories.
2. Learning-Line – make the spiritual conversation or study an open invitation.
3. Question-Line – leave time open to ask and explore all questions offered.

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<sup>40</sup> Elaine McCain, "Conflict Issues and Team Based Resolutions," interview by Kevin Wade, March 3, 2016.



To fulfill any of the line items, the leader has to be open enough and show true interest in all things discussed in order to allow the seeds of trust to grow in order to crash the mode of the growing conflict.<sup>41</sup>

The processes of conflict resolution begins with by the entire leadership team, or the members present. The rules of crashing the mode must have the open and clear agreement that the frustrations dealt with in the meeting may not be discussed outside the group setting. Once group trust is established, the boundaries have to be slightly rigid and defined so the leadership can be true leaders and not allow any forms of dissent and confrontation to develop in the congregation and those who are not members of the body.

The following six steps should have a set completion date of a few weeks to two months; a short amount of time that will allow the members of the leadership team to ingest the stages required for reconciliation and resolution.

- Determine the actual problem or disagreement
- Define the layers of the problems
- Define and clarify what the members understand concerning the issue
- Define and generate mutual options
- Determine and implement a viable solution as a group
- Review and discuss the results within 30 days

“Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”

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<sup>41</sup> Gary Cormer, *First Steps Discipleship Training: Turning Newer Believers into Missional Disciples, Vol. 2* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014).

In war, let your great objectives be victory, not lengthy campaigns. Thus it may be known that the leader of the armies is an arbiter of the people's fate, the man on whom it depends whether the nation shall be in peace or peril.<sup>42</sup> There was a siege taking place in the city during the time John the Baptist preached and baptized. People wanted to get any portion of Heaven they could, and many desired it as a pirate having made landfall and seeing the treasure of their desire. If the pastor-C.E.O. is to be viable in the push of growing a spiritual congregation, the treasure cannot remain programs, musical shows, and dynamic preachments. This pastor/leader has to offer that treasure John the Baptist spoke of, and Jesus delivered.

The central point for the discipline of simplicity is to acknowledge that the tasks before the leadership team have defined terms members can both understand and immediately implement. In Matthew 6:33-34, Jesus tells his disciples to "Seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness" before accomplishing anything else. In this, the very simplistic terms have been established and the outliers cannot be changed once the terms for moving forward is the actual event. The motif of "competition" has to be thrown out, and a return to the Gospel Story picked up, and offered as that treasure and catalyst to rebuild the fence and fields destroyed by the need to match a business model and meet societal expectations of what Christianity is.

The leader and the leadership team must be made aware of the expectation of the group, what each member is required to bring to the table and how they must be open to learn and accept the changes they will face during the life-cycle of the team/group. The stages of the group are as follows:

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<sup>42</sup> Tzu, *The Art of War*, 23.

- Forming – members become acquainted with one another
- Storming – members of the group jockey for position and roles
- Norming – rapport, acceptance, and trust take shape
- Performing – purpose of the group is acceptance and tasks are completed
- Adjourning – end of the group, but in this discussion, the team has no set end

During the meeting, the leader has to be remindful of the message given within the conflict resolution discussions, and grow avenues of in which all parts of the meeting become proverbial learning tools for the leadership team that will flow out to the congregation through discipleship. What takes place in the group as positives will spill out into the congregation. People are social animals and will discuss all positive things they have learned in their leadership sessions. Not as an attack on the leader, but in admiration of the group and their understanding the reasons behind the settling of the conflicts or issues that may arise.

### **Unity and Identity**

In his dissertation, Peter Tie states, “Theologically, the doctrine of universal priesthood has to be understood by all as being set in Christ Jesus. The direct access to God has to be understood as being something that Christ Jesus does alone and no member of the group can ascend this concept. Societal concepts of belief have misidentified the role of the leader in something more important than what it truly is. The leader must define his/her role and not allow the boundaries to waver at any time, this will only open the doors to total failure of the team and the leader’s image. The identity of the leader and the group must be a mirror image of Christ Jesus and not changed based on doctrinal

or societal descriptions for personal gain”.<sup>43</sup> James Cone states in the lines of the identification of the body of the church in the lines of appropriate thinking, “Biblical thinking is liberated thought, i.e., thinking that is not entrapped by social categories of the dominant culture. To think biblically is to think in the light of the liberating interests of the oppressed. Any other starting point is a contradiction of the social a priori of Holy Scriptures”.<sup>44</sup>

Self-esteem is defined as confidence in one’s own ability, self-respect, and self-worth. In a group setting, the function of self-esteem takes on a larger context, and adds to the emotional connections offered in the leadership group. In simpler terms, the human animal craves social intercourse on varying levels. Being in proximity of others with like-minded natures, goals and objectives, the leader of the group and ministry has a unique opportunity in controlling the fate of each individual, the group-think and how quickly the group can enter into a state of peace or fall into a perilous cycle of unanswered issues and unconquered problems.

Mixed within the group-think is the idea of liberation which comes from conquering those challenges faced in the community and the church body. In this sense, liberation is not a human possession, but a divine gift of freedom to those who struggle in faith against violence and oppression. Liberation is not an object, but the project of freedom wherein the oppressed realize that their fight for freedom is a divine right of creation.<sup>45</sup> The moment the leader decides to create open pathways of discussion and lessons designed to edify the leadership and then the congregation is that moment the

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Tie, *Restore, Unity, Recover Identity, Refine Orthopraxy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 88.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

conflicts become a little more than personal. The understanding and struggle to find solid footing for the church body is the moment the conflicts cease to take control of the worship, the education, the fellowship and the levels of communications are strengthened.

“Goals begin behaviors; while consequences maintain behaviors.”<sup>46</sup> In the book, *The One Minute Manager*, Blanchard offers up non-conflicting direction for leaders to adhere to the timeliness of dealing with conflict and opening the door for better communication to take place between the leader and the members of the group. Each has to be given chances to make needed changes in personal behaviors and work choices.

*The Art of War* by Sun Tsu, teaches us to depend not on the probability of the enemy (conflict) is not coming, but on our readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather seen as a truth that positioning is incontestable. There are several dangerous faults which may affect the leader:

- Recklessness – which leads to destructive behaviors in the group
- Cowardice – which leads to issues overtaking the membership and leadership
- Hasty tempers – which are a result of provoked insults
- Delicacy of honor – which is sensitive to shame and vulnerability
- Over-solicitude – which is carrying the burdens which belong to the group<sup>47</sup>

Then the question arises, “How does the leader focus the entire intent of doing a good job and achieving optimal performances from the group if the level of objectiveness is not from a mindset of remaining impersonal on some level?”

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<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Blanchard, *The One Minute Manager* (New York: The Berkley Book Group, 1983), 15.

<sup>47</sup> Tzu, *The Art of War*, 44.

Self-esteem and self-efficacy in this context, work hand in hand when discussing the unity and identity of the group. Conflicts will rise, but it is the cycle of the group in which allows the transitions through the life cycle of the group: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. Cycle steps three through five is the area in which the higher functioning groups survive. That is if the leader is a constant engager of the terms of the group and the goals set during the selection period. “People who produce good results, feel good about themselves.”<sup>48</sup>

In his book, *Putting the One Minute Manager to Work*, Blanchard exposes the requirement of the leaders to have some level of praise for all those members of the group and then to look in the mirror and pat themselves on the back. A little praise will allow the foundations of unity and acceptance to remain strong during those transitioning times when group members cycle out of the church or out of the leadership committee.

In seeking an upward pattern in the unity of the group, the idea of change has to be discussed and accepted by each member of the leadership team. Change is that animal that everyone knows they can pat and rub, but never wants to hold and get too acquainted with. The delta is the mathematical symbol for difference. To some members of the group, change does not add unity to the group and questions remain. The difference between what is made up about the experiences and the truth within the group when facing the process of a different type of change is where the meaning and wisdom of the experience gets its life.<sup>49</sup> The group moves from storming to norming – that is finding cohesiveness and mutual trust and a sense of belonging amongst the members.

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<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Blanchard, *Putting the One Minute Manager to Work* (New York: The Berkley Book Group, 1988), 19.

<sup>49</sup> Brene Brown, *Rising Strong: The Reckoning, The Rumble, The Revolution* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 135.

Mentioned in the earlier paragraphs were the issues of five dangerous faults which can plague the leader who, by Sun Tzu's definition, is unsure of himself in the role of commander or leader. In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Proverbs the writer states the following, "Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not.....Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding". The stronger of the five listed which can cause the greater divide in the leadership is that of Recklessness and Cowardice. Both items derive their strength from a lack of understanding and the ability to be settled in one's position in the church family. Lack of understanding of the power within the role of leader, a non-understanding of the scope of being an unspoken mentor to the leadership team and a wavering belief in themselves allows for the cowardice and recklessness to flow unchecked. Settling on the idea that the leader is ill-prepared for the role or the magnitude of the conflict is a storm that has not been faced. In either case, a leader in facing the first two issues on this list has to be well-read and find the desire to seek out varying areas for the growth and progress of the leadership team and church.

### **Purpose and Intent**

The Whiteboard is an article in this world which can become a leader's best tool. People tend to pay more attention to the things they can visualize and write down. The smooth voice and powerful message can and will only go so far. It is the plan of attack and the directions given in written form will allow the group to walk past many conflicts. The idea of having an agenda in hand when the group members arrive home will open doors to dialogue needed for the wrap up of the discussion and rethink of the plans in the weeks that follow the initial meeting.

“Do not just do something; sit there!”<sup>50</sup> There are two areas in listening. Listening to reply or listening to learn. In the previous paragraphs, the discussion focusing on the areas of handling the conflict, and preparing the leadership team to overcome the stresses of said conflict, and the paradigms in the group becoming a functioning unit. Blanchard gives directions on how the leader should perform in the instances of elevating the group or individual into a self-believing unit with the capabilities to discharge conflicts before they disrupt the cohesion of the laity and church. In one minute, the leader can diffuse most problems and empower members of the team to become the leaders they are supposed to become. Mastering the text of the conflict is this – understanding the meaning of the outliers, the area in which the storm began and all things that were involved in its creation and then explaining and illustrating all that has been learned and previously experienced. The leader must know that the group will not believe the directions or the explanation unless the leader has had some personal knowledge of the topics which caused the conflict. Better stated, the leader must have or have had some “skin in the game” to have overcome the situation.

“Two main goals as a parent are to teach and help my children gain self-esteem and self-discipline.”<sup>51</sup> Feedback is one area most individuals have some quorums and a tool not often used in a productive manner. Blanchard, Sun Tzu, and Cone grant the realization through their descriptions of the mode the leader should crash in clearing up conflicts, developing trust and cohesiveness in the group and growing stronger individuals from each issue.

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<sup>50</sup> Blanchard, *Putting the One Minute Manager to Work*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Blanchard, *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey*, 70.



The liberated persons in the group are the ones who work by taking all they can from the encounter to increase how they see themselves in the scope of all things occurring. While gleaning from the guidance of the leader they develop a relationship with God and the congregation. This can be better stated in the context of the child taking the knowledge and wisdom from their parents and immediately using it in the context of their circle of influence.

There is a belief, in part, that teaching and education with a practical and cultural emphasis is the way into the Christian faith for a majority of people. Put another way; if the people can be raised to a better quality of life, they would embrace their change and embrace their Christian faith.<sup>52</sup> The push or direction of the leadership group and the leader is they have a sense of ownership in the determination which should end the conflict and prepare the group for upcoming challenges. In the homes of most Evangelicals during the Settlement Movement, was a text set in a gold painted frame set over their fireplaces which read, *Thou God Seest Me*. This image still resonates with a sense of duty and responsibility to most who will choose to take on the mantle of leader in the church. Perhaps if this image is given out as a vehicle mirror icon, key chain or framed text the tone of the group and moreover the congregation can see themselves as partakers of the conflict and its ultimate demise.

People in general hate change because they are required to give up or release a great deal of themselves in acceptance of the knowledge gained and the wisdom which must be understood. In the simplest of phrases, “Those who raise the most conflict in the

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<sup>52</sup> Nigel Scotland, *Christianity Outside of the Box: Learning from Those Who Rocked the Boat* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 222-225.

church are those members who actually participate the least.” “We become what we think about”.<sup>53</sup>

Before, during and after each conflict has been discussed, worked through, completed and fully addressed for future issues; it is the duty of the leader to step up and make detailed confirmations to the leadership group and congregation. The challenges which have been overcome and who they have become as a result of having walked through the storm as a family and not just a group of people working together. The change of identity will seal the strength of the leadership team when new challenges arise.

One way to impact those individuals is to follow the examples of Samuel Barnett, who was one of the leaders of the Settlement Movement of the early 1900s. He began to have undergraduates from the local colleges work in the neighborhoods of Whitechapel. This on the job training of sorts, allowed the people to see why the change was needed and understand what their total part would be in the future directions and differences which would avail themselves long after they'd left the Whitechapel area.<sup>54</sup> What are the price for growing the church, community and the individuals into something and someone better over a one-year to three-year time frame?

In some business leadership training sessions, the system to grow employees is The Price System: Pinpoint, Record, Involve, Coach and Evaluate.<sup>55</sup> The answer to the question posed, the price for success takes all that the leader and the leadership group has

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<sup>53</sup> Spencer Johnson, *The One Minute Father* (New York: The Berkley Book Group, 1995), 74-89.

<sup>54</sup> Scotland, *Christianity Outside of the Box: Learning from Those Who Rocked the Boat*, 224.

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Blanchard, *Putting the One Minute Manager to Work* (New York: The Berkley Book Group, 1988), 67-80.

to offer for the stability of the community: time, tears and talent. These steps can be completed when there are not any negative judgments being attached:

- Pinpoint – the process of defining areas of strength and performance
- Record – track all the improvements
- Involve – inform each of improvements, responsibilities and desires
- Coach – realistic goal and strategy setting
- Evaluate – open discussion of all things and given in writing

### **The Book and The Spirit**

In Matthew 6:33 the writer states, “Seek the Kingdom of God and all of its righteousness, then all things will be added to you.” Church leaders have to have the mindset to be open to learning as much as they are able from various areas of society, and then equate those things learned through the Word of God. In his dissertation, Jones makes a befitting statement of the work of Jesus and the disciples,

In John 14:26, Jesus tells his followers that the Holy Spirit will come from the Father in Jesus’ name to teach them everything and to remind them of all that was told to them. The Gospel stories portray Jesus’ disciples as often misunderstanding what Jesus was trying to do. In Seminary, professors often make the statement, “The disciples just didn’t get it!” Jesus knew that they needed the Holy Spirit to help teach us and to constantly remind us of what Jesus had had to do for the world.<sup>56</sup> Vernon Jones

To understand in 20/20 is that Jesus put a great deal into the game to instruct and lead the disciples into realizing where their struggle would be when they faced a world that hated change and brought with them, very personal conflicts that would require extensive sacrifices.

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<sup>56</sup> Vernon T. Jones, *Discipleship: A Lifelong Spiritual Pilgrimage* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2013), 39.

Though the church leader can take a lot from the world, all strife possess an approach from a varied theological/historical level. The first task of using theology is to recognize that truth is not contained in words. Truth can be located in the dynamic of the divine-human encounter in social existence, wherein people recognize the connection between the historical struggle and ultimate reality.<sup>57</sup> Everything which is taking place in the community and the lives of the congregation has to be given the proper explanations as to why it is taking place, how long it has been in existence and the avenues of escape.

Liberation from certain life's pressures varies among the membership of the church and is not based on cultural lines. Some will fight tooth and nail not to be moved. Some will fuss and cuss because their complacency is being challenged; they have to do something. Others will grumble and grunt because the burden causes them to stand and see the community in a different light. To affirm that liberation is an expression of the image of God is to say not only who God is, but also who I am and who my people are. Liberation is knowledge of self; it is a vocation to affirm who I am created to be. Furthermore, it is clear from divine revelation as witnessed in the Holy Scriptures that authentic liberation of self is attainable only in the context of the oppressed community in the struggle of freedom from society's oppressive nature.<sup>58</sup> As the church leader teaches the escape routes through the conflict and offers up patterns of change and explanations as to why the group and congregation are different from most patterns given in mainstream society, the leader has to make sure that his leadership team "gets it."

It is said that imitation is the best form of compliment. But this is not true in the pulpit, or in meeting room #4. If the act of teaching or preaching is truth through

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<sup>57</sup> Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 136-142.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-135.

personality, to proclaim the truth dressed up as some other persona is not to teach good avenues of escape. No teacher will be completely original. All are influenced in some form or fashion by other preachers, pastors, and students. To offer the leadership team a way to grow their self-esteem and self-discipline, the leader has to allow the calling given by the Lord to mature and manifest.<sup>59</sup> Otherwise, offering liberation to a group people struggling to get through each day will be a waste of time on both sides of the issue.

There is a generational gap existing in the community of faith is all too real, and this has created a chasm which cannot be filled within a 20-year time frame. So what is taking place in the Christian community is not a matter of fate, but rests in the lack of stepping outside the box and looking for fresh colors to paint a brighter future. The continual need for the leader to remain open and humble is the opportunity for direct bridge building. The “Selfie Community” is not limited to social media as it once was. It has become the mode in which many tweens, teens, “adult-children”, and adults communicate and desire to be heard and understood. It is a mode of self-expression and a shout to express themselves as an emerging culture within the community.

In this discussion, there are two canvases which require priming for there to be a total picture allowing the community to have a full visual connection. If there is not a clear connection, this closed community will walk away and seek other opportunities to see, rather than hear the Gospel of Christ. Taking the angles of understanding how to provide the correcting information for the disciple, the leader must realize the difference between teaching and learning, when there may be members of the congregation who have decided not to learn in that particular setting, or on that particular day. The

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<sup>59</sup> H.B. Charles Jr., *On Preaching* (Chicago, IL; Moody Publishers, 2014), 54.

disconnection occurs, not because the lesson and information contained are not well delivered, planned out and performed well. The *Disconnect* occurs because there wasn't an adequate buildup of background information, the context delivered did not contain the proper language for the time, or the individuals did not possess the correct belief system to accept the information offered. The resources for a strong foundation has to be in place and accepted to create a space of growing and maturation. The base for a good canvas rests in the structure and choice. This is an expanse which resides throughout the church as a whole and eclipses all denominations, economic statuses, and emotional/educational levels. No individual is immune or above reproach in this model. The resources for a strong path forward are in the following lists:

#### Canvas #1 – The Leader

- Financial – stable finances to purchase the materials and services required
- Emotional – possess an ability to choose and control emotional responses
- Spiritual – believe in the process, and the materials are for a divine purpose
- Physical – ensure one's mental and physical health and mobility is taken care of routinely
- Relationships – have open access to associates outside the personal ministry context
- Knowledge of The Hidden Rules – understand the unspoken cues, gestures, and habits of the community

## Canvas #2 – The Disciple / Congregant

- Financial – may contain some negative, self-destructive mannerisms and though educated, may not understand the reasons behind financial security and planning
- Emotional – the internal factors toward maturation may not be in place and there may be the opportunity for uncontrollable fits of anger or brokenhearted emotions
- Mental – lacking the mental abilities and acquired skills to process a great deal of information though college educated, but lacks the proper amount of social skills to deal with daily life.
- Spiritual – believes in the divine process, but does not comprehend the need for guidance nor the purpose for each individual
- Physical – physical and mental health are far-fetched and is a concern when the physical appearance dwindles from the norm
- Support System – external resources are only available during a time of deep need and emotional frailty
- Role Models – may lack the frequent access to individuals who can provide the appropriate directions for nurturing and ending self-inflicted failures
- Relationships – living and working within the same circle of influence and accepting base emotional support as the norm
- Knowledge of Hidden Rules – lives in a communal mindset that covertly shuns change or new information not clearly delivered. Trust issues abound in this category.

The approach to the canvas in both sections are similar, but those first strokes can either unveil a great picture or a complete disaster. The leader, as listed in group one, must be able to engage each topic offered to remain a viable leader. The moment there is the thought of “I got this” or “I have done this successfully in the past” is the exact moment the connection between the congregant, disciple, and staff begins to break down. The approach must be well thought out and imagined before first words are spoken. For example, the qualities of a good painter are always to look for the small things and explode them on canvas as if all life should begin and end with the smallest of details. The strokes and the handling of the brush change ever-so-slightly, but the drive is to have a picture that is always engaging; no matter how many times the artist’s strokes and attention to detail are studied and then reproduced for later audiences.

In the matter of the disciple, nothing can be taken complacently, and sealed based on the appearance, the speech or the cliques they seem to migrate in from day to day. Individual talents may be hidden under a cloaked shell or because of the lack of familiarity between the laity and leader or within the changes that come with stepping into a new adventure of learning. Though it may be tedious, having gathered a great deal of the tribal speak, the local customs and quirks and knowledge of all the rules of “the house” will allow the information required to flow without difficulty.

### **Rebirth Model**

Life in the church can be compared to a fast moving river; likened to a matter of impermanence. The variances that come along with the previously discussed canvases are several items of movement which can be labeled as “deposits’ and “withdrawals.” The



first steps to developing relationships between the leader and disciple are the deposits that will become the basis of the relationship.<sup>60</sup>

The changes which come with leading a small community, the leader must have an open understanding of the vast number of available Leadership Styles, Possession of a distinct ability to move through each Leadership Style as the people who volunteer and those in discipleship are being taught may respond differently to the approach offered:<sup>61</sup>

- Autocratic leaders make decisions without consulting their team members, even if their input would be useful.
- Democratic leaders make the final decisions, but they include team members in the decision-making process.
- Laissez-faire leaders give their team members a lot of freedom in how they do their work, and how they set their deadlines.<sup>62</sup>

The changes which take place when working in the ministry can be related to the months of change that take place when a new child enters the home. There are the patterns of adjustment based on attitude, need and that individual's personality traits. Though this person is a member of a larger unit, there is still that space created in their worlds that they must remain true to who they are and what they desire to take away from the group experience.

When discussing the variations in training and teaching individuals in this paper, the interview conducted with retired SSgt. Jeter, real-life examples are befitting. SSgt.

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<sup>60</sup> Ruby Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Highlands, TX: Aha! Process, Inc., 1995), 40-43.

<sup>61</sup> Content Team, "Leadership Styles: Choosing the Right Approach for the Situation," Mind Tools, accessed August 12, 2016, [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_84.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_84.htm).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Jeter stated of the members of the group who had recently returned from deployment in Afghanistan and Iraq. “The directness of the instructor must remain consistent throughout the session, but there must be a component where he varies his approach, so there is a connection that is made between each recruit, NCO (non-commissioned officer) and other instructors in the room. We had to consider that their frame of mind gave us a different picture than those in the class who had not experienced war, skirmishes or survived IED going off in the barracks or during road maneuvers. Our goal was never to overwhelm, but lift everyone up on the same level before attempting to take a specific objective or target in training them to be the next leaders within the Corp”.<sup>63</sup>

In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul makes the most encouraging statement for those who are disciples of Christ by stating something that is not always obvious to those who are in a learning mode. Verse 37 states in part, “yet in all things, we are more than conquerors. ....” It is the framing of this text with knowledge of the groups and the strengths they have within which allows the congregant an open understanding toward future challenges and the movement toward a consistent pattern of ending destructive behaviors. Being more than a conqueror rests on the knowledge that all things experienced and learned are those foundations for having a strong self-efficacy and belief pattern that can pass on when the mantle of leader changes hands. The Apostle Paul and SSgt. Jeter makes direct steps in touching the cross between logic and emotion by looking at the background and history of those they are teaching and the future they desire for those being taught.

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<sup>63</sup> SSgt. William Jeter III, U.S.M.C. interview by Kevin Wade, December 2, 2015.

Major factors which are hidden in the context of the Leadership Styles is that of *Assertiveness* and *Stress Tolerance*. Assertiveness is the ability to express feelings, thoughts and to defend one's pattern of belief in a nondestructive manner.<sup>64</sup> Stress Tolerance is the distinct ability to withstand adverse events, stressful situations and strong emotions without falling by using passive-aggressive measures to cope with the stress and shut down the individual who does not conform to the image the leader formed before engaging a congregation of disciples. This emotional skill does involve the ability to ride through difficult situations without giving up and becoming overwhelmed. Being resourceful and effective and being able to come up with suitable methods of conversing facts through personal stories, information gathered over a lifetime can be used in a quick moment of improvisation.<sup>65</sup> This does mean that the notes and lesson plans cannot be considered concrete at any time and the leader must realize the impermanence of the job at hand.

Consider the interview with SSgt. Jeter and reading the many epistles of the Apostle Paul, the level of assertiveness is present and changing throughout their interactions with the various individuals they encountered. Better said, they worked the people in the room for who they were and not who they thought they should be. This pattern flows with the various Leadership Styles, and also allows the leader to become many people while in a room filled with individuals possessing different morals and beliefs.

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<sup>64</sup> Rich Handley and Reuven Bar-on, *Optimizing People* (New Braunfels, TX: Pro-Philes Press, 1999), 47.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-135.

Within the lists from the previous section, consider the Emotional, Spiritual, and Knowledge portions are the catalyst which does not act as a singularity, but as a “team” in the maturation of each individual, based on the correct leadership style displayed. The wrong approach can lead to the breakdown of information because of the individual’s attitude and background. In the case of SSgt. Jeter and others, who have taken the role of leader, and not considered limiting their approaches to the group and then to each individual show examples of having the ability to give birth to new ideas, stories, and challenges which will grow the disciples in areas of trust and modeling. It should be valued to remain humble and open to gather new insights into an old habit and overly used information. I do understand that the people in the room desire to have a portion of the power of leadership within their grasp, so the ability to swing through the leadership matrix is of a value. One statement given in the course that leads me to take pause was given by Flameholtz and Randle. “A person with a high level of education, skill, motivation, and independence is likely to want autonomy. Someone with low motivation and skill will need – and may want – more feedback and interaction so that he or she can complete the task successfully.”<sup>66</sup>

One can consider the idea of momentum and how to have sustained growth and a change model which will allow the disciple the ability to walk in the steps of the leader, but retain a strong presence of self while taking on the role of mentor/leader. In essence, the leader must move from pastoral mode to parental mode in teaching individuals to walk as a group.

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<sup>66</sup> Yvonne Randle and Erich Flameholtz, *Leadership Style Matrix*, December 2015, 69.

<sup>66</sup> Lee, *Pastoral Leadership: A Case Study, Including Reference to John Chrysostom*, 62-83.

### **The Photo-shopped Model**

Pendulum swings are not healthy in a small church where attitudes can become as forest fires in a matter of hours, not days. One failure in modeling the power within the church is the radical re-interpretation of power and the power structure concerning the spiritual balance. In this model, the image of who is in charge as the head of the local community and always leaving the conversation open to hearing from the members concerning the problems and issues within the community or congregation. One of the ‘leadership style’ of the emerging church is sharing the leadership with many rather than a few in the leadership group and claim that the collective leadership produces a better result. The shift from following the picture set by the early church with one leader being the head or under-shepherd, having several deacons/elders to carry out the leader’s vision to the hearts of the congregation. The former being accepted as leadership, removes the image of the servant-leader being a leader in the humility of Christ.

In the 42<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Isaiah the prophet writes, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.” This is in agreement with the leadership style suggested in the earlier paragraphs of having one individual in charge and working in the image of Christ Jesus and delivers the responsibility of the leader in setting the pattern of the Early Church and the Apostles in equipping disciples to become effective leaders in small communities.

The stoic picture of the Christian leader is a leader who is teaching the congregation to discipline themselves in a direction that mirrors the area of self-denial and having them “do something” that is gracious and loving as in respect to becoming the image of a good leader.

The examples have to direct and ask purposeful questions:

- Relate it to life – how does message/lesson give relevant to life situations?
- Take it with you – can the truth be lived out in daily life?
- First of the day – will there be a desire to begin the day with meditation and in prayer?

The idea is to equip the congregant with solid information and directions which allow them to immediately use the lessons provided by the leader when they are dealing with the daily grind. It is this focus which will prove that small steps to become stronger in the latter months and years of discipleship.

Martin Luther said, “The Old Testament and the New Testament form a golden circle. To lead with this in mind, the Old Testament is about a people called of God, delivered from Egypt and journeying forward to the Promised Land, while waiting for a Messiah, who would be their Savior. The New Testament is the continuation of that story, the fulfillment of the coming Messiah-Savior in the person of Jesus Christ, and the journey of God’s children while looking forward to the promised return and reign of Christ on the earth”.<sup>67</sup> If the leader can sufficiently teach the congregant that the life of a Christian is a journey, move through the varied Leadership Styles, be consistently confession-committed and honest in all his dealings, then the changes will be well accepted in the small community. The remaining challenge will always be the “Selfie” motif that is so prevalent in today’s society, which is missing the components of being connected to a body of people and feeling the needs to unique, needed, successful and the security of understanding the Gospel story of Jesus as being relevant in their world.

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<sup>67</sup> Comer, *First Steps Discipleship Training: Turning Newer Believers into Missional Disciples*, Vol. 2, 38-40.

Consistently moving forward, the leader must be able to connect the dots when teaching, lecturing and preaching to show the dysfunction that exists in the selfie-based community. The leader must paint a clear picture to the disciple that answers the questions, *what kind of world do we live in, where people are told not to trust anyone, especially church leaders?* And where individualistic self-interest rules the land, with the expressions of dog-eat-dog, “Getting stabbed in the back,” “Fool me once, shame on you; Fool me twice, shame on me,” and “Every man for himself.” When it comes to the relationship between the congregant, the world, and the leader the failure resides in the quality of the fellowship at all points. Fortunately, there is a place where quality relationships will be formed and nurtured to create positive, long-lasting pictures and personal stories furthering the Gospel story and strengthening future leaders in the church.<sup>68</sup>

### **Framing**

Newton’s world of cause and effect, *force action upon force*, required a great deal of expended personal energy to someone else moving, vast regions of space to traverse to get anything accomplished.<sup>69</sup> This same principle should be applied when working in the small community church and expecting to have or create a space filled with enough energy, that the congregants feel motivated enough to be moved to accomplish things outside their normal scope of life. In other words, create so many positives that many are compelled to pattern themselves after the person in charge. In I Chronicles 11, the writers show the strongest example of framing and expending energy from a leader by detailing

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 38-40.

<sup>69</sup> Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (New York: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006), 50.

the actions of the men leading David's army. The movements of David begin with his relationship with God and then his fellowship with the men he had chosen to be his "disciples." Framing has the definition of comprising a set of principles, objectives, morals, and beliefs in an indirect way of creating a stable support for the individual or organization to have a solid foundation on which to build. In the church setting, the foundation must begin with and return to that "Golden Circle" spoken of in earlier.

One component not mentioned in the model of Framing is the need to remain humble and open to immediate and unexpected change. These are the storms H. Beecher Hicks describes through emotional stories and challenging sermons in his book, *Preaching through A Storm*. Preaching and Framing are not always easy but highly recommended. It is noted that the greatest leaders have an ability to resonate an air of openness and acceptability, such should be the case in the example the leader paints on a daily basis.

In the case of David being king, his example was set to the standards God had given to kings, leaders, in this case, to live openly in front of the people of God. Within the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter, one can find that the motives of the mightiest people were not to make a name for themselves, but to be a living example from all the things they had learned from their leader. Further on in the chapter, there are mentions of many others who desired not be as David's disciples and sought to create objectives which would propel them to be in the image of the person they patterned their days after.

One profound strategy for changing the dynamics within the small community comes from engaging the environmental surroundings and developing incremental programs to initiate conversation and actions. The real work derives from redirecting



individual focus from self to the future by asking a simple question, “Do you want to be in this same lifestyle 10 – 15 years from now?” There must be some viable steps in place in the leader’s agenda to create the space required for framing a beautiful picture in the small community church:

- Focus on the now – show how personal patterns and behaviors contribute to the whole. Invite in a panel of community members who have lived a life of change.
- Focus on the “me” – develop a keen awareness of their self-worth as it relates to the congregation, their families and the future of the small church remaining viable and being needed by members of the community.
- Focus on actions – walk away from the imagined plans and create a dense interdependent network which extends from the church to the schools and into local businesses.
- Focus on “I am” – self-reference is the best mirror for a disciple/congregation. The idea of remembering the “white moment” in the Christian walk allows for fewer missteps and strong forward progression.

Without a dependable connection from the local church, businesses cannot thrive nor can the community church without potential members coming from the schools and donations and support flowing from business partners. The point of reference in the changing of time and personal actions leads to creating conversations which will open up leadership opportunities within the individual’s daily routine. The congregant sees and can move and growth from being the average church attendee into a place where they discuss the needed changes in the community, the church, one’s life, and then testify (speak) in a

pattern mirroring the actions of the leader. One point of consideration, the disciple will not speak from the terms given by the leader, but out of their own perspective, history, and change. All of this will still be encased in the Framing done by the work of the leader.

Leaving the idea that any individual can control when “Life Happens” and not realize that some items are open to fate or chance can be attributed to a limited outlook on life. The need for having an unyielding identity will be an issue, but firmly answered in this paper was the design flow to create the foundations required for engaging those individuals in the church who may lack a strong self-efficacy and patterns for removing themselves from self-inflicted bad behaviors. It is the belief set in this paper that the humbled and well-prepared leader of the small community selfie-based church can make a positive and long-lasting change, which will allow the individual to create a space for a larger perspective of the community above the motif of I, me, and not you.

### **Trust and Development**

*By method and discipline are to be understood through the marshaling of the army (congregation) in its proper subdivisions, the graduation of rank among the officers, the maintenance of roads (plans and schedules) by which supplies may reach the army (congregation), and the control of military expenditures (church finances).<sup>70</sup>*

Dedicated planning, functional, progressive programs and open fellowship, once established will allow the congregation to have the cohesiveness of a well-trained military unit. A pastor must be willing to shed some blood, tears and a great deal of stress-filled sweat to become successful. The pastor must be a semiotician of his people. Paying attention to their expressions, their body language, their reactions, their responses,

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<sup>70</sup> Tzu, *The Art of War*, 4.

their words, their input, their participation and their eyes to discover the missing spiritual needs.<sup>71</sup> Being ethical is not about the leader and all about the character of the church. Maintaining a high level of respectability allows for the creation of a good reputation and keeping all things respected. When we decide to treat people the way we want to be treated; everyone wins.<sup>72</sup>

Trust and fellowship have its degrees and requires a consistent evaluation in of all its parts:

- Fair Dealings – imply that all parties will act and work in good faith without breaking their word, using deception, or failing to meet another’s clear and reasonable expectations.
- Acting in Good Faith – honor all commitments and obligations. That means to conduct all business dealings honestly and strive to meet all expectations and promises
- Clear and Truthful Communications – never mislead others for personal gain.
- Dropping the Proverbial Ball - never promising what cannot be delivered and never position situations to take advantage of the laity, business partners, and community leaders or volunteers.<sup>73</sup>

Growing the seeds of trust is a cycle of change that remains uncomfortable for many, but needed if the church’s leadership and community are to partner and grow. When we encounter the “other people”, they make certain demands on our independence, time and

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<sup>71</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Giving Blood: A Fresh Paradigm for Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014),16-23.

<sup>72</sup> Content Team, “Business Ethics Training,” August 2016, accessed October 25, 2016, <http://www.workplaceanswers.com/courses/code-of-conduct-ethics/>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

dominion. “Share with me,” “Make space for me,” “Help me,” “Sustain me,” and “Heal me,” while not taking into consideration the pressures imposed upon one person to always be strong and open-hearted.<sup>74</sup> The pressures can create a definite chasm if the leader has not taken time during the week to regroup and stay still on that most private Sabbath Day. An escape to that personal space allows the leader that seclusion required to “recharge” his or her focus and find those desires for success. Without the personal time, character flaws, and personal decisions of being ethical begin to waver, and resentment slowly sets in. We are no longer surrounded by those who are familiar with the biblical narratives, or by those who once filled seats in the church out of a sense of duty or obligation. Instead, we are surrounded by people who are sovereign and engulfed by consumerism.<sup>75</sup> In short order, they isolate themselves and become numb of the ability to grow productively and fellowship on a spiritual level; without being led like a sheep.

“The core of every human being is the longing to know,” as Augustine said, “to be known, to know who we are, and to be known by the One who created us.” It remains the functional responsibility of clergy and laity to instill in each congregant that sense of purpose which will offer the ability to teach and reteach those new skills learned from the pastor’s example remaining ethical throughout all storms, preachments, Bible Study Classes, and other church functions. The model of Christ in the pastor is set in stone. A pastor’s example must be a silent catalyst for constant change and growth providing the laity a challenge which makes them feel uncomfortable and inspire them to become greater.

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<sup>74</sup> Mark W. Scarlata, *Am I My Brother’s Keeper? Christian Citizenship in a Global Society*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 31.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

- Inspire is defined as filling someone with the urge or ability to do or feel something creative.
- Aspire can be defined as directing an individual's ambitions or hopes toward reaching a goal.

William Penn once said, “No man is fit to command another that cannot command himself.” To have successful days in leading and growing the laity, the pastor must listen to all conversations directed his way and have the courage to aspire for better things when feelings of abandonment from the laity.

### **Uncomfortable Endeavors**

Focusing, training, meditations and open conversation toward amicable personality and spiritual development should not be a difficult endeavor for the church leader. Mentoring should always be the filler when planning where productive spiritual work needs to possess closure.

If we share the details, the negatives, and positives of leadership in a society dominated by the “Selfie” mindset wrapped in consumerism; the first steps in sharing is the perception of patterns and values set in the community. Teaching the church is a community role. Many who are teachers in the church, do not consider themselves to be the “teacher of the church,” rather, they teach a subject or coach in a church-affiliated program, but they do not teach or explicitly locate their teaching within the scriptures. They are program administrators, preachers, or coaches, who have not become competent shepherds or teacher or that “parent” with the developed training to foster disciples to

replace them once they've left the position, or carry on the legacy of spreading the Gospel.<sup>76</sup>

When the growth of the church has a curriculum which has become stagnant, regression becomes the norm. Regression is a learned, accepted pattern if no area is forcing change from the daily pattern of not challenging growth. Answering the question, "Who is the teacher?" moves to the primary descriptor of who Jesus is and the things His disciples should do being His examples, is "TEACH." Not all teaching is divine teaching. It is inspiring, humbling and aspiring those areas in the laity to engage and be engaged in something that God Himself does.<sup>77</sup>

Regressive Teaching has the following traits:

- Instructional Content is lacking
- The atmosphere in the church is toxic
- Enthusiasm for learning is facing death and the lessons offered are repetitive
- Mutual Care and Respect is absent from almost all programs

Changing the mode, the church's lesson plan and atmosphere should begin with small steps when trying to not to break "too many eggs" in the process of moving from a state of regression. People have become entrenched in the mundane and often refuse to leave their walled cities. Sun Tzu stated, "The best thing of all is to take an enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is never good."<sup>78</sup> Meaning, the leaders should create ways in which to conquer, but assimilate in positive ways while leaving the foundations remaining. In this manner, trust has its light and foundation, and the

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<sup>76</sup> Russ Moulds, *A Teacher of the Church: Theology, Formation, and the Practice for the Ministry of Teaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 4–28.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> Tzu, *The Art of War*, 13.

congregation and laity will not remain focused on any singular issue when leaving those old cities of knowledge to become enveloped in more Spirit-filled teaching. Spirit-filled teaching must begin in the leader and project outward as something great, not only as a learned script but a pattern of his or her personal life.

The following steps should be the concrete form set in building the new city:

1. Preparation of the heart – one must become heartbroken regarding teaching the laity to become disciples of Christ Jesus.
2. Study the Law of the Lord – inform and fill the heart with God’s wisdom and determination that is in the Book of Proverbs.
3. To do it – follow his or her instructions and distinguish the cognitive praxis at the beginning of each day.
4. Teach statutes and standards – instill a high level of competency, self-worth and Biblical truths for spiritual harmony to become the norm of the laity’s fellowship with the congregation.

This stance is respected if the leader doesn’t become so involved in the change that he/she imposes any personal agendas and is not hostile or combative to questions and fears from the congregation after explanation has been given.<sup>79</sup>

In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Proverbs, the writer is extolling life lessons upon his children who have been experience-wrapped and a spiritual awakening that causes stone-set wisdom about life; knowing God and understanding the company one keeps. This experience is the area of trust, development of open communication (fellowship) that can

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<sup>79</sup> Moulds, *A Teacher of the Church: Theology, Formation, and the Practice for the Ministry of Teaching*, 27-29.

lead to the legacy of Christ onto new volunteers. And invites younger members of the laity granting the abilities to retell old information in new ways to their families.

Historical oral repetition of the leaders' personal stories can create patterns of continuous growth, but there will always be some that error in the process of re-teaching the lessons. Errors will happen because some refuse to unveil truths learned through personal experience. This error will slow the process of teaching the congregation to become a family other than a building filled with church folk. The leader/pastor must understand and accept that no one is error-free. The leader must watch and listen intently to those who ask questions and those who watch and study the leader's life patterns as a way of defending negative behaviors as reasons for not escaping their walled-in cities. Hollnagel offers four examples of human error in information processing:<sup>80</sup>

- Perception Error – made when receiving information concerning the outside world or new areas of scriptures.
- Memory Error – made when retrieving or using information from memory. This includes procedures or actions in detailed sequences, specific places, times and dates.
- Decision Error – made in deciding what to do based on information perceived in conjunction with information memory. Such as decisions occur when one should take action on specific agendas, programs or unexpected turns of events.

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<sup>80</sup> Erik Hollnagel, "Human Error," 2010, accessed October 3, 2016, [www.erikhollnagel.com/ideas/no-view-of-human-error.html](http://www.erikhollnagel.com/ideas/no-view-of-human-error.html)



- Action Error – made when action on a decision can include physical actions and speeches. Giving out the wrong advice without detailed or personal knowledge of the situation.

Anyone can make an error, as Hollnagel says, training, skill, and motivation are no defense against error. Efforts need to be towards reducing or eliminating errors by changing the design of the lessons/jobs required to become successful in moving the congregation and laity toward increased fellowships with Christ. Though it is time-consuming and exhausting, the personal gift when changing anyone's perspective on life must and can visualization as that lifesaver thrown to a drowning man caught in a funnel in the middle of a lake.

Dr. David Busic said the following concerning the church leadership, "The new era of leadership is no longer, Command and Control; it is Connect and Collaborate." This means that the leadership must leave the pattern of Corporate-type leadership, and accept the "PARENT" role in his / her relationship with the laity, volunteers and congregation.

### **The Beloved Community**

The perspective of the church has been askew for a while. Leaders of the church should have been using a pattern of inclusion. It has been garnering a deep aspect of division and competition through a denominational pedigree. In this paper, it will be detailed how the pastor/leader should develop a world perspective, where the church no longer places materialism, power and supremacy over the moral and spiritual dimensions

of life.<sup>81</sup> The “disconnect” has obtained a foothold in the church as an inability to communicate effectually and effectively on a sustained level between the church family. The church has moved out of the neighborhoods and become a stale as the local library in regards to having a message of love, hope and all are welcome at the Lord’s Table.

The leader cannot allow the church to operate as a sterile unit, only surviving on scheduled programs and distant outings. The church must be a living organism and should reflect the sheep or the family unit which must be nurtured, loved on and taught as if it were a small child or groomed like a sheep. The laity must move into assuming the role that it has for the community is caretaker, and they should become equipped to give their account of their testimony in Christ through the open example of the leader/pastor. The leader’s examples then becomes a heart issue than a head issue. Lessons learned become lessons lived, explored and explained to new converts and future leaders.

If church members have a responsibility to replicate themselves in the form of new converts, how much more should church leaders replicate themselves in new ministerial candidates? It is natural to want to reproduce in ourselves others experience of God. Reproduction is a process of inaccurate, flawed self-copying, which is the key insight of Charles Darwin: Authentic “nature” is not cloning but evolving.<sup>82</sup>

Two paradigms which can demonstrate the limiting potential of the current model of leadership in the church are often overlooked. The following lists out those items which are not keeping up with the needs of a changing society.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Lewis Baldwin and Paul Dekar, *In an Inescapable Network of Mutuality. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Globalization of an Ethical Ideal* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 32.

<sup>82</sup> Leonard Sweet, *11 Indispensable Relationships You Can’t Live Without* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook, 2012), 81.

<sup>83</sup> William Beasley, “Greenhouse Movement,” January 2012, accessed November 11, 2016. [www.greenhousemovement.com](http://www.greenhousemovement.com).

1. Entitled Pastor – positional power based on education, church history and the stand-alone church structure in which the pastor is sole authority
2. Clergy Center Ministry – the gifts and power of spiritual gifts focus only on those in leadership
3. Positional Authority – elected or staff have the decision-making power and
4. are being coveted above everyone else in the church
5. Governing Boards and Committees – lead the missional priorities in the church body and laity
6. Church Boundaries – programs and ministries are bound to the specific church or congregation
7. Individual Congregations – one congregation becomes the only participants in programs, outings, and services.

With the adage in mind, “Outside of Church, there is no salvation” the above list shows the flaws within the corporate-type leader. As I have stated earlier, the waning support system allows for a continual failure of churches in the Protestant landscape. Something and some people require immediate change. Held within the above list, is the mindset of the pastor/leader is a movement of more self-centered, in which the pastor-leader is first and the foremost authority rather than a God-centered Spirit-driven ministry. The idea and central focus of the leader must extend further than the structured church. A leader must love the community so much so that the beloved community and congregation become likened to a parent nurturing and caring for children in a familial setting.

Vastly different from the first list, the Gospel-centered / God-centered ministry is through the following:<sup>84</sup>

1. Shepherd / Leader – position based on a familial mindset. The leader interacts with the congregants on a personal level. Though highly educated, the church is led by the head of the family
2. Lay Ministry Centered – the laity given the authority to work and design the smaller portions of the ministry; small groups, prayer meetings, visitations, etc.
3. Leadership Gift Authority – the focus of growing the ministry and future leaders is not on the pastor, but on the laity and other members who desire and show the potential to become leaders
4. Mission Field Ready – the church and its congregation are not bound to serve only at the building, but take the message to other neighborhoods. The congregant has been prepared to create disciples.

Though this can be written to a specific denomination, the belief should be that the problems offered in the areas of trust, fellowship, and discipleship have no certain designation to ascribe. The previously submitted issues presented are associated with the universal church issue.

Gradual differences exist between the corporate modeled church and the planted church.<sup>85</sup>

1. An imagined competition between churches vs. a focus on growth
2. The church is the building vs. the church is the congregation

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

3. The church is comprised of “like” members vs. the church is comprised of a targeted demographic

4. Positional authority vs. Leadership authority

Numbers one and four are the corporate modeled church; the idea of the association of leader and laity based on an idea of structured/managed accomplishments. The planted church is starkly different because this model and leader have a determined push to remain innovative and a step ahead of the corporate model in the aspects of growing in numbers and financial status. Both seem to miss the mark when the aligned against the Early Church and the role of the leader being remarkably close to the shepherd/parent.

### **Icon or Idol**

In the first chapter of Titus, the description of the leader is one of perpetual action. The seventh verse reads as follows, “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God: not self-willed, not soon angry, not given in wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy and temperate.” In short, the leader is not to be one who leads by authority, but through his life’s example. This idea also fits the model of Shepherd-centered objective I am presenting.

The fallacy of the corporate-type leader is the belief that leadership has to be direct, program or objective driven to be successful. Sun Tzu stated the following, “The general who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country (congregation) and do service for his sovereign (God), is the jewel of the kingdom (icon). You are to regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys. Look upon them as if they are

your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you, even unto death.”<sup>86</sup> Just as the son will follow the father because of the blood relationship, so will the church follow the pastor/leader who has the heart relationship.

We live in a networking world. Pastors and the laity need to make the network work for them. Learning from colleagues and then leaning on peers means more now than eagerly joining the local minister’s alliance, or ministerium, or sharing an occasional meal with a pastoral colleague.<sup>87</sup>

The Bible delivers images of the table being that open and acceptable place where each participant relies on one another and uses the character of the leader to sustain and increase personal fortitude through fellowship and trust. As stated at the start of this paper, *SILENCE* was understood to be the best approach to any challenging situation. Because the belief is, that time will clear up the most difficult talks it clear communications never take place. The most important task of the pastor/leader is to be a dedicated disciple of Christ Jesus. It is noted that only disciples can draw out and teach other disciples. So, a fully realized and fully connected disciple/pastor can change the minds and hearts of the laity into that of a child leaning upon its parental unit.

Relevance defined is something or someone being useful and directly applicable to the situations or circumstances at hand. The issues with the Corporate-leader model is production based and what items lead to relevant measurements of success in the business. The church is not a business; though it has a business component, it should be in the heart business. This is the drive that is set in the model of Shepherd / Parent and should deliver to laity and congregant.

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<sup>86</sup> Tzu, *The Art of War*, 22.

<sup>87</sup> Sweet, *Giving Blood: A Fresh Paradigm for Preaching*, 39.

### **The Issue of Skating**

“Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard lest anytime with drift away.” Hebrews 2:1

These words in the first chapter of Hebrews were written to those individuals in the Early Church who were breaking away from the traditional cycles of religious life. They were not finding the Christian walk to be an easy adventure. Life happens. Life happens with the fluidity of an open stream, with currents so swift any pastor can become caught up and distracted from seeking to shore up the church family’s boat, over rigging up his boat first. As the parent, the pastor/leader should be on the move to “train up” each adult child in the congregation, and then challenge those who have matured and can find solid ground quickly.

“Every blood washed believer need to take heed against the great tragedy of becoming a drifter.”<sup>88</sup> Clovis Chappell

The corporate-type pastor does not fit into an individual who could successfully mobilize and encourage those in the congregation who have begun to drift away from the church family because life has happened. The empathic genes do not kick in quick enough. In this type of pastor, the flow of things moves from creating agendas to creating meeting space, to schedule “feel good” worship programs never meeting the need of the skating child. The CEO-type pastor has a distinct focus on having individuals settle on how to do life and manage to be a flourishing Christian, and not how to be comfortable with themselves, and learn exactly how to skate over the pebbles on the journey when life does happen. But allowing some in the church family become adrift, believing they can adjust

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<sup>88</sup>Clovis Chappell, *Familiar Failures* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), 109.

without parental guidance can lead to negative consuming issues later on. It is the image of being a good skater that draws everyone to try on a pair of skates early in their Christian walk.

It is human nature to want to look good for other. Some Christian leaders seem entirely preoccupied with the public image. When the church places manners before morals and appearance over reality, it becomes what Jesus spoke against in Matthew 23:5-7, 25-28.<sup>89</sup> It can allude to the image of the pastor in the story has become the image of what Jesus preached about the leadership of the Early Church. Allowing the weak to fend for themselves while they are drifting, should be considered manipulative and abusive. Hands-off leadership is the direct counter to the free-reign parent style. Neither can add significant patterns for positive growth. Thus the drifting can continue until the downhill slide effects more congregants because they've tried to intervene at some point without full knowledge of the situation and are spiritually hurt as a result of the pastor's inaction and hands-off approach.

“In culture, everything done in the community and in the church is done through identity politics.”<sup>90</sup> Those willing to participate in this process I have used are seeking opportunities to practice reaching perfection. “Our churches are not communities of practice, but have become communities of perfection.”<sup>91</sup> The matter of complacency allows for the process of spiritual maturation to fall into an area of drifting. It is the teaching techniques used by the parent-pastor which will excite and engage the participant's heart in overcoming current situational distractions.

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<sup>89</sup> Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse*. 83.

<sup>90</sup> Leonard Sweet, Lecture: “Advancing Semiotic and Culture through Preaching the Story,” Portland Seminary, Orcas Island Advance, June 6, 2017.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



Drifting is listed below in the following destructive forms:

- Stretching the Truth – displaying all the good of the church while burying the failures and hurts. Automatically taking the road of exaggeration when painting the picture of the church family.
- Making Denial an Art Form – the pastor lives a life of denial. Through his example, the congregation is not allowed by proxy to show any human weakness.
- Do not Speak – the “no talk rule” implies that no problems or issues cannot be exposed or the church family may look bad and things will have to change.
- A Call for Unity – a shallow appeal for familial unity is a common ploy played out in many churches. This tactic is used to silence the whistleblowers and those seeking spiritual formation and parental leadership.<sup>92</sup>

The soul goes overboard when the scriptures, which point to Jesus, begin pointing to themselves. The witness of the Bible is not to get people to believe the Bible, but believe God. It does not say, “Believe in the Bible and you will be saved,” but “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household” Acts 16:31.<sup>93</sup> It is my firm belief that those who flaunt their devotion, promote their position and posture their power do so out of basic insecurity. The man or woman who is confident need nothing for show needs no slippery or evasive speech to promote or defend self. When Jesus says, ‘The greatest among you will be your servant’ (Mt 23:11), he is not calling of us to paralyzing, humiliating self-negation or self-abasement. He is simply describing what secure, God

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<sup>92</sup> Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse*, 69-76.

<sup>93</sup> Sweet, *AquaChurch 2.0: Piloting Your Church in Today’s Fluid Culture*, 56.

affirmed leaders look like and how they act.<sup>94</sup> The cycle of deconstructing the church is set on the limited corporate-style that has overwhelmed the church in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The Gospel is marketed from a boardroom, and the family has become a product of granulated, deeply flawed characters in a useless six-second advertisement video. There is a difference in being in the position to deliver change versus being the definition of what the position requires.

There are three words that can send customers up the wall – three words salespeople are now instructed never to use in relationships with clients, ‘That’s Our Policy.’ These equivalent words drive today’s hearer up the wall when debating moral and ethical issues: “The Bible says.” People now how bureaucracies of church, state, and corporation – which are in love with labels, and have lost track of people – filter what “The Bible say” into forms favorable to themselves. What post moderns yearn to hear is “What Jesus Says” and “What is Jesus Doing?” And even, “What do you do as a disciple of Christ.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse*, 53.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

## **SECTION II**

### **The Movement toward the Fields**

### **Holding the Shepherd's Staff**

Society has been filled with experts from varying fields offering advice on how to be successful, how to be “king of the hill” in certain arenas, and how to get the best bang for the buck when assembling a staff. A look into their daily grind sheds light on the adage, *Do what I say, not what I do*.

The following proposal has made significant changes in the lives of 27 young adults in the four years it was implemented in the trial before to this dissertation being written. Environment and social settings play a great role in the growth of youth and young adult ages from 18 to 30 years old in varying settings. Those items that are supposedly ingrained in productive individuals within the church are not so readily accessible by all, based on their familial cycle and level of education. The approach to any group of people cannot be so stifled, that the person leading the group cannot read the emotions in the room. Change the approach from pastor-leader to pastor-parent. Before we truly begin to breakdown my patterns for the growth of the church family, it is not to be considered a change solely for the Small Group exercise. It may work for most churches which consist of congregations of 500 to 600 members and less.

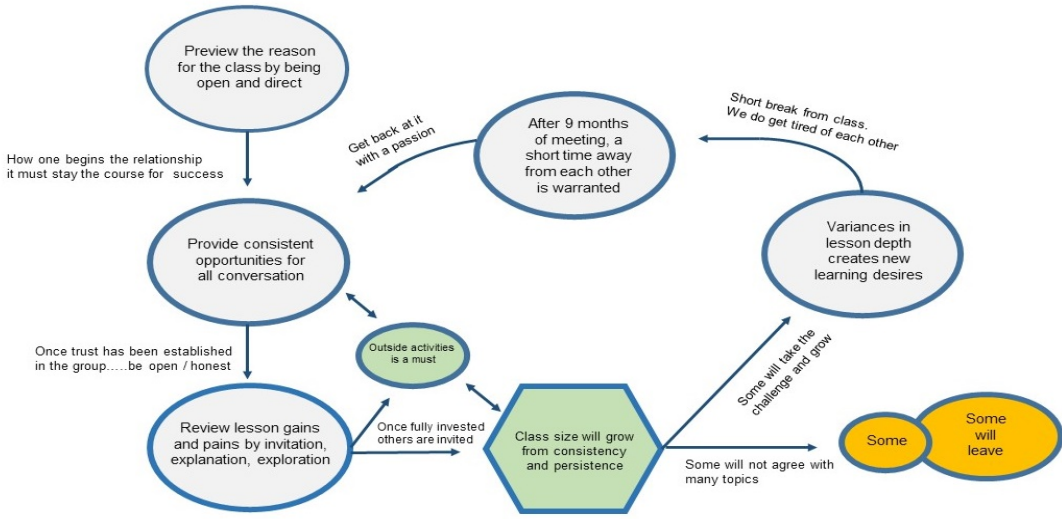
The steps below should garner sound results:

1. Seating – the room should be semi-prepared for the first meeting; this will allow for questions from the leader to the newly formed group on how they would like the seating arrangement.
2. Speaking/Teaching Position – the position of the teacher can open doors and windows for a better connection between everyone in the room.

- 3. Lesson Topics – the topics of each lesson MUST have its center around issues that are of deep concern to the people in the room. This approach allows the teacher an avenue to learn while teaching. No one has the ability to stop learning.
- 4. Be approachable – take and answer all questions unwrapped in the classroom. The effects of the lessons touch on each person’s emotional triggers in various ways drawing out old unanswered questions.
- 5. Be personable –the lessons may possess unfamiliar topics, personal introspection should allow for boundaries to broken down and replaced with deeper values. In other words, be vulnerable enough to live the testimony out loud.

Reviewing the previous steps, one can see that Direct Intervention will be established to develop, create, and show the exacting acts of positive reinforcements as a pastor-parent. The teaching of biblical and life applications as the catalyst to end negative life cycles will not be easy, but it begins a successful process only if the pastor-parent is willing to “give up some blood” in the process of training up *the child* in the congregation to listen and learn new ideals.

Let’s take in the classroom flowchart below for consideration:



Created by Kevin Wade

Each one of us would like to experience that “fresh feeling” when we first began learning of Christ. Same desires rest in the young adult and senior adult congregant. The approach to the church family has to be in the same manner as planning for a long-awaited family vacation. No one really wants to make the exact, same journey they have experienced some years prior, right? So, the class experience must move from the boardroom setting to a setting befitting the desires and social groupings of those being engaged. The challenges have to matchup with the congregant’s daily grind.

“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They (His Mercies) are new every morning: Great is thy faithfulness.”  
Lamentations 3:22-23.

Just as any parent is open to hear stories from their young children, so should the pastor-parent move toward each congregant. Whether it is Bible Study, Worship Service, Prayer Meeting (this is an extinct meeting in today’s church), and any time the pastor-parent greets anyone in the community. The first three bubbles represent the open actions of the pastor-teacher when transitioning into the pastor-parent. It is always mindful and humbling to remember that each class is not about the pastor/leader. The class, any class, should be design to cement in three items that will increase confidence in those in the classroom: legacy, lineage, and love. Being open and receptive takes some practice. It is listed in the second bubble, “leave opportunities for conversation.”



With the doors open, the pastor-parent has to have a pliable mentality. Though the participant means well, some will ask questions that are not related

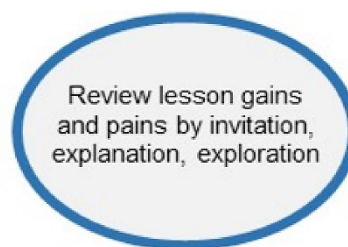
to the lesson but has been pushed by some emotional cue. This question needs an answer at that moment, or the pastor-parent may stand a chance of alienation and a partial barrier built. It is not an easy task to answer random questions, but with practice and time, all questions can possess answers in a manner that will allow for a “circle-back” to the main topic of the lessons.



Outside activities can be planned by the pastor-teacher, but it is better to provide a list while leaving the door open for the class participants to provide suggestions at every turn. The desire here is to allow each person to learn and feel that they are of some value to the class



members. Not answering their questions, and non-acceptance of their suggestions for activities will open the door for some to walk away. The third bubble, Reviewing Pains and Gains, is the avenue I opened during the last 10 minutes of the class time. I desire feedback as a parent from my children when we have watched a family movie, or had a discussion on certain topics. It is not a time that I want to gauge their having ingested some materials to show me that they have been paying attention, but to provide those first moments of reuse and preparation.



Consistency does matter when a pastor-parent is working with young adults and seniors. People want to have a clear understanding that things will be there and useful for their return on the next scheduled class time. Inconsistency is a deafening spirit killer. Be

consistent in all dealing with all people. If not consistent, be dang honest to tell why the horse wasn't saddled up for the ride that week.

Ex: A child has been promised weeks prior that the dad is going to take them to the movies and then burgers and fries on every third Saturday. If the dad makes the first two dates, then skips the third, is late on the fourth – the joy that was once there has waned because the child cannot rely on the word and actions because they do not match.



The yellowed bubbles display the negatives in any ministry. Though one can bend over backward to open doors, there will be those folks who will not agree with any item or subjects that challenge them to change or face their own demons. Change is hard.

Looking at and then leaving some negative behaviors behind causes some old wounds and heartaches to be reopened. This is why the second and third bubbles are so important in this classroom cycle for the pastor-parent. Parent and Shepherding



Skills will have challenges. One has a desire to chase down those expressing a deep desire to walk away. The move of the pastor-parent falls in line with tough love. For a person to learn any items of value in this Christian walk, they have to experience those lessons given on their own apostolic.

**REMEMBER:** Always leave the door open for a prodigal child's return.

The lessons chosen should build upon the last. Teaching series are a good thing, but if the lessons do not open the door to the current challenges faced by the participants,




most will feel like they have wasted their time in participating. It is what we all have experienced in meditating on scriptures. We see new things each time we delve into and study from a differing mindset. This is why it is important to discuss the areas of study the congregant has had uneasy feelings. The challenge is for the pastor-parent to take the suggestions and create that ‘white space’ in the lesson that can be similar to a good parent/child teaching moment.

Taking a break from a loved one is not a slap in the face. The pastor-parent needs some time to regroup and refocus. The issue, which could arise with the time away, is a falling away. When issuing a time apart from one another, the pastor-parent steps into the role of pastor-shepherd and gives two or three written lessons for the class to work on and work out, with an overriding push that the first class back will cover all that they have gleaned from the *Vacay Lessons*.

### **Herding, Gathering, and Loving**

The failure in the educational system in the local community is an understood staple across the nation. The ideas behind ‘No Child Left Behind’ and ‘Race to the Top’ do not account for a foundation of people not being prepared to establish a dependable support system. Both systemic, top-down instruments designed from a corporate mindset.

The change that is a must is the return to the church being the guiding force and beacon of hope to those who do not understand the priorities of seeking higher ground in a sinking society. Education and financial hardship are strong distractions in reaching the youth and young adults in a struggling community. Showing them the light of Christ and



After 9 months  
of meeting, a  
short time away  
from each other  
is warranted

all that they can accomplish after a fellowship with Him and other determined Believers is set as a constant negative.

Discipleship is teaching defined precepts while modeling and guiding individuals toward living a life of higher standards. The Pastor Walker story is an example of what legacies are beholding by the next leaders in the church. From Joel Osteen's business and marketing practices to Paula White becoming a political envoy dilutes the example set by Jesus examples of creating disciples for the central idea of becoming like-minded leaders. Communication is a key staple of any great teacher. Teaching and talking on all areas of life will allow the laity and those wishing to become leaders a solvent understanding when it comes to dealing with the church, church folk, and leading their replacements by positive preparations. To create and keep positive attitudes, everything must be on the table for discussing. Pastor Walker created limitations and boundaries through complacency and selfishness. My approach to return the pastor to a life of parenting and shepherding will do the total opposite. It will establish the family protocol as a foundation.

The associated distractions of the poverty level in most communities range from \$29,000 per year and falls to approximately to \$18,000 per year per family creating challenges for the leadership. The local church must seek to develop sound ways in contacting the minds and souls of the congregants when those who have and have achieved are seen as the villain in some cases. Real life lessons can be taken from 2015s fall and then rise of Black National Baptist Convention Chairman Benjamin Lyons, who stole, cheated and embezzled funds from the church in the name of God and offered

blankets of lies to remain in the pastorship of the church from his prison cell.<sup>2</sup> Actions like this have taken place across the country, through multiple denominations, and in many families. The insulated example of the pastor/leader who thrives on the business model can deconstruct decades of growth and trust in any congregational relationship. This real-life example destroys church families.

The emotional distraction that has been in place in this local community is distrust for the leaders in the church in the areas of infidelity, stealing and lying. In researching the history of the local area of three counties in Texas (Chambers, Harris and Liberty). It has been discovered that a period of 47 years negative direction by leaders who held a practice of using, and abusing the community through actively soliciting funds from the poorest families by promising them prosperity through God's Word. These type of leaders seek to walk around the change required by God by not cultivating the talents from their congregants but allowed them to wallow in their pursuits to end personal financial and emotional struggles. All of this has been done by an established clique of ministers, who have been trained and train their close friends and sons to become Libertines; aggressive "wolves in sheep's clothing."

The uphill battle within a prayerful life in leadership is to ask God to break the hearts of those in leadership, who are living in a less than applicable manner. Especially when it comes to showing and seeking Christ for those in the congregation must be a slow and designed pattern that has a component of pushing out successful people. Life changing programs must be direct and empowering at all sides, and in all forums to

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<sup>2</sup> Cari Jackson, *For the Souls of Black Folks* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 34.

develop accountability levels while moving them into a life in Christ and standards that will end the negative familial cycles that the group members must overcome<sup>3</sup>.

Taking this assignment to a usable medium as weekly classes and from just being a theory has offered personal growth and discovery into trustworthiness being a solid cornerstone. The strongest catalyst to set the level of honesty to a realistic level will be the addition of the pastor's wife to the group for the nurturing talent she possesses. It is her defined knowledge of the Bible, and her desire to push others to be stronger in Christ gives our personal history a sincerer light for the Young Adult's in their understanding of life's challenges and that all people/couples have struggles which are conquered by trusting and calling on God for direction. The relationship of the pastor and his wife are always on trial. The move to active participation on this level, will silence a great deal of naysayers, strengthen the couple's relations and provide positive, living examples of the lessons.

The circular seating arrangement for the Tuesday night class was a great benefit. The conversations can be open and direct because there is no set authority based on the leader/teacher of the group standing and dictating the lesson, but "eye to eye" and leveled opens the doors of trust and heart-filled conversations that lead to hidden hurts and ways to heal those roads. It was my point of view that if I allow unity to find a foundation, the lessons taught would not be difficult to ingest and the pushback would have been a little more honest, and not filled with a great deal of historical information.




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<sup>3</sup> Strong, *Church for the Fatherless*, 114-118.

In this model that I am suggesting, the matters of the heart should be on the table and returned with Biblical Applications when it comes to the participants of either the 18 - 35 group and the over 40 group. What I see to be challenging are those individuals arriving at life's halftime. There are some in the age range, 36 – 50 who find themselves focus on regaining what they had in their younger years. Most call this a mid-life crisis. I call it the second search for individuality and identity. Church for this group is a challenge. They are smarter and somewhat settled in life, but not challenged by the weekly programs offered at the corporate-model campuses. They feel as if they replaced one work setting for another. They are looking at the broken fences and eyeing greener pastures.

### **Ultimate Objective of Herding**

The goal of the training and teaching of the age group 18 - 30 is to lead them to a better lifestyle and stronger fellowship with Christ. Several areas of secular life will be addressed in the within the first year, with anticipation that each member will be able to mentor the next group of 18 - 30-year olds without prompting. This action will make the church member accountable for one another in word and in action. The idea of growing individuals spiritually and secularly will be set in starting weekly prayer/contact lists and bi-weekly community activities. Activities could be softball teams between the local churches, bowling night, movie nights – with the pastor-parent reaching out to the local movie theatres for discounts to build up the church – business relationship. This move will shed light on community and family slower and stronger than a 40-minute worship concert. These activities offer real physical contact.

Fellowship and discipleship will be essential in moving the group from its current state and changing their circle of influence to more positive individuals. Direct supervision and a hands-on approach will be used to develop the trust needed in changing the group's activity level in church and their total outlook toward the future and life.

### Setting

The set target for change has an age range from 18 years to 30 years old, with an additional class for those older members to participate. This separation is due to the social disconnect between the personal experiences and life focus of the groups. It is also an advantage for the pastor-parent to have this separation in place to alleviate some elder members being sought after for leadership over the pastor.

Former latchkey and at-risk children, the program has to be designed to last well beyond a one-year period. It will begin with several plans for "step successes" in changing behavioral patterns at work, school and in church. The program must be strong enough to limit or eradicate wayward behaviors and increase critical thinking skills. Using one year, three year and five year plans each individual will eventually have the capacity to mentor the next group of youth.

Former leaders, teachers, and retired members of the second group will have lessons centering on the following ideals:

- Legacy – fulfilling their callings as elders by teaching them how to use their life's stories as examples and catalysts for the young adults.

- Soft Leadership – moving toward stronger ties with younger church members takes a soft, direct approach. Some elder members are from generations which had a mindset centered on the ideals, ‘Do All That You Have Been Directed’.

The following list of objectives can vary from community to community for the seeds to become firmly planted. For the heart of each class to begin beating, some of these objectives will work with many of the participants in both groups. Resoundingly, there may be others who will watch how things grow and fail, before they attempt to join in the fold.

- Develop a mentorship program to reach those under 18. This will enhance and build spiritual strength and personal character through personal achievements in their community contributions.
  - Meet with the mentees parents to obtain permission and develop plans for the fellowship becoming prosperous.
  - Meet the younger members once a month to discuss plans, areas of expertise and desire.
  - Seek out opportunities to support them by attending afterschool functions.
- Enrich the educational level of a depressed community by working to increase the high school graduation rate and community college enrollment.
- Work to inspire the participants to reach their potential through Bible Study and instilling positive behaviors.

- Introduce the group to varying concepts of life and relate each activity to scriptural stories: this is developed by showing these individuals how to *BE* a Christian versus *DOING* the Christian lifestyle.
- To develop a consistent prayer life and encourage each individual to work in various areas of the ministry.
- Create weekly lessons that will inspire the group to seek out those areas that they fall short in their daily lives. (ex. budgeting/finances)
- Teach leadership and followership by using outside resources such as excerpts from stories, movies, and items that are outside the norm for the community. The goal here is to remove the roots of complacency while creating hope for a sustainable future.
- Create a yearly trip that is out of state or across the state visiting historical site. (Most individuals have not ventured outside their local community or city).
- Develop ideals and standards so the participant can become a better employee or a candidate for hire in the local job community. The following resources provide articles, job fair information and access to local (sometimes free) workshops and conventions.
  - The Ladders – Executive Job Hunting Resources
  - Cyber Coders – Mid Level Job Career Resource
  - The Work Source – Local state/community job skill building entity
  - Rig Zone – Direct and Temporary Employment



## Positive Shepherding

One very important function of the facilitative leader is to construct ongoing personal development plans and to encourage and all group members to develop their own plans.<sup>4</sup> My three to five-year plan is to create a consistent positive cycle strong enough to keep the participants seeking higher standards for themselves and those watching them. This process involves reviewing skill sets, personal agendas, and identifying future goals and dreams through planned activities. Good questions to begin the process is, “What would you like to be doing in three to five years?” and “Are you in the place you thought you’d be at this age?”<sup>5</sup> The following suggested activity list is only an example of how to begin, and where to seek a solid foundation of moving the groups forward.

- Monthly dinners – to increase the group’s fellowship away from the church and directly grow their social behaviors.
- Weekly visits to Senior Centers – each individual will see how life is during the final quarter a person’s life.
- Bi-Monthly Skit and Praise Dance Routines – draws inner talent and increases self-esteem. Some have personal issues while in front of large groups of people. This activity is to break down some personal barriers and replace them with self-esteem strengthening events.

Indirect engagement during the fellowship and non-lectured activities encourage the growth of self-worth, stretching of personal attitudes based on the activities and

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<sup>4</sup> Glenn Ray, *The Facilitative Leader: Behaviors That Enable Success* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Publishing, 1999), 75.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

interactions from those in the groups, who do not customarily step outside of their patterned group and normal routines.

The life of the congregant must be systematic, prayerful God led, and mature. These young adults will feel empowered and stronger. They will learn to balance the checkbook every month. Planning, preparation, and prayer will allow us to make a stronger foundation in the church for later years and stronger parents and children twenty years from the start of this program. All things must start and end with God in mind. Most people learn better through groups or bunching. The pattern in bunching is set at a rhythm of 3s, 5s, or 7s when it comes to memorization and then acting out those things learned into the actual daily utilization.

The area that I began this model was a short-term lesson, with the participants explaining personal discoveries, challenges they could not overcome, and all successes; no matter how small. Voicing these items will allow the participants aid in healing during the period of transitioning from not having a plan to have a small-seeded plan.

#### Plan 1 - 30 Day Budget

Most people consider budgeting as something to do when all things are falling apart, and the house is short on cash. Others run from it because it requires a strict level of discipline. It is an uphill battle if one has not begun the practice of budgeting and the sight of instant sales catches your eye and takes that last \$50 out of your pocket. Living within a budget is for all to do, rich and poor. Budgeting earlier and often allows for changes to take place and the financial stability of the house will not fall apart.

As the weeks and months pass by a budget will help in planning out long and short-term expenses and allow you to pay off some items much earlier than on time. For

those who have never been disciplined in sticking to a goal, or following through on any plan, this group activity will create an area of fellowship and accountability that resonates outside of the house and into the church family.

The proposed change permits the identity of the group to change from a setting of a meeting to family members becoming a support system for one another with the pastor-parent taking the lead and being dutiful to participate without using an over-bearing hand. The following is provided as food for thought while thinking about budgeting techniques:

- ✓ it will level the playing field if there is a crisis in the home (ex. A severe toothache)
- ✓ it will allow for savings to increase and the idea of a vacation away becomes possible
- ✓ it will allow for savings for college tuition, paying off the car and purchase your own home
- ✓ it will allow one to open up an “extra account” and save for The Unknown
- ✓ it will allow one to get the most out of their money

It is a good possibility that you devote more than 40 to 50 hours working each week.

This does not contain the time you use to get ready, the drive time, lunchtime, or the hours you use as downtime the moment you arrive home. If you're going to dedicate that much of your life to earn a living, you owe it to yourself to make sure your money is going toward things that are important to you.

Some simple things in habits of spending can assist in the process of budgeting:

- ✓ Take your lunch to work – spending \$7.50 / day for lunch is \$225 / month
- ✓ Changing your own oil and filter – will save on average \$28.00
- ✓ Performing your own tune-up – will save you on average \$45.00

- ✓ Raising / Lowering the temperature on the thermostat 2° can save \$50 - \$80 in electric costs over a month  
(Ex. If it is summer – the AC should be set at 76° instead of 74° - 72°. The AC will not come on as often, and you will still be in a room close to 26° lower than the outside temperatures)
- ✓ Only eating out once a month over every weekend
- ✓ Cooking dinner five nights a week
- ✓ Couponing on some household items

#### Plan 2: The Three / Five Year Plan

Everyone has a desire to be financially solvent. The barriers are based on behavior and a non-belief that change can become real and lasting, and a valid reason for given up “guilty pleasures.” The premise behind any plan is to get from one level to the next. The only obstacle is changing behaviors that limit or negate any chance of becoming as successful as you would like to be. Challenges being understood to happen on every side of life. I believe it is the duty of the pastor-parent to tie every move upward to a story of change and growth in the scriptures. Below is the text that I have used to set up the three-year development plan. With the history of the text being harsh, I intend to be direct and open in issuing this cyclic challenge to the church family as a way of creating a lasting legacy that is based in writing and delivered orally from one member to those joining during the three to five years following its establishment.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said, write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come.

It will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by faith. (Habakkuk 2:1-4)

Purpose and Desire should be hand in hand. The problem with mingling the two has a lot to do with critical thinking, emotions, and distractions. During the process of opening up on purpose, I began in my practical application of this process, by sending out short weekly emails two to three days before to the group meeting. I did try a seven-day advance of the lesson, but most participants did not read the email or remember those items discussed. Timing is crucial. But consistent, short timing is profitable beyond measure. They get the information and will regurgitate it back to you during the class session.

One can be easily pushed off course if the plans and desires are not made in an orderly fashioned and prayed on detailing how one is to pursue a new job, house, spouse or car. The best soul-shaking question I have found to open the eyes of each group member is, ‘Are you truly satisfied to be in and live in the same situation and level of life you have been experiencing for the last two to four years for the next five, ten, and twenty years?’ After they have had a few minutes to ingest the challenge of being complacent, purpose and desire discussions should be open to the group.

To write down and develop a three and five-year plan, all things to within the goal must become a matter of great importance and if the pastor-parent can open the participants to a position of meditation, a willingness to cry and pray on their goals, success is not that far off. DREAMS & GOALS are seen as the lifesaver (floaters) tied to the edge of a 15ft deep pool and your legs are too tired to push you up. You only live once and in that one time of living all things in your short days should be God-centered,

God-driven and possess a deep-rooted purpose to reach back and grab others out of that same pool.

### The Three / Five Year Plan

The purpose of increase is set in the following steps:

- The patterns of the daily grind to allow the individual to look and pray forward and not just for the day to day grind
- The outlook of the individual and moves them to “outside the box” habits and thinking patterns. (personal accomplishments become the trophy)
- The 3/5 years cyclic move is most goals are completed long before the time frame gets close. This means the participants walk back over the year and look for those items of success to establish new goals for the next three years

The following pages contain examples and blank forms for short-term and long-term planning. This is not to force you to do any one thing but simply look at your future in terms of being settled when those days arrive.

The periodic setting is to allow you to research and invest your time wisely into your dreams and gives you credence in all those items you desire and correctly pray for and desire to possess.

The 3 Month to 12 Month Plan – breakdown ushering in change:

- these first steps in changing habits and behaviors and moving mindsets into seeking other avenues of brightening up future dreams
- to have in place certain sound goals that will add to your daily and monthly growth

- maintaining a positive attitude when the first few months are reflected upon and one can see that progress has been made

The following list is recommended steps in creating a positive plan for successful transition by the pastor-parent's directions to the participants creating their plans:

- List out those things that you would like to accomplish in the amount of time you feel that those items can be accomplished
- Begin listing out on a separate sheet of paper all those things that could hinder/stop you from accomplishing your goals
- Discuss none of your plans in detail to no one (this is between you and God). I am here for you & will assist you in designing your plan to fit your talents. Not one person outside of your spouse, God and mentor should give direction and information
- Pray on both items (your plans and the list of things that can stop you) leaving to God to grant you favor on those things which are good for you and those that can cause you to quit in the middle of your pursuing your dreams and goals
- Return to your lists often to see what has been accomplished and removed from your days
- Between the three and five year plans, the increments of 6 months and 12 months will be needed to keep the focus on the long-term goal in sight and obtainable with less distractions

The next steps in engaging each group is to discuss all lessons with an eye on future success. As we know, a lot of deal of people have accepted the concept of living in the right-here and right-now mentality of progression. What the pastor-parent is planting are

seeds for maturation and replanting. While this is a three - year plan, the intent is for each participant to spread the Gospel Story, along with all things they've learned from the pastor-parent. The following statements should be added three to five times during the lessons. Psychologists have stated for the last six decades the capacity to learn in chunks.

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, the barriers of chunking are virtually non-existent through the overuse of cellphones, laptops and the quick look to Wikipedia. It is as if the ability to learn and immediately use new information has become an item on a shelf for antiques. When engaging in the chunking process through teaching, I have found that if I used the phrase in the email setup of the lesson and then repeat it during the class sessions, they ingest the ideas without any negative pushback. Here is the clarity in my process: once they have heard it or read it more than once, they will believe it as truth. This takes place because items are seen more two or three times. But I did realize that most of the participants did not remember the phrase originated with the weekly emailed lesson set up.

The following phrases are what I have successfully used over the past four years, and seems to have stuck with four of my seven daughters. I say it is successful because I have had numerous opportunities to hear certain phrases are passed on from my daughters to their friends and associates during social intercourse.

Those phrases are as follows:

- A little work now will pay off in the long run.
- If you do not have a concrete plan of action, you are doomed to fail before you get the plan off and running.



- Planning is transporting your future into the present, so you can create and cultivate those need items into a usable thing now.
- It does pay to plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
- Some people make things happen. Some watch things happen, while others wonder what has happened.
- Have you considered what your next five years will look like? Are you comfortable with that view?

The following statement hits the mark on why there is a struggle to change the historical information of church member, family member or pastor-C.E.O. into becoming a pastor-parent. Lecky writes, in reformation the Protestants of liberal personation are most supportive of renewing experimentation, but the conservative and fundamentalist are not in splendid isolation. Reaction grants recognition.<sup>7</sup> It is my intentional belief that the more a congregant has exposure to ever-growing information, the more likely it is for them to accept new information and change. But the latter comes with maturation and time.

In this plan, I sought out the most difficult topics to cover. Some areas that the group requested information were things not usually discussed in the corporate-type church. Creating space to interact with the whole person, will allow the pastor-parent a realization into why Jesus would ask, "Do you want to be made whole?"

Below are the steps to goal setting in this plan:

- Three-year plans - the participants will list out 15 items/goals that they would wish to overcome or achieve within three years.

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Lecky and Elliot H. Wright, *Can These Bones Live?* (New York: Sheed and Ward Publishing, 1969), 88.

- This list does not have to be detailed but must contain central ideas of why they believe it is an important reach.
- The participant cannot be shy about seeking their goal.
- Encourage them to “shoot for the moon.”
- One year plan - the participant will list out six (6) items/goals that are immediately obtainable within a one year period.
  - Paying off two to three bills
  - Planning a trip out of state
  - Reading two books
  - Meeting and making four new friends outside of their normal circles of influence
- Budget Plan – Teach and demonstrate a monthly budget for the participant to have the ability to break free of familial cycles of not paying bills on time. (Romans 13:1-11)
  - Budgeting takes a great deal of coaching and patience
  - Creating a one-month budget blank budget plan will assist in moving discussions
  - Discuss the options of opening a small savings account at a credit union without the option of immediate withdrawals. This account can be titled, “Buy a new car account,” or “My Hawaii vacay account.”
    - Set the account to receive direct deposits from weekly pay in an amount that will not be missed on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. My suggestion is \$26.00
    - No debit card
    - No check card

- No ATM card
  - Remind the participants that this account is secret and not to be used to bail out friends and family during their struggles
    - Rule on lending money – if you cannot afford to give it away, do not
- Leadership/Followership Plan – the “circle back” is a direct action of bridge building and sharing the information obtained during the class session. The idea is to create space to grow future leaders.
  - Schedule each member to work with one junior high or high school aged child in developing a short speech or presentation for a Youth Sunday Event (Team Working Skills).
    - This event is to groom the youth to overcome issues with public speaking and trust
    - The work in speaking and performing is a hurdle that will allow the youth the ability to grow their self-esteem and self-efficacy.
      - I used this to go hand-in-hand with the sessions on interviewing skills and communicating with superiors
    - The mentor should readily talk to the parents and again, circle back to get the parents to act out in one of the Youth Events
- Weekly Bible Study – will be set around life in an at-risk community and being a light-leading Christian working to move upward while all life is causing distractions. The lessons scriptures will be known a week prior.

Participants can read ahead and meditate on it by using a journal. My group used the book, *My Spiritual Journal* by Robin K. Johnson because of its Bible Study Sections.

- Class Study Examples
  - What is leadership and where does it begin? (I Chron. 11:1-25)
  - How to overcome circumstance weighed down by situation (Phil 4:5-13)
  - Can baggage kill off your dreams? (Mark 5:2-7)
  - Prove yourself to me, Jesus (Mark 10:35-43)
- Resume Building & Job Hunting – develop the skills needed to obtain a long-term position
  - Question the participants on their job hunting techniques
  - Ask the participants if they keep a running list of the places they have applied. This will assuredly curtail wasting time by applying to the same position several times
  - Introduce the participants to no less than four headhunting sites
- Anger Management / Conflict Resolution – discussions on how to deal with negative and heated conversations. The list below are steps I took when discussing these issues and those of physical violence, which could ruin lives for generations:
  - Invite in professionals to discuss the overreaching effects of living with anger issues
  - Invite in the counselors of Domestic Violence Shelters

- Invite the local police department to shed light on the penalties associated with living angry
  - D.W.I.s and D.U.I.s
  - Simple assaults and assault and battery

## **SECTION III**

### **Mended Fences**

## Project Evaluation

Most of us like to gauge progress and accomplishment in the course of work and ministry. I suggest the following to be completed, but not issued to the staff until plans and schedules are concrete for the future sessions. This removes possible distractions to take place.

1. Completion/Complements of the one and three-year plans by items completed and marked off.
  - Wait to see if the participants provide feedback and pushback. This will allow the pastor-parent to make boundaries in lessons pliable.
2. Rate the budgets by how much money the participants have saved.
3. Rate the Bible Study through completion of weekly sections in *My Spiritual Journal* (or the sources used) and how many people have been mentored by the participants.
4. Rate the Leadership and Followership at the end of the year by the level of participation and growth that comes from the group's participation in church and school grades. In my using the standards set in this dissertation, the following have taken place;
  - Leadership – I believe through active participation of my wife and myself, several have completed their goals.
 

Three have started classes in pursuit of B. S. Degrees in Criminal Justice.

One has written her three-year plan and has interviewed and joined the Harris County Sheriff's Department in pursuit of becoming an S.W.A.T. Officer.

Two young fathers have completed Industrial Welding Courses and have become certified welders. One young woman has landed a job as a radio host on a local Hip/Hop radio station. In the loss column, three have left the church and have not attended services in a year.

5. A stated/defined change and showing of maturation by the participant's attitude and growth in the church and behaviors. The testimony (personal story) is the biggest read anyone can have to show the changes in growth and maturation.
  - True Change - We have had several members of the group join the church, three have accepted Christ, two couples have moved out from living together in preparations of marriage and "getting right with God," and 12 have joined the Sanctuary Choir.



## RESOURCES

Abasto, G. and Y. *How to Equip the African American Family*. Chicago, IL: Urban Ministries, 1991.

The book has a study guide and lesson plan to deal with the circumstances of young adults in at-risk communities. The profounder context and lesson plan of the book's design is to break certain familial cycles and patterns that have destroyed communities. As beginning with scripture, it opens the doors of how examples can shed light on limited roles in the house and the failures of the church in making amends to broken fellowships between God, church, and family.

Casey, Carey. *Champion Fathering: How to Win at Being a Dad*. Colorado Springs, CO: Tyndale House Publishing, 2009.

The book offers direction into being a detailed father with an open heart to hear the stresses in life that can either make a child face fears alone or with an ideal "father" type to offer direct resolutions into moving the family unit from one level to another. I do feel that this book gave me greater insight into reaching into the Young Adult Group and finding their hurts and strengths.

Covey, Steven. *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*. Steven Covey Books. 1990.

Covey's book sets a pattern of changing negative behavioral habits that will assist in moving a stagnated set of individuals into a mindset of becoming over-achievers. The accurate meaning of success has to be set in the climb to discover yourself and those talents that are within. This book continually forces the desires to leave old friends and find forward-thinking ones. These listed actions are for personal growth.

Gower, Stephen. *What Do They See When They See You Coming*. Lectern Publishing. Toccoa, Ga. 1997.

A great book to use to draw the changes in behaviors, and to grow the individual to excel in the local community. Changing the attitudes of the members is showing them that life-long negative friends must be let go and a new circle of influence setup and accepted.

Hicks, H. Beecher. *Preaching Through a Storm*. *Ministry Resources Library*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987.

This book sets a preparation for the leader in the church to deal with personal problems in the middle of empowering the lives of those that are in an area of falling apart and being raised to a new level of fellowship in church and with other congregants. Dealing successfully with personal negatives can allow the leader to be more empathic and reach into the changes of those who are trusting in “his” knowledge to be victorious.

Jackson, Cari. *For the Souls of Black Folks*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013.

The book suggestions of a stronger look at the barrage of hurtful Black men that have damaged the symbol of the pulpit in the community. It offers credence to the understanding of the decades of failures that have plagued the growth and increase of standards in poverty-stricken communities.

Johnson, Robin K. and Kevin Wade. *My Spiritual Journal: For a Closer Walk with God*. New York: Lifeway Books, 2010.

Set inspirational behaviors which will endear the reader to look inward to meet God in fellowship and develop a prayerful comportment that should allow for strong personal/spiritual growth within the designed year.

Scofield, C. I. *Scofield Study Bible III, KJV*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Press, 2001.

Is the main source of study and creating lessons, the history and details of moving, and inspiring the children of God to do better in life.

Strong, Mark, E. *Church for the Fatherless*. Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

The message of the book is a resilient foundation for those who have not had the luxury of having a stable familial setting, which creates that dynamic for opening the doors of trust and hope in developing a base fellowship with God and moving from being hurt into a life of continual healing and maturation.

Warnock, Raphael. "Message to the Black Church and Community." *Journal of Religious Thought* (1977): 23-28.

This article details the movements needed by Black leadership to enhance the experience of the Believer and makes requests that the leaders must take personal acceptance of the failed American Church and use that to grow the minds of the Believer.

## BOOK PROPOSAL

**Title:**

*The Last Judge: A Pastor's Aid for Parenting and Shepherding the Church Family and Laity Through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family Dynamic*

**Author:**

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of the book is to equip those pastors who are seeking a different area in teaching, reaching and going “all in” with their congregation as a means to grow up leaders now for the use of the Kingdom later on. Crisis and stressors are contributing to the deconstruction of the church and community, with the only option being a corporate-like church. The purpose of the book, *The Last Judge*, is to recreate the purpose for the pastor to act in the same manner the Apostles did after establishing community churches. The Apostles moved toward their congregations in the same manner Jesus moved to the children in the courtyard, as a parent wanting to shield, love, and then direct them to act out loud in love.

The family dynamic has become a moot point when considering the barriers of the pastor being business minded over being the shepherd/parent he or she is supposed to be as modeled by Jesus and His Disciples. My desire is to make the church so uncomfortable when using the lessons within this book, that they will have open discussions on the barriers and challenges of connecting through growing one another other than experiencing the “worship concert” together.

**Promotion and Marketing:**

Promotions and marketing will be accomplished through social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), regional and local book fairs, conferences and newspapers.

It is my hopes to obtain a book agent and publicist within the first six months of completion of this project. I plan to tie this work in with the book, *Consider This On This Day* and use both as tools to use throughout the week in my dreams of teaching the laity and church volunteer that they are worthy of the calling and just as important in the community as the church's leadership.

**Comparative Title:**

- Tony Evans – Kingdom Man: Every man’s destiny, every woman’s dream
- Tony Evans – Kingdom Woman: Embracing your power and purpose
- George and Yvonne Abasto – How to equip the African American Family

**Uniqueness:**

The Last Judge is not a typical sit back, teach and take a lesson for the pastor and congregant. It is designed to create that white space where each individual can reflect on spiritual maturation experiences and compare them with others on this Christian journey. The goal in having a different approach is to allow the pastor to “step out” of the overseer role and become a parent explaining the changes and challenges he or she has overcome in their relationship with Christ Jesus. Its design is that of a conversation starter, not a lectionary.

**Endorsements:**

I will seek out the endorsements of several pastors I have had the privilege of working for, attended school with and are those I am participating in various associations.

Dr. Myron D. Barnes, Sr. Bethany Baptist Church Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
 Rev. Eric P. Trimble Revelation Church Crosby, Texas  
 Pastor Dan Ward Crossings Church Las Vegas, Nevada  
 Rev. Dwight Benoit Magnolia Baptist Church Beaumont, Texas  
 Rev. Frank Joe Landry Little Rock Baptist Church Old River, Texas

**Book Format:**

The Last Judge is formatted as a two book set.

A guide consisting of overview with open lesson guides to allow the pastor to create space unique for his or her congregation and community. Within each exercise and lesson are questions that are designed to for group discussions and activities.

The book also contains areas of personal challenge. These sections will pose steps for growth in biblical application, financial behaviors, and communication within love relationships.

## Chapter Outline:

### Chapter One – Deborah and Barak

Designed to allow the leader and laity study a leader who faced social and familial pressures while openly serving God, and remaining pliable in his character. This viewpoint will open the discussions concerning personal adjustments during the challenges of being involved in ministry and surviving the “change.”

### Chapter Two – Communicating Openly: Choices and Choking

Provides insight into the Family Model in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ephesians, and the dynamic of the family being universal though society may not agree with the need for a “nuclear” centered role model as a normality. The level of intimacy will be the catalyst for the discussion, with outliers covering commitment and holiness.

### Chapter Three – The Base of the Relationship

Centers on confidentiality, self-worth, and counseling someone who has been hurt by personal calamity and spiritual letdowns in the church family. The central focus will be based on how to recover in and still hold onto personal uniqueness. Conversations will be opened on creating true and open relationships that are encouraging and protects each other’s heart.

### Chapter Four – Transmitting through Historical Barriers

Focuses on the similarities between marriage, extended family support systems, siblings and cousin relationships after adulthood. The discussion will seek out what lessons can be learned through and from support systems and the replacement of people in the lives of the congregant as they mature as Christians versus secular maturity.

1. Historical Informational Barriers
2. Change and the issues surrounding its acceptance
3. New family members – positives and negatives

### Chapter Five – Transmitting Accountability and Values

The location and residence of accountability is an enormous issue in society. It seems as if the rule of being a *stand-up individual* has all but disappeared from the values taught by today’s parents. Discussion will be opened by looking into the outliers in the relationship between Joseph and his brothers in relation to the actions of pastor, laity, volunteers from the church and community, and church family.

### Chapter Six – Adjustments

The pastor-parent must push and press the issues of needed growth as an open issue. In this chapter, the focus will be to open the participants to creating space for acceptance of adjustments in their daily grind, and not the challenge it has been instilled in all of our psyches.

#### Additional Lessons – Positive Production

The addition of future topics and biblical texts for future discussions as a Segway for the pastor, laity and church family's advancement in spiritual formation and increasing trust amongst the church family.

#### **Intended Readers:**

The intended readers and users of the book will range anywhere from small to large churches. The Mega-Church's small groups can utilize the book to promote personal growth and discipleship on a level the full congregation cannot ascertain in large meetings.

#### **Author Bio:**

Robin K. Johnson is a graduate of Lee College and the University of Phoenix and a graduate student at George Fox University. He is a devoted husband and father of seven daughters and one son. He is also the author of several amazing books and short stories.

#### **Publishing Credits:**

The Heritage Tree: Planted by Mom, Dad and the Girls – 2009

My Spiritual Journal – 2010

Planting Daisies: when roses just won't do! – 2012

A Daughter's Book of Secrets: Everything a Dad Should Tell His Daughter before She Leaves Home – 2016

Consider This on This Day – 2016

#### **Future Projects:**

The Last Judge: Shepherding and Parenting the Church and Laity through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family Dynamic - 2018

Clay Castles - 2018

Shell Games - 2019

Penelope's Chronicles - 2019

Mom, Santa Looks Just Like Me! - 2019

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**APPENDIX**

*The Last Judge: A Pastor's Aid for Parenting and Shepherding the Church Family and Laity Through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family Dynamic*

## The Last Judge

A Pastor's Aid for Parenting and Shepherding the Church Family and Laity  
Through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family Dynamic



By

Kevin A. Wade

To Callie

my best friend, my bride, my blessing  
my ride-or-die, my rib, the reason behind all of my smiles,  
the melody in my 10-bar morning song  
Thank you for putting up with all of my little quirks  
and pushing me to stay focused on all our goals.

To my Carrie Mae and Isaac “Big Ike” Lawson

the gift of in-laws is sometimes clouded with barriers and fences.

You guys have opened the flood gates of love and have  
given me the best woman to ever walk this earth  
and supported me through all of my endeavors in ministry

I love and thank you.

To Dr. Myron D. Barnes, Sr. (Philadelphia, PA) – thank you for being the example of Jethro and Apostle Paul early in my life and judging me long before I understood why tough Christian love was needed from a Pastor-Parent.

To: Pastors Bruce Barnard and Dr. Doug Balzer – thank you for showing me a different view of life through brotherly love.

To: Dr. Leonard Sweet – thank you for being the most abrasive and effective teacher that consistently caused me to reach beyond the historical information to find the details of the story.

To: Michael (Fr. Mike) Mahon (Bozeman, MT) – a friend and spiritual brother who I see as my Jonathon in this Christian walk.

*The Last Judge* is a book that creates allowances for open conversation and fellowship. The basis of this book's design is to open up paths for growth amongst members of the church family. While creating opportunities for those working in the laity and in leadership to become spiritually accountable in the support of each other, and remaining focused on the call from God. The goal is to create the foundations for training up new leaders in the church family, with a mind to reach out into the community and allow Christ to increase the family's membership and strength in the areas their talents fit best. It has been created in hopes that those in leadership and in laity will be open enough with one another through the lesson within to pass it onto those waiting and watching from a distance.

*A family is like a forest, when you are outside it is dense, when you are inside you see that each tree has its place. ~ African Proverb*

Society has imposed the wrong definition of *JUDGMENT*, the context of the scriptures provide avenues for creating that "white space" needed for personal introspection and spiritual formation.

**Judgement** is usually understood with an evil connotation, but through a Christian viewpoint it does contain positive outcomes and destinations. It provides new avenues and a hope of change.

**Condemnation** – has a defined outcome and outlook. It only offers the punishment for wrong and negative actions. It only provides an immediate stop to any proposed ideas of positives toward providing a change.

The layout for completing the six (6) lessons within begins here:

1. Classroom setting should be either in a semi-circle or full circle. The pastor-parent should be seated within the circle, or in front of the semi-circle. The goal is to eliminate the position influence of lecturing to allow all participants become equal while supporting opportunities to speak throughout the lessons within.
2. The matters of the heart should be on the table. All topics questioned should be discussed and returned with Biblical Applications. An open mind during this fellowship will allow each member of the church family opportunity to partake of the items on the table.
3. A blend of secular and spiritual activities/goals are to be discussed and scheduled to open the doors of trust between the group's participants. Planning and goal setting are tops on the agenda.
4. Build bridges where there is a social disconnect between the age groups, and raise fellowship of small social groups in the church toward other members and groups.
  - a. Bread and Meat Sections – holds questions related to biblical passages and the short story introductions in each chapter.
  - b. Church Application – offers a series of activities to challenge the group in purposes of looking in that mirror discussed in James chapter 1.
  - c. Personal Application – provides one or two challenges for each participant to take home and research in their personal meditation and study in hopes they will use all that they have learned in the chapter studies.
  - d. Secular Changes – is a setting to directly allow the participants to look at

personal behaviors and open up avenues to grow the support system within the fellowship gained through the lessons.

- Step Ball Change
- Treading Water
- A Stitch in Time
- Jab - Cross, Hook - Cross

*What a child says, he has heard it at home.*

~ An African Proverb



## Chapter 1 – Perception Matters

In a village, somewhere deep in the Amazon Jungle, two American missionaries saw a woman who was carrying two babies. They noticed because of the smile her face, and made comment of how happy she looked.

Later that day, they saw the same woman pass but she was only carrying one child. So they called to the woman and ran over to speak with her.

*Sometimes folks want to be active in the journey appointed in the lives of others.*

The missionaries felt a strong concern and asked the woman where the location of the other child she was carrying. The woman answered and said that she gave up one of her children as a sacrifice to her God. Feeling grieved one of the missionaries looked at the child she was holding and saw that the child had a deformed foot and asked why she did not give up this instead of the healthy one.

*Sometimes folks consistently interject their own opinions and judgments into situations they have no or limited knowledge.*

The woman feeling angered, let the smile leave her face before she answered the inquisitive missionaries. She took a breath and told them that the God she serves requires her to give her best. Not her second best. The missionaries stood in silence for only a moment, then demanded to know what happened to the first child.

*Sometimes when folks think they should rule over your desires to serve God openly and make decisions concerning your walk in this Christian journey they demand the steering wheel in your vehicle.*

The woman hugged her child. She smiled and then answered with a strong voice. She informed the missionaries that her child was given to an adoption agency run by the

church she attended, but the missionaries had never visited. She continued to explain that she and her husband had prayed on the sacrifice for more than a month before the Lord told them to give up a child.

*Somedays the answers we receive on prayers we have offered up to God are not for everyone to ingest or understand.*

The missionaries demanded to know who it was that had taken the child and where they could see if all things signed were done by the law. The woman looked in amazement and answered them with the largest smile. My child has been adopted by one of the richest stars in America and will have a great life.

Silence joined the conversation, as the missionaries could not utter a word.

The woman continued her explanation at the amazement of the missionaries.

“When people ask the reason behind your blessings, give them the full testimony.”

The woman detailed the scope of the adoption to the missionaries.

“First,” she said, “my child will be taken care of and we will get to visit him in America twice a year. Secondly, my eldest two daughters can now attend university and all their expenses will be covered. Third, our house is being repaired and we are getting running water installed next week. Every time we give God our best without complaint or trying to take a portion back, He grants us more than we can ever dream.”

The woman thanked the missionaries for allowing her to give them her testimony of how God’s grace is first personal and then informative to those who do not understand the relationship based on trusting God.

*Sometimes giving JUST ENOUGH is not enough because those things that will come in return will only match the gift given.*

Being in a church family, like any family, the members have to be willing to give of themselves. The limitations associated with the idea of Kenosis (empty out) is the levels of selfish intent we all hold. We desire the ability to hold onto the best parts, the sweetest parts, those easily related ideals allow us to shine. Even the best silver needs to be polished and rotated.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Judges opens the door to a relationship that defied the status of those seeking the standards of traditional leadership. Deborah and Barak are a unique pair of leaders. Both were set in their roles. One was more open to hear from God to remind the other of the directions already shown.

“And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him. Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded saying, ‘Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee the ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. And Barak said unto her, if you will go with me, then I will go. But if you will not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, ‘I will surely go with you, notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for you own honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah rose, and went with Barak to Kedesh’”. (Judges 4:6-9 NKJV).

Personal adjustments are a mainstay when working in the ministry. The level of commitment can vary when making decisions on becoming fully invested in the calling God has placed in the heart of the believer. The challenges arise when having to deal with “church folk,” family and then the staff. Especially when there has not been clear discussion on personal visions versus the vision of the pastor, and how these items can be combined for a true picture.

Next is the light on issues of diversity is shown as a non-issue when considering the actions of the Children of Israel concerning the leadership styles of Barak and Deborah. This should be a standard for today’s church when the roles of leadership require opened minded folks to find clear solutions concerning the church family and the community.

Deborah is described in the text as a wife, mother, and a woman with a lot of knowledge and wisdom, and receiving direction from the Holy Spirit. She became the “spirit” of the government and utilized all the duties of a judge, but knew her limitations

when it came to being a military leader. For Deborah, the kenosis had to be a heart-wrenching decision. She had already left her home to judge over Israel. Then Barak made request of her to travel into military battle. Not to fight, but to be the animated spiritual validation needed for Israel to find faith that God would allow a victory over the oppressor, Jabin.

Leadership has varying levels. There is not a great leader in all of history that did everything on their own. They had assistance and help. They had others on which they relied on for wisdom, tact and sometimes spiritual guidance. The church family and its leadership is no different. If there is to be success in leading people to Christ, it will have to be done as a family effort. Cliques and the “lone wolf” persona does not fit into the original apostolic methods of the early church. Access to one another and the leadership wasn’t hindered based on who one was.

Barak is the other side of the leadership coin. The writer of the text suggests that there had to be several discussions taking place about the issues of oppression, “why me Lord?” and Jabin. Deborah questions Barak about his inactions after he had been directed by God to take action. There is a little fear that creeps in all of us after God has laid specific destinations and people in our hearts to conquer. Barak needed someone to provide that spiritual influence that matched his military might. Sometimes each of us are strong in one area, but we become better when we have aligned our days with someone gifted in that one area we have not been blessed to obtain.

This is the area where giving in and giving up become crucial in our days. We have to open up and allow someone to know where we actually need assistance and help. Vulnerability is not a weakness. It is the first steps in maturing spiritually outside of our

norms. Like my Aunt Rose used to say, “You have to give something in order to know who you are in the Lord.”

READ I Corinthians 11:18-34

Everyone is welcomed to the table of the Lord, right?

In discussions about the Corinthian church, like the 21<sup>st</sup>-century church, there is an unseen intention for separation and notoriety when access to the table is open. The Corinthian church was in disarray. Folks decided the cliques and establishment were more important than the people celebrating life together. Positions have to be placed to the side and the acceptance of family moved to the front of the line. The church has to be better than the world (vs. 32). This was Paul’s message to the church as a family. We have to keep a “Table of Christ” mentality at all times so there is not an opportunity missed in growing and maturing. It is the idea of being accessible to one another that can build trust between church family members and open the doors to hope.

**Bread and Meat for the Class:**

1. What kind of boldness does it take to listen to directions from others about the calling God has placed in your heart and life?
2. As leaders in the community, how do you think people perceive you?
  - a. In the short story, would a question, followed by listening ears have changed the conversation between the Amazonian and the Missionaries?
  - b. Do we really size people up before we engage them in conversation? Why?
3. Does it take a special kind of person to step into a leadership role?

- a. Are there certain people who should not be trained to become leaders in the church?
  - b. When should “learning” cease concerning the church family?
  - c. Are there members of the church family who should not be included at the Table of Christ? (This is not a Lord’s Supper question.)
4. Who do you see yourself as Deborah or Barak, or lost in the fray of the Corinthian church?
    - a. What can be done to create more leaders like Deborah and Barak?
    - b. What ideas do you have that will keep the actions like the Corinthian church limited, or removed from worship service and other church functions?
  5. As a leader, in the church and in the laity what are you willing to give up to win that one person over to Christ?

### **Church Family Application**

There are close to 2000 churches closing its doors every year. I truly believe it begins with access to the family being limited and the perception of the church convoluted by society standards.

The 30-day challenge for the church family is to invite two people to worship service and Bible study. This is not about increasing church membership, but changing the community’s perception of your church family and how they have been offered access to “Table of Christ.”

**Personal Application**

Let's challenge ourselves. This week is the week that you should make it a mission to introduce yourself to two members of the church you have not met or spoken to in a while. Yeah, those two people. Those two everyone has been avoiding. It is time that the church family step up and make moves to remove barriers so healing and growth can begin. All it takes is small conversations to remove fear and doubt and create new friendships. And these friendships are the best. They are begun with the access to the Table of Christ in mind.



*Two Eyes Are Better Than One*

- An African proverb

## Chapter 2 - Communicating Openly

Early on in the ministry, from what I had seen of Dr. Barnes was someone who was so self-assured, I found every moment I could to write down little “action notes” to myself on how to move about the church and still remain focused on the things God was calling for me to do in life. I think I had written out all of his sermons he preached in the seven years he was my direct pastor.

I had to accept the knowledge that any counseling has a level of confidentiality and trust within the conversation and in the relationship. A spiritual relationship’s trust is on a level social friends cannot understand. This relationship begins and changes in dimensions of the heart, no one outside of Christ can fathom the experiences. Some people never learn how to be confidential. In Christian circles, this inability can deconstruct a church family in a matter of weeks. People hear. People talk. People change the story.

My backstory of dealing with a father figure was shaky at best. My own father taught me through his actions with his children and wife were a “*What Not To Do*” *laundry* list of fatherhood and parenting. I had served in the Army and Marines, but never had the direct impact I received from a 30-minute meeting with Dr. Barnes about sermon preparation and what he would not allow me to be while growing under him in the ministry. No one had taken the time to provide judgment in my days. It was a shock to my spiritual system and provided me with a sense of respect for the man and not the position. He became my first Pastor-Parent.

His advice to me came through action first and then word:

- A preacher is only as good as his library

- Do not allow the ministry and yourself to be two separate people
- Be who you say you are throughout each sermon
- Never mount the pulpit in the same way because the message God gives is never the same
- Do not make me look bad

Most of us can back track our days to that one conversation that caused us to take pause and rethink our goals and focus for the future. Then some of us can track back several conversations that the information given did not match the person presenting it. Then comes the decision to take the advice or shun it off like a bad piece of chicken.

Now when we all consider advice coming from others, we sometimes act as if it is that dreaded spoon of Cod Liver Oil. Sometimes it is best to “Consider the Source” of information before ingesting it and putting it into practice.

“And it came to pass on the morrow that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses’ father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, ‘What is this thing that you do to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from the morning until the evening?’ And Moses said unto his father in law, because the people come unto me to enquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me, and I judge between one and another. I do make them know the statutes of God, and all His laws. And Moses;’ father in law said unto him, ‘The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou will surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee; for this thing is too heavy for thee, and thou are not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee. Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God. And thou shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. If thou shall do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shall be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.’” (Exodus 18:13-20, 23 NKJV)

There are several layers within the approach Jethro used to get Moses’ attention. From the account in the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter, Jethro had had time to commune and stress with God, his daughter, and his grandsons, while Moses was bringing the children of Israel from their Egyptian captors. This had to have him seeking the well-being of his daughter’s husband. In short, no father would like to have something tragic happen to the man he had given his child to in marriage.

Verses 5 through 7 opens up the fact that there was a relationship between Moses and his father-in-law. Moses honored the patriarch of the family, above his title and position. But for security reasons, Moses has a security force around to protect him from those who would seek to travel back to Egypt by ending his life, thus the father-in-law shouting out who he was and why he was nearing Moses' location. Sometimes we do not know all the intentions of those working their way into our circles of influence.

One thing to be mindful of is the contrast between fathers: Moses' father in law as a priest and the historical knowledge Moses possessed growing up under Pharaoh.

There are several items which should open up the text for us concerning his motives as a surrogate father:

1. You cannot do this alone
  - a. You have help, why not train them
  - b. There is a time to step back and take a break
2. I've prayed about this situation
  - a. You have got to be here for my daughter and grandsons
  - b. You have to take care of yourself before you take on everyone's burdens
  - c. You are not going to make my daughter a widow, even if you are working for the Lord
3. Do your job for God first
  - a. Teach others to be as you are
  - b. You are that role model – be that role model every day

Those who care for us will attempt to judge our actions by watching those things which can cause us to trip up and fail. It should be our intent during this Christian journey to listen to, consider all items through prayer, and then make to decision to ingest all or part of the information given.

Read Acts 8:9-20.

In these verses, we find that Simon had a position in society based on wealth and status, and believed that temporal items would translate into eternal gifts. It is Phillip's reactions to Simon that changes the conversation. The information provided by Phillip to Simon was not accepted.

**Bread and Meat for the Class:**

1. Those seeking to be in leadership of the church, and in a family should have what type of mindset when it comes to receiving, ingesting and sharing all information?
2. What is the value limitation on information that does not align with all traditional news and historical facts obtained?
3. Why is change seen as difficult in a church, in a family relationship?
  - a. How should the church family be provided new information and challenges?
  - b. What reasons can you give for not leaving negative friends and behaviors?
  - c. Why is it so difficult to listen to someone explain reasons for leaving those negatives in our days?
4. What are your perceptions of leadership seen in Moses, his father-in-law, Phillip, and Simon?
  - a. Which one is prevalent in today's church (denomination does not matter)?

**Church Family Application**

Name several programs in the ministry which could benefit from change through pray-filled, open and honest conversations that can strengthen the church as a family. Change can only take place by those willing to see and work in the vision offered. If changes are named, who is willing to be the “Jethro” in aiding in bringing in the transitions?

**Personal Application**

Having an understanding of Moses’ background and calling of God on his life, how can you see yourself when approached by others to change your approach to the challenges of life?

\*If you cannot answer these in the class setting, sit down and begin writing a journal to have those moments of self-introspection and clarity. Only after you have become comfortable with your answers and are willing to hear from others, then you should reach for the next level in your Christian journey – partnering up with stronger individuals you trust.

This action is to grow you, not condemn you in any way.

## Step Ball Change

We all can consider portions of our life to be a dance. Some catch the rhythm immediately from a young age and can dance like Fred Astaire, Usher, Michael Jackson or Bruno Mars without missing a beat. These are the people who can see the vision and move without full knowledge but will learn new things and advantages on the fly.

Then there are some who may take repeated lessons, genre changes and two left shoes to catch on. These are the people who will not quit until they have learned that one new thing.

And again, some are wallflowers. Standing idly by waiting for that right moment, right person, and right time to take that long walk to the dance floor. These are the people who consider all options before wading into the shallows. They want to know if the conditions are right and the partner they have been waiting on is wearing two right, too tight shoes.

Wait one, I almost forgot about that group of folks who will dance a dance of their own creation. These are the people who move very well and smile and giggle the entire time perfecting their own dance moves. And each move fits the music and the people moving on the scheduled beat. These people are those free thinkers we all know. They enjoy living in the blessings they have been afforded and accept unexpected change with a smile and song. (2 Samuel 6:1-15)



The following pages are topics we all should discuss with our families, children, with the support of our church family. Not everyone in our church family can dance. We have watched them from the corner of our eye during worship and asked, “What beat are they moving on?” Let’s face it, some folks are better at Line Dancing in a group of people moving on the same chords and with a purpose of enjoying the moment. Then there are others who will pull us from our seats and give us one on one training in the art of the Ballroom Dance.

Let’s get started.

**Question: Are you satisfied with the last three (3) years of your life?**

The premise behind any plan is to get from one level to the next. The only obstacle is changing a lot of behaviors that limit or negate any chance of becoming as successful as you would like to be. Challenges being understood to happen on every side of life. I believe it is the duty of the pastor-parent and church family to tie every secular move upward to a story of change and growth in the scriptures. Below is the text that I have used to set up the three-year development plan.

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the Lord answered me, and said, write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come. It will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by faith.” (Habakkuk 2:1-4 NKJV)

Everyone has a desire to be financially solvent. The barriers are behavior, belief that change can be accomplished, and a valid reason for given up “guilty pleasures”. The premise behind any plan is to get from one level to the next, to see the vision or dream to fruition, and to see if the things we believe about our talents can be justified in changing “that one thing” in our days.

Anyone of us can be easily pushed off course if the plans and desires are not made in an orderly fashioned and prayed on, in the same manner one would pursue a new job, house, spouse or car. The best soul-shaking question I have found to open the eyes of each group member is, ‘Are you truly satisfied to be in and live in the same situation and level of life you have been experiencing for the last two to four years for the next five, ten, and twenty years?’. After a few minutes to ingest what has been said in the above chapters, we shall move into the areas of purpose and desire.

### The 3 Month to 12 Month Plan – A breakdown ushering in change

This portion is to set up short-term goals, but it shall be aided by the pastor and church family. The outside goal in all of this is to grow the levels of trust between the member of the laity, leadership and church family and begin breaking down those barriers that may have been created by some past failures that some may not have been able to accept the healing or apology.

- these first steps in changing habits and behaviors and moving mindsets into seeking other avenues of brightening up future dreams
- to have in place certain sound goals that will add to your daily and monthly growth
- maintaining a positive attitude when the first few months are reflected upon and one can see that progress has been made
- to reach out and reclaim family and friends to usher in stronger spiritual formation to overcome secular denials and hardships

The following list provides recommended steps in creating a positive plan for successful transition by the pastor-parent's directions to the participants creating their plans:

- List out those things that you would like to accomplish in the amount of time you feel that those items can be accomplished
- Begin listing out on a separate sheet of paper all those things that could hinder/stop you from accomplishing your goals
- Discuss none of your plans in detail to no one (this is between you and God). I am here for you & will assist you in designing your plan to fit your talents. Not one person outside of your spouse, God and mentor should give direction/information

- Pray on both items (your plans and the list of things that can stop you) leaving to God to grant you favor on those things which are good for you and those that can cause you to quit in the middle of your pursuing your dreams and goals
- Return to your lists often to see what has been accomplished and removed from your days

Between the three and five year plans, the increments of 6 months and 12 months will be needed to keep the focus on the long-term goal in sight and obtainable with less distractions. With a habit of returning to the short-term goals, the longer projects can be accomplished and not create stressors because some steps were missed in the planning. Here are several examples of short-term goals I used with my 27 member - Young Adult Group:

1. Create a savings account at a local Credit Union with a goal of saving \$20.00/week for a savings more than \$1000.00 within the first 52 weeks. (most accounts are seeded with \$10 - \$25)
  - a. Do not take an ATM / Debit Card
  - b. Make weekly deposits of \$5 - \$20
  - c. At the end of the goal year, take a short trip out of town to a museum, concert, or to have some alone time at a BnB.
2. Pay off two high-interest bills within a year.
  - a. Take lunch to work instead of purchasing a meal. This can save anywhere from \$9 - \$15 a day ( $\$9.00 \times 5 \text{ days} = \$45.00 + \text{tax}$ )
  - b. The money saved from taking lunch can be split at the end of the week and applied as an extra payment toward the high interest bill. Essentially

killing the interest each month. It is always better to pay on the principal toward becoming debt free in five years.

- c. Do further research beyond this book to discover more creative ways for financial planning and canceling out some debts.
3. Plan a trip out of the country for a five-day stay (this is a long-term goal wrapped in short-term planning).
    - a. Grand Cayman Island, hotel, and food - \$1600.00 +/- for two people to enjoy themselves.
      - i. \$1600.00 will allow for a peace-filled trip without the need for dipping into the household budget during the 5-day stay.
      - ii. Why go cheap when you have put in some serious work?
    - b. Start a Vacay Account at a local Credit Union – If the steps in #1 are to be used, the amount of the deposit has to begin at \$25.00/wk.
    - c. This could become a group effort or a group trip. The church members can form traveling groups while pursuing the goals of saving to see what God has created outside of your city, state, and country. Believe me, it is a better view than peering at it from Google Earth.
  4. Change the way you look at yourself – it takes 90-days to change a behavior/habit
    - a. Cut out all carbonated drinks for three months
    - b. Stop eating all fast foods
    - c. Take a walk around the school track (5 laps) three times a week
    - d. Read at least two novels in three months

If these examples are not chosen, list six goals as a group what goals can be beneficial in creating those positives needed for reaching the steps in positive spiritual formation to overcome secular hurdles. Then choose from those goals and begin to make your moves toward your short-term successes.

The staff writers at FASHIONSBEANS wrote an article titled, *7 Ways You're Wasting Your Money That You Do not Think About*. They took the time to list out simple things we overlook as being a budget killer. I am listing them because they resemble most of our personal spending habits. Some of the items listed are easy to handle-up on, but they will take a lot of conversation and willingness to break some habits:

1. Going out to eat – it is seen as aiding in the development of cooking skills
2. Throwing food out too early – a lack of meal planning and not wanting to eat leftovers
3. Setting your thermostat – U. S. Department of Energy states that most people can save close to 3% on their heating bills if they would only turn down the thermostat during the winter.
4. Doing the Laundry – Use less detergent if your washing machine is an efficiency appliance. This would save you from purchasing excessive amounts of detergents.
5. Purchasing Certain Cosmetics – The average woman spends close to \$8 per day on cosmetics. The writers state that a change of where you shop will not cause a sacrifice in looking flawless.
6. Buying Clothes – buying items that are not name brand clothing can allow a savings of \$1400 annually from the household budget.

7. Buying Coffee – the difference in purchasing your favorite latte adds close to \$460 to the annual budget. The other side of this is making it at home and only spending \$0.18 per cup - \$28.00 annually.

**Just for Thoughts and Remarks**

1. What are the serious barriers to completing any of the goals suggested or discussed in the group?
2. Would the support of the church family aid in you reaching any of the goals suggested?
3. Does talking about your goals prohibit you from making and carrying out your plans, or does it aid an air of encouragement?

*There are three things that if a man does not know, he cannot live long in this world.*

*What is too much for him*

*What is too little for him*

*What is just right for him*

- A Swahili Proverb



## Chapter 3 – Conflicts and Resolutions

### GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS

There is this one couple who lives in a very nice neighborhood.

This one couple's home was the 28th home constructed in the first section of this subdivision that consists of 94 homes.

For almost seven years, this couple has resided in this subdivision without any serious incidents from their neighbors. Well, that is until they decided to construct their property fence, by the allowances afforded all property owners through the Deed Restrictions' Guidelines, that allow for a front yard fence. Just like any homeowners in this subdivision who had made property improvements, this one couple obtain the required approvals from the Builder.

Construction of the property fence was completed in 2013. The property looks like they desired. The fence extends into the front yard of this property and was perfected by the fence company. The fence's side pickets slopes from six foot in height to three foot in height when it reaches the front of the house.

This one couple fell in love with their home all over again.

Let's fast forward three years.

Then comes the introduction of the dreaded HOA and the most unprofessional association management company. The HOA is seated with shortsighted individuals, who from the very first meeting pose the question, "Just how far back can we go after someone?" and "We do not like how their property looks."

For 22 months, this HOA Board has singled out this one family, not because their fence is out-of-compliance with the Deed Restriction, but because "they do not like it."

Wait one.....daggum minute

When has, “We do not like it” become a provision of any Deed Restriction?

At this point in this story, I am scratching my head at the level of intimidation and misrepresentation of the facts, rules, and standards of a Deed Restriction. This one couple has received no less than 26 letters from Association Management Company stating the property fence has been deemed to be in violation of the Deed Restrictions. So climbs the mounting fees for a violation that is not a written violation. And a notice that avenues to place a lien on this couple’s home if they do not comply with the demands of the HOA Board and Association Management Company.

So, this one couple meets with the HOA Board.

In this meeting, the HOA Board consistently state that they are singling this one couple out because they do not like the property fence. They sound like jealous five-year-olds who did not get the same flavor Jello Pudding Pop. All they really had to do was look in the box to see what specific flavors were available. What the HOA Board has to do is simply read what the Deed Restrictions actually state and not work to move by conjecture or some type of unseen power they wish to usurp over this one couple.

Let me say it in this manner:

If these HOA Members would have sat back and read the Deed Restrictions’ Guidelines concerning property fencing, and then took steps like this one couple to make request and clarification with the City of Ordinances, they would have discovered everyone within the city limits can construct a fence similar or greater than this one couple.

This one couple seeks to find resolution to get the HOA Board to understand the Bylaws and Guidelines of the Deed Restriction were not written as a weapon to control homeowners at the behest of the HOA Board, nor the Association Management Company because NO ONE ELSE HAS ONE LIKE IT. This one couple sends letters of request for fair and equal treatment to the HOA Board and to JDH Association. The certified letters are returned and marked refused. However, those letters mailed and not certified were never return to this one couple. This proves they had gotten the message but refused to treat this one couple, in the same manner, their neighbors are being treated.

This one couple sought to follow the exact instructions given by the now HOA Board President. This “really smart” guy informed the property owners in the first open meeting that they would approve all work that was completed prior to the board being seated but made it clear that this one couple’s property improvement will not be approved under this new plan.

So, in this recorded meeting, this “really smart” board member repeats several times that the HOA Board is singling this one couple out, and will not offer them the same treatments as other property owners. We are not stopping here, the board members then take a vote to approve what is taking place. Thus certifying that they have decided to seek out every avenue against this one couple for the sake of showing who’s in control.

Weeks and months after this meeting, none of this one couples’ neighbors would address the HOA Board, but behind the scenes, sent text messages, letters and spoke to the couple in the local grocery store. This one couple survived their ordeal. But it took almost five years of prayer and sticking to one another through weekly planning sessions on how to Step Around the negative situation.

Let me give you an explanation of who the men are that are now seated on this HOA Board. They are the type who think if they fill the room with all the knowledge they have, it makes them the smartest in the room. In this case, they believe that they are the smartest in the subdivision.

While you are reading this, you have to ask yourself the questions, “Is this the 1950s?” and “Are there really people still trying to revive a sectionalized and oppressed type of lifestyle in 2017, and call themselves to be Christians?”

One-sided communication is one thing.

No communication is an issue that stands alone.

But when no one is listening, there will not be any compromise on any level.

*Traveling is Learning* – Kenyan Proverb

Some of the days in this Christ-like journey, we have to step outside of our comfort zones and travel into those areas of our attitudes, beliefs, and limitations to obtain an understanding of those people who we see every day. Most of the information we have received and have presented to others is not 100% correct. But there are opportunities where personal knowledge needs some distancing if there is to be spiritual and personal growth. Yeah, from time to time, we have to travel outside our Circles of Influence to get a better understanding of those who we see are not exactly like we are.

Jesus told many parables and stories that we can believe were based on local events and residents everyone knew because of the stories details. In the story of the Prodigal Son, several areas of the story's relate to the issues listed in the story – communication issues and lack of fellowship.

“And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:11-32 KJV)

During some of our days, we can find it easy to overlook the situations friends, family and associates have found themselves. It is either that we have become tired of their cyclic behaviors, or that they have been warned of the dangers associated with venturing

into unknown areas of town, new circumstances, or that desire to experience the “Red Light District.” We all have had to make the decision on whether to chase the *Wild Oats*, or remain proverbially honest and wholesome.

Let’s face it, we all have not been *Saved* all of our lives. We have turned a few bottles and broken several hearts.

### **Bread and Meat for the Class**

1. What are the differences in fellowship and friendship? Why?
2. When and where is a good time to discuss issues in the family?
  - a. What can “putting off an issue” lead to and do to a family?
  - b. In the story of Good Fences, what would be a solution toward creating a level of friendship between the couple and their neighbors on the HOA Board?
  - c. What do you think can cause someone to set up barriers toward others they have not had conversations or fellowship?
3. Are there variations of fellowship and friendship within the first story and parable of the Prodigal Son?
4. “There are more people who know us than we know.” This adage suggests someone is always watching our every move. Compare verses 15:1-2 and 15:30.
  - a. What are the levels of “spying,” “watching,” and note-taking going on?
  - b. Do you feel that there was opportunity to ask the persons in 15:1-2 and 15:30 being watched questions of *WHY* and *HOW*?
  - c. Who do you think followed the son’s movements, the father or the elder brother?

- i. Who had more to gain from gathering evidence?
  - d. If someone is watching you, what do you believe is the reasons for wanting to know more about you?
5. How can the emotions lead to a misinterpretation of the events and changes that can lead to an open fellowship?
- a. Should a person's past or culture prohibit fellowship, and then friendship?
  - b. How can someone prepare themselves for fellowship with individuals exemplified in 15:1-2?
  - c. How can political rhetoric create barriers in reaching others in the pursuits of following the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)?
6. "Bear one another's burdens....." (read Galatians 6:1-10 KJV)
- In the story *Good Fences*, why do you think those who were watching all of the events take place did not take the opportunity to speak out?
- a. What burden do you feel the father took on during the time his son was gone?
  - b. How do you think the conversations were between the father and eldest son?
  - c. What should be the conversation between the pastor-parent and the congregation when some members have not attended service in a while?
7. Why is it so difficult for others to see your point of view in a situation?
- a. List four ways that would make a conversation beneficial to all parties involved.

**Church Application**

This is a moment that participants tell that one story where misconceptions (almost) caused a good friendship to fail.

Telling these stories can aid someone else in the room in the areas of healing, emotionally and spiritually.

**Personal Application**

In another's shoes:

The story of Good Fences, put yourself and your family in the situation of the couple. Read the story over the next few days. In prayer, ask God to open your heart and mind that you can see beyond the story and find the Gospel within. Then tell the story to at least three of your friends and associates outside of this class. The agenda is not only to be able to teach this against the negatives but allow the Gospel Story to be heard after you have found that one area of the story that relates to those days where you actually were “that one couple” – “that person in a far country.”



*People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude*

- John C. Maxwell

## Chapter 4 – Adjustments and Attitudes

A large corporation scheduled a *Team Building* excursion for its employees. The intent of the excursion was to open patterns of communication towards the profitability of each department.

A man and a woman from the electronics division of this corporation were walking on a path in a wooded area.

Several other pairs had gone before them, so there was no expectation that safety would be an issue.

Each pair was sent out eight minutes apart. The walk was designed to build up trust between management and lower level employees.

Shortly into their walk, the two happened to veer off the beaten path and found themselves 30 feet from a Grizzly Bear.

They froze in their tracks. Neither took a breath for fear the Grizzly would hear them and turn around.

The man made the first whispers of direction.

“Since I am your manager and the leader here, I want you to do exactly as I say and we can get out of here without being seriously injured.” He took a breath. “If we walk slowly backward, the Grizzly will not come toward us.”

The woman looked at him puzzled and slowly bent down to her knees.

The manager looked at her and then looked at the Grizzly and said, “What exactly are you doing? I told you to do exactly as I say?”

The woman slowly tightened the laces on her boots.

Positioned herself in a Sprinter's Stance and gave the manager some needed advice in a whisper.

"I only have to outrun you in order to make it safely out of here."

And she took off running in the opposite direction of the Grizzly Bear.

In the story of Joseph and his brothers, the issues of historical information and tradition come into play in the relationship between elder and younger. This is further compounded by the realization that Joseph and each have different mothers and Israel favors the younger Joseph. The adjustments that should take place when a new child enters a family must be taken during the months preceding the birthday. I am not suggesting that Israel should have worked harder to place the barriers between his sons, but took the time to talk to them about inheritance, love, and cooperation in rearing their younger brother into manhood.

Jealousy can deconstruct a relationship.

It can kill a church family.

In the 37<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis, the story of Israel and his sons has a focus on ATTITUDE, and the variations from negative, supportive, inspiring, and positives that can be drawn from the story and the quoted portions.

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him yet the more. And his brothers said to him, “Shall thou indeed reign over us?” And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.” (Genesis 37:3-5, 8 NKJV)

Sibling rivalry can be defined as the continuous, jealous-based competition that originates in the youth of brothers and sisters. It can be carried on into late adulthood. The sibling bond is often complicated and is influenced by factors such as parental treatment, birth order, personality, and people outside the family who put in certain verbiage that aids into the negatives of the situation. The issues with Joseph and his brothers is documented as beginning with Israel letting everyone know that this one son is highly favored above all

the others. Some might say that it was who Joseph's mother was, but the scriptures tell us that it was a "Man Thing" with Israel. He was proud to be 75 years old and still having the ability to procreate (Gen.37:3).

There are some instances where bragging about certain accomplishments can cause pain in others. We can only imagine that Israel did more than brag for the 9 months preceding the birth of Joseph. But when the child arrived.....WOW!! Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery. The constant reminder shouting at all the brothers was Joseph's attitude behind wearing the "Coat of Many Colors". It may have seemed normal for Joseph to be doted on by his dad, but his brothers did not receive the same required attention. These actions would make even a loving, dutiful child act out (Gen. 37:21-22).

### **Bread and Meat for the Class**

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20 KJV).

1. What are the exceptions that allow for hate to fester in the hearts and minds of a Christian family, church family, or someone who says they have accepted the life's journey of a Christ-like person?
2. Who was accountable for Joseph's well-being and his becoming a prosperous man?
  - a. What values do you feel were being transmitted from father to son, and brother to brother?
  - b. Where do you feel a child receives its instructions for life, what they hear or what they see?

3. Does the scripture above apply to the context of the story of Joseph and his brothers?
  - a. Who created the atmosphere in which this level of hate grew to the point of wanting to end someone's life?
  - b. The story is not of children, but of "adult children" who seem to hold onto childhood pangs. List the ways issues wrapped in hate and anger can be resolved in the church family?
  - c. Should issues of hate, anger, and distrust be discussed before the congregation, or in private (Consider Matthew 15:15-20)?
4. Concerning the issue of attitude, in the story of the manager and low level employee, does it seem as if the title blinded the ambitions of being a leader in a tight situation?
  - a. Rueben is the elder brother, do you think his leadership skills come into question when it came to his brother's life and being accepted by the other brothers?
  - b. When does being accepted rise above doing the right and correct things?
5. After reading the stories, is there any portion of the things discussed and read fit your church family, what can be done to step through those barriers and solidify the church family spiritually and secularly?

### **Church Applications**

In this section, it is encouraged for a prayer to be offered to usher in the movements for reconciliation between church members who have been holding onto old baggage and issues that have not been discussed. This is not a push to open up old

wounds by discussing unresolved issues. But begin to build that bridge that will begin the conversations required in making the church family whole.

### **Personal Application**

The baggage acquired

We all have had those times where we have had issues with someone where the relationship or friendship ended on bad terms. We all think about these issues from time to time. We have been weighed down by the burden of being hurt, or have hurt someone else. It is time to drop off some of those bags that have stopped us from moving on.

Can you write a short letter to that one person and let them know that you have prayed for God's help and intervention on healing so you both can come together and move on?

I suggest a short letter because a letter can:

- Break the ice
- Allow you to write things that are very difficult to speak
- Give you the opportunity to breathe

*If you destroy a bridge, be sure you can swim.*

~ Swahili Proverb

*A mule can swim seven different strokes,  
but the moment he sees the water he forgets them all.*

~ Armenian Proverb



## Treading Water

Money and Time seem unusual partners. On some days and weeks, they do not work well together. We either have enough time, but not enough money. But then there are those times when we have the money for that one thing, but time has run out and the sale is over, or the bill has become past due.

Planning and succeeding have a foundation based on effort, desire, and a willingness NOT TO QUIT on the dreams we want to place all our focus. Planning and succeeding are aided when there is a support system that will keep all the secrets, and help you through the pains of transitioning toward the goals that have been set.

When we receive swim lessons, one of the first lessons taught is for each individual is to tread water. Treading water takes some effort to do and a little more oomph to master. It becomes easier once it has been done for a while, and muscle memory has been established. Here are several techniques to use while trying tread water:

- Dog Paddle – chopping motions performed underwater
- Bicycle – riding the invisible bike with the legs moving at a semi-rapid pace
- Helicopter – arm motions performed right below the surface of the water
- Scissors – slicing motions done with the legs set in a locked, straight-legged position

*The secret in swimming is to know how to take care of your clothes. ~ Spanish Proverb*

While serving in the Marines, I was taught to swim and tread water. As the Drill Instructor explained the need to tread water, he provided the reasons behind why the lessons were so important and needed for everyone who will have to spend any amount

of time on a Navy ship. If there is an incident in which a person should ever fall off of a ship in the ocean, it takes no shorter than 45 minutes for the ship to slow, turnaround and a rescue team or search party to begin looking for that person. The techniques included taking off our trousers, tying the legs together at the ankles, and then holding the waist of the trouser above the water, while flapping as much air into the trousers as quickly as possible. This would create a floatation device that would aid in making past that dreadful 45 minutes. Yeah, even the best swimmers tire. This technique has probably saved a many people.

But then there is the matter of budgeting and keeping our finances “above water.”

- Budgeting is defined as the quantitative process of writing out a detailed plan towards personal or business financing.
- Goal Setting is defined as the process of identifying something that you want to accomplish and establishing measurable goals and timeframes.
- Quitting can be defined as that moment we all give up on our dreams.

I have always believed that adage, “If a man wants something he desires greatly, he will work to move the heavens and hell to get it.” I know this to be true in my own life, when my wife and I decided to put forth an effort to save money towards the purchase of our first home. We did everything to ensure that all things required to make it happen would not be missed on any level. For 19 months we put action into the plan we had written. We opened a second savings account, stopped going out to eat, cut the cord on cable television, and took leftovers for lunch. We eventually saved more than the customary 10% for a down payment on a new home. After looking at 64 homes (whew!), we found

the one that fit us that was still in the process of being built. We prayed on the front porch and closed on the house three weeks later.

### **30-Day & 60-Day Budget**

Many people think of budgeting as something to do when all things are falling apart and the house is short on cash. It is an uphill battle if one has not begun the practice of budgeting and the sight of instant sales catches your eye and takes that last \$50 out of your pocket. Living within a budget is for all to do, rich and poor. Budgeting earlier and often allows for changes to take place and the financial stability of the house will not fall apart. This is one of those areas that people have issues talking about. They sometimes feel attacked when questioned about unscheduled purchases take place. If there is to be any success in future planning, the conversations on the household finances must take place at least three times a month (small steps, right?). The conversation of getting and remaining above water financially has to be a family effort. This project should be discussed routinely with the children to instill the knowledge that “Money Does Not Grow On Trees.”

My goal in this lesson section is to allow you to find that peace of mind we all seek at the end of the month. This is during the times when the temperatures are coldest and the television is blaring all those Disney Dream Vacations on a Cruise Ship, and the latest electronic game systems. Let me explain it this way, we have eight children and budgeting was hard to begin, but it has paid off in the teaching our children the highs and benefits of having some “extra” cash at the end of 90 days. I am not giving out anything that we have not performed in our own home in seeking avenues of remaining solvent in

all the areas of our lives. If you're going to dedicate that much of your life to earn a living, you owe it to yourself to make sure your money is going toward things that are important to you.

Let's look at some examples of bills we face:

Utilities – Water, Gas, and Electric - \$465.00/month

Car Notes - \$615.00/month

Car Insurance - \$230.00/month for 6 months

Gas for each car - \$300.00/month

Health Insurance - \$315.00/month

Cable/Internet - \$190.00/month

Kids' extracurricular activities and fees - \$450.00/month

School Lunches for two children - \$50.00/month

Lunches for the parents - \$300.00/month (\$9.00 per day / per meal purchased)

Total is \$2915.00/month

Then there is the monthly income - \$3800.00/month (two-income household).

(this is before taxes and the unforeseen bills/car maintenance and the casual speeding tickets)

The idea of a 30-day budget is scheduling it to cover 120 days. Each month is planned out for four months. This length will allow for a good conversations to take place with each parent and the children about spending habits and the dream of experiencing traveling as a family.

### **Questions**

1. What areas can you see that would aid in saving?

2. Is there any way a family trip can be planned on this monthly salary?
3. What would be a good schedule for a family trip – annually or bi-annually?
4. How long do you think a budget should be followed after the goal of saving for a family trip has been accomplished?
5. After discussing the above, what areas in your own personal budget can you see that need change?
6. Should tithing be considered a part of the budget, or does it come out before the budget is set?

### **Extra Cash, right**

Another item of contention that we ran across was, “What to do with the money used in the monthly car note when one was paid off?” After we had had several conversations about becoming debt free, the plan was to divide the payment from the vehicle that was paid off into threes: One portion went to payment on the other vehicle. One portion went to paying down credit card debt. One portion went into a Date Night Account (yeah, we want to do a Fancy Date from time to time at a four-star restaurant).

In the interim of making the extra payment on the car, we killed off a good portion of the interest and was able to pay directly on the loan itself. The credit card was paid down to a minimum balance and only used for gas and maintenance on the cars. This move allowed us to keep the credit lines open and keep our credit scores at a high level. Ending lines of credit is not good in this society since most venues seek to find out how you pay your bills when looking for work, purchasing other items on credit and opening up utility accounts for your children’s first apartments or homes. All of this takes some sacrifice.

Each move toward living a balanced financial life takes time, good and open conversation and learning how to trust each other's ideas about how the family's future should look.

Performing these steps in total is worth it.

*Do not let what you cannot do tear from your hands what you can.*

~ Ashanti Proverb

## Chapter 5 – Transmitting Values

*that tinga-ling, tinga-ling thing*

On many days, we try to save as much money as we can.

Some try to pay a portion of a bill, hoping they can make it to the next payday and cover the rest.

Some seek to pay just enough to keep the lights on, keep the car from being repossessed, and then try to have enough extra to have a good time at the club.

But on Sunday – it is a different story altogether.

We seem to worry about how much the pastor is going to get off the top, how much someone in the finance committee will put to the side and not into the everlasting Building Fund.

Yeah, we try to save money to ensure our personal desires are met at the end of the month.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark, the writer details out the actions of Jesus and a Widowed Woman and her approach to letting go of earthly matters in an effort to trust God. On the outside, most think this text is about the tithe of money and the responsibility of giving to the church. That is a fallacy preached more than 10,000 times. Some of make moves in life not realizing others are always watching and critiquing our “Christian Ethics.”

Some say that you can pull yourself up by your boot straps.

That is a bold-faced lie. We cannot survive alone and have lasting success.

We all need assistance. We all seek encouragement.



No one really makes it on their own in this world because everything and everyone is connected. Aid is obtained through advice, directions leading to the next good thing, and other avenues set for advance.

This story is not about money, but the heart of trusting beyond what we hold dear.

It is our daily approach during the week that can turn some folks off on God and then on us.

Yeah, we can say repeatedly, ACTIONS SPEAK.

This is what John Mark noticed when Jesus perched Himself across from the FREE WILL OFFERING. He wasn't watching the money of all the folks being put in, but from taking a long look at His position and knowing that He has a detailed understanding of our hearts and desires.

Jesus was watching the show.

Reading the text slowly, we can find ourselves seated next to the Jesus and His Disciples – watching and listening to the ting-a-ling of the money falling more than 8ft into the treasury coffers. Yeah, there some dropping their coins slowly to alert everyone that they were making a substantial Free Will Offering because they had it like that.

Then there is a woman, widowed. No Job. No Home. No support system. No real money to make that ting-a-ling in the buckets below. More than naught, it is not about what we put into church, but how we approach the Free Will of giving the last in an effort to make noise about the relationship we have with God.

Read Mark 12:41-44.

*A person's wealth may be superior to who they are. ~ Cameroon Proverb*

What is it about the things we consider dear and precious?

Why do they override our abilities to seek God at every turn in our days and give back to Him those same items we have been blessed to cultivate?

Here we are in an age where the sports and racing teams are given the same worship services that are supposed to go to the Lord. We sanction and partition our homes to have the worship services for these teams at a certain time. We are heartbroken when cannot participate in the worship of these teams. We leave church services for the God who continuously blesses us before the benediction because we have to get prepared for the worship service of this particular sports team. We dare anyone in the house to interrupt the worship of this particular team. We set out the *Lord's Supper* in the guise of tailgating, snacks, and drinks. We do not take a breath when the team's mascot is carried out. No, we do not. We sit back and smile and scream into our hearts for the joy this team is about to bring to us. We pay tithes to these teams. We pay tithes and offerings to these teams, even if they have not had a winning season in 25 years. We love them. We adore them. We worship them because they are worthy to be praised, right?

It does sound crazy. We offer up the same set up that was established for the worship of the ONE, True God, to idols that cost us money and time. We are devoted followers of these teams. We would fight friend and family if they get stats wrong, change their focus from the team we have fallen in love with, and will delete certain folks from our Facebook pages if they speak ill of any member of the team.

We have become fans.

We are no longer disciples. There should not be a moment where we call ourselves Christians because Christ Jesus has been replaced. There is a difference

between a fan and a disciple. As stated by Dr. Leonard Sweet, “A fan does not trust their life to the things they “fan”, a disciple does.” The latter is an active, engaging commitment that provides daily returns. The former is empty of promises and the commitment can change through each season. It does not give a life- lasting, life-changing gift.

But we still are open to “*FAN*” because it provides immediate gratification and less work.

When it comes to God.....*Silence* attends worship better than we do.

What values are we transmitting to our children when we consider what is put first in our lives? Does it not speak loudly when all our actions place God on the sidelines and we treat him like the third person in a love relationship? What exactly can be said to justify the Christian actions of spending more time and money on idol worship, over Godly worship (Read Exodus 20:3-5 & Matthew 6:24).

“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him (Jesus), Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him (the rich young ruler), Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in Heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.’ And the disciples were astonished at this words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, ‘Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God (Mark 10:17-24 NKJV).

From the time we first were told this story, our hearts felt for this young man because of the decision he had to make. Standing on the outside, we can come to the conclusion that he should have chosen the kingdom over his possessions. But here we are making the

same decision as this young man while being fans of those things that are consuming us on a daily basis.

Watching Jesus give such a direct commandment seems to have struck the hearts of all who were just watching Him bless the children that ran into His waiting arms. The disciples' reactions came out verbally and lets all believers know that Salvation is simple, but the move toward it forces us to consider the costs. As we stand behind Jesus our thoughts can immediately be moved to personal choices and what do we really need to give up to gain eternal life.

### **Bread and Meat for the Class**

1. What do you think are the biggest differences between the widow woman and the young ruler?
2. Why do you think the actions of the widow woman were so important to Jesus?
  - a. What is so important about how we “perform” while in public?
  - b. Can we consider the young ruler’s attitude and approach to be that of privilege and class?
3. Jesus opened up the conversation to include all who were watching and not just the young ruler. Would it be correct to say that this was not the first person who thought there would be a simpler way to receive eternal life?
  - a. If our children are challenged to think about their roles in Christ, would their views of the world evolve as they mature?
  - b. Why is giving to the poor spoken of in high esteem? What does the giving change, why?

4. If you had 12 minutes to prepare for your last breath, what would you immediately give up?
5. In attending worship services, list those things that can cause distractions from you becoming totally involved.

### **Church Application**

There is a difference in the time for offering/tithing in churches around the world. In 2009, a video was shared on Youtube showing African-Anglican Church members dancing and delivering their tithes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bYe4cHcCe8>). I am not suggesting that your church dance, but open the discussion about personal feelings and attitudes when it comes to worshipping God through giving. Would it be a difficult change in the church to change the atmosphere around this portion of worshipping God? Why does the church treat worship through giving in the same manner as a funeral?

### **Personal Application**

“It is not about me!”

For 5 weeks after experiencing the conversations of this chapter, make steps to change how the worship through giving is done. One or two days prior to attending church: take out your tithes and place it in an envelope, pray as a couple (family) over the gifts, asking God for them to meet the needs of the church and community, and when it is time to place it in the basket during worship services say, “Lord I thank you for this opportunity to give back to you in this manner.”

*Advice is a stranger; if he's welcome he stays for the night;  
if not, he leaves the same day.*

~ Malagasy Proverb

## Chapter 6 – Developmental & Relationship Changes

Who is intimidated by what change exactly?

Intimidation has been defined as the open act of persuading a person or people to do something, believe something that they would not normally wish to do, or place faith in.

Bullying, or being bullied is nothing new to any society on this earth. It happens every single day. It only seems to have increased because it is being videoed placed on social media, and then passed on for more eyes to see.

Victimizing an individual is not an immediate act. It takes time to wear a person down and break them into feeling insecure about themselves.

There are some in this world who openly seek to destroy the character, integrity, and soul of those targeted to be a victim.

This is where believing in yourself and your support system comes into play. This is where your church family comes into play (read Matthew 18:20). Talking to people about issues that have either hurt you or broken your heart does not open you up for further attacks.

Too many people suffer from depression, loneliness, self-depreciation, undervaluing themselves, and broken hearts. Then they give up on life, family, people and the church because the avenues of communication are believed to not exist.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Daniel, the writer details the actions of more than 100 people wanting to destroy the soul and character of Daniel, because he was gifted a leadership role by the king, after being chosen and blessed by God. It can be said that they were jealous of who Daniel was, Daniel's relationship with the king, and then the way he chose to walk in life in front of his God.

Some folks seek to control every facet of another's life, desires for the future, and how they see the world and its people. The writer allows us to see exactly how hate and bigotry can fester into actions that can physically kill another.

Yeah, I am eluding to the fact that there are those who thrive on domestic violence. If we as children of God would look at the society in which we live, and those who are in control of the federal, state, and local governments, we would notice a strong agenda to bully and abuse certain peoples and hold others into a certain area in life – financially, emotionally and educationally.

If a bully can stop you from learning the greatest things in you will fuel you to success, then they seek every opportunity to keep you from being educated.

Some hate others so deeply, they cannot see the impact of their actions are sometimes circled back to where it began. Then the historical information that created the negative views is upfront and should be questioned for change or removal.

This is the place the church has arrived. The marginalized and socially unacceptable have no place to run for help.

Those who have been oppressed, bullied, murdered, and then lynched because of a deep seeded hate have become tired of being tired, lied to and lied on. They have taken the higher ground to find solutions toward lasting change. Taking a knee is not a protest built on hate, but one built on character and integrity when the change in the relationship required to benefit the whole.

Booker T. Washington said it best, "I shall allow no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him."



Daniel's accusers said repeatedly to each other, "we cannot find an occasion of fault in who Daniel is. So let us attack him through his relationship with his God so we can degrade him from the inside out" (yeah, I paraphrased). But they still were not able to destroy Daniel.

Now, I ask who in this story was intimidated by who?

Sometimes the character of a person is not broken by the actions of others outside their circle of influence. In this case, Daniel's parents set the foundation for an honorable character long before he and Israel were taken into captivity. The historical information Daniel had to lean on was correct and solidly planted.

The Bible tells us that we are facing a lion that seeks to destroy us every day, at every angle. Daniel was thrown into a lion's den, long before he was in the pit with lions.

There was a decision made in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Daniel that set his soul on fire, solidified his relationship with the three boys that were with him, and then intimidated an entire society of people to understand the rule of standing up for what you believe in. Sometimes our days may require us to stand or kneel in order to create those portions of our testimonies through God that will allow others to see the light of Christ in all of our actions.

Daniel's actions said it best – "No nation's statue, flag or rule will reign over the relationship I have with my God" (yeah, this is my summation on the story and actions of Daniel).

READ Daniel chapter 6.

A relationship that is built on love and trust is not restricted to persons of a singular bloodline. Within a relationship, those participating sometimes have to step into a gap to rescue, save and persuade the others from hurt, harm or serious injury. This is the point where some discussions come up and accusations of judgment (condemnation) are thrown out. But it is the judgment (positive and productive) that cause the most hurt – people have to accept it after seeing what items they need to give up, change or move towards in order to sustain a healthy relationship and productive life. Yeah, some folks are so hardheaded, any good information is seen as a personal attack. These type of people have to fall on their faces, and almost lose all before they will accept any advice.

From the outside, some relationships seem two dimensional; the give and take are all that can be seen and accepted in the beginning. The portions of assimilation that follow a relationship after years of exchange is where the issues of trust, familiarization and shared patterns of approval are formulated. In the letter Paul wrote to Philemon, we can step into their relationship and see that the portions of assimilation are being used in order to cement all the love they have for one another, and then accept an additional person into the relationship.

“If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hat wronged the, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I, Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albiet I do not say to the how thou owest unto me, even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say” (Philemon 1:17-21 NKJV).

For any relationship to grow, the needed adjustments that take place are a must in keeping a fresh view and perspective on the love and trust that follow. Like the character of many pastors, standing in the gap for those who have been marginalized are

questioned, prayed for and prayed on, and then loved enough that they are introduced to the church family as a person, fully capable of being loved and having the ability to love in return. The issue, as in any family, is the level of accepted adjustment.

### **Bread and Meat for the Class**

1. What do you believe was the relationship between Philemon and Paul that the Apostle thought he could make such a request for acceptance of someone who was clearly in the wrong?
2. Why does Paul make mention of the benefits of having Onesimus as a friend and brother?
  - a. What do you believe folks say about you when you are not in the room?
  - b. How much weight do you believe “character” and “integrity” play in a person’s life when it comes to the people watching us?
3. What are profitable reasons when members of a church family seek to increase friendships outside of the confines of the church building, why?
4. Vs 15 - 17 shed some light on limitations and reconciliation. What can be seen as limitations in the areas of reconciling the relations between Philemon and Onesimus?
  - a. Do the members of a church family face the same limitations when bringing people into the relationship?
  - b. When does a church family begin acting in the character of Christ Jesus and open the doors to everyone and anyone?

5. Should there be strict boundaries between the pastor, laity and church family's relationships?
  - a. Could having restrictive boundaries limit the growth and prosperity of the church?
  - b. If there are non-pliable boundaries with a familial relationship, can any member truly stand in the gap for another?
6. What do you see in this chapter that can inspire reconciliation between hurt friends, family members, and local church family?
7. Realizing that patching relationships is a long process, what has to take place for reconciliation to work successfully?

### **Church Application**

What did you bring to the table?

For four years, we have been having First Sunday Lunches in our home with the Young Adult and Men's Ministry. Some Sundays the crowd in the house would reach 40+ people and the conversations were open and cover all topics. Yeah, we did not try to act "holy and righteous" because of the title. The intentions of the First Sunday Lunches were to usher in a deeper trust between the ministries and generations. Between my wife, Callie and myself, we would alternate who prepared the meals, but we required nothing from those coming to our home to eat. Folks still prepared a meal to share to keep the burden and cost from being overwhelmed and have the opportunity of participating in what was offered when everyone got to the table. During the First Sunday Lunch, the Dipping Game was instituted. A fishbowl is placed in the middle of the room. One person

is to pull one tab of paper and read out the topic for a three-minute discussion. It was a blast. Topic questions ranged from “How would you describe yourself when you were 18 years old?”, “If the inside of your nose were itching and you were on a train with no tissue, how would you scratch it?” to “Can you give you switch cell phones with your spouse for 24 hours?”

I am suggesting a Pot Luck Meal with the venue being open and away from the church. I say away from the church building because some people cannot truly let their hair down because of the perspective associated with the title, position, and family relationship.

### **Personal Application**

This part is to challenge your family.

*It takes a village to raise a child* – African Proverb

As a family, have a Saturday or Sunday Lunch or Dinner with a family in the church. Invite a family that you have not had strong fellowship within worship services. You know, the people you have only spoken to on random Sundays. The application here is to till the ground to cultivate those seeds of fellowship and love to increase the strength of the church family and allow a widening support system to be set. Where we are weak as children in Christ Jesus, others may have that one nugget that pushes us to see the horizon where all we have been seeing are clouds and tops of mountains.

## A Stitch in Time

It only takes a few minutes to a positive pattern in the minds of those seeking new information. When in high school, I took Home Economics (Home Ec.), Child and Parenting Classes, Marriage and Relationship Classes, and learned how to sew, crochet, and cook from my mother and Aunt Rose Mae. Both had different views on how to do some things, but I learned to incorporate what they learned into all that I do as a father and husband. I wanted to be a good husband. Plus I was single for a while before finding the best friend who would become my bride.

There are a few items that I believe should be passed onto the younger generations that are not being taught in school as it was a few decades ago. Some items are not brought into conversations at home because everyone is so busy, so wrapped up in their cells, or on their laptops looking at the wildest/lit six-second video.

The history and emotions of hearing and learning things from our elders is something that seems to have been put on the backburner, or only heard right after Thanksgiving Dinner. Here are a few items I believe could be a Segway into bridge building between ministries and generations:

- Tie tying class – teaching the young adult men and women how to tie a Windsor knot, half Windsor, and bow ties.
- Sewing – teaching everyone how to correctly sew on a button, or hem a pair of pants or skirt.
- Basket Weaving – making a basket from thatch, or Bulrushes (this one is regional).

- First Aid/CPR Class – setting up the four-hour class to educate and certify many church members in this lifesaving technique is beneficial for the church and community.
- Table Etiquette – this is a lost art that should be explored.
- Vehicle Maintenance – teaching young adults how to change the oil in their vehicles, change spark plugs and air filter, and how to change a flat tire.
- Self-Defense – schedule a defense class with the local police. Learn the responsible ways to shop at night and during the holidays, and how to protect oneself to prevent a carjacking.

Some of the items in the list may seem useful, while others might seem a waste of time.

The intent is to increase fellowship and open the doors for communication between all members of the church family. In each congregation are those individuals who have those special talents that they would be willing to teach someone if we would only ask them.

Now the question is not about using church financial resources to set up some of the classes in the list above, but use the talents and gifts from those in the church family, for community inclusion, list the classes in the local newspaper and on social media.

Participation in these classes will allow one person can be won one stitch at a time.

Jab - Cross, Hook – Cross

The art of communicating effectively with the love of your life.

Martial Art Disciplines offer preparation classes for the sole right of successfully defending yourself if you ever found yourself in a place of being attacked. They offer up a set of punch combinations that once learned, will come out of you as muscle memory when you are in a disastrous situation. The central issue within any relationship is the knack for creative communication to ensure no fussing or arguments arise. I have heard numerous times from the Young Adults in my class, “It is okay to fuss and fight in a relationship.” Well, I can tell you that I had an uphill climb in explaining the issues behind trying to live with buried anger and resentment. Old baggage is just as it is described, old.

The issue of trying to hold onto those little things in arguments with your loved one is that you bury the issue until there is another flare up. This is the moment where you throw out that zinger you have been holding in the back of your mind (for weeks) because you feel this is the right time to let it go.

This is the jab.

Then there is that time when your loved one arrived late, did not purchase the correct items, or brought up an unresolved issue trying to find closure. But as stated in previous conversations, “This is not the time to talk about this.” Four years have passed and it is still not the right time. Now you dig up those harsh failure stories you know will hurt your love deeply. You say it and you say it as loud as you are able.

This is hook and cross.



The hook and cross are used because you want the upper hand so you can win this time. But no one actually wins. It only creates a larger and growing divide in the relationship.

Now that weeks have gone and no fussing occurred, you are feeling good about yourself and the relationship. This is not the case with your love one. This person throws out those little negative zingers to only rile you up. Those zingers you guys have been giving each other is the only way communications are done. This type of sharing has to find an end if the relationship is to find that glow from the first time you saw one another. Finding an area that creates a “white space” between you guys is beneficial and can prove to be long-lasting. I am one of those people who doesn’t like to argue and will go silent when the seeds of a fuss begin to seed. I rather wait until the emotions subside so we can have a logical conversation. Below are several ways over the decades that I have sought to keep my bride leaning into that “white moment:”

1. Board Games – we have found that Scrabble® and Play Nine® are good ways to create the dumbest laughs and create some good conversations when it is just two of us. Once we have played and talked so much that we found ourselves watching the sunrise six hours later.
2. 25 Reasons – I have numbered a page from one to twenty-five and made the request that we each sit down and write out those things that we like about one another without repeating any item. If an item is repeated in any way, the penalty is a kiss.
3. Steering Wheel & Mirror Notes – sometimes I write little notes and put them on the steering wheel of the car, or in Callie’s purse (these are not found for weeks

sometimes) just to let her know that I am still in love. I have purchased my own lipstick so I can write on the mirror to express my love (Yeah, I am cheesy).

4. Blank Cards – from time to time I mail the cards with a crazy poem of my creation just to make her smile.
5. Opera Day – several days a year on the weekend, the only way I respond in conversations. Sometimes, she joins in (Yeah, I think she has assimilated some of my silliness).

Each item in the list is my way of keeping our relationship and conversation fresh. The memories created are good seeds for future talks and discussion. We do have our serious conversation, but we have had maybe three fusses in two decades because I refuse to lower my love for Callie into the realm of arguing and name-calling. This gift that God has allowed in my life worth more than trying to agree with the claim, “It is okay to fuss and fight in a relationship.” The opposite is found in Ephesians 5:25.

Here is why I feel the way I do about my bride and why I refuse to argue and fuss. Life for a woman is not at all glorious in our society. Being objectified and treated as if she is a second-class citizen when she is out of the house, does not give me the right to scream, fuss, and call her names. If the house is supposed to be her castle and sanctuary, when she returns from a hard day’s work being greeted with harsh words is the last thing she should receive.

Communication is the way we gain direct intimacy and grows our relationships. In our relationships, we seek confirmation, reassurance, and affirmation from those people who are the closest to us because they have our trust and total attention. One of the better techniques I have used in teaching Young Adults (18-30) in cultivating their

relationships is the Potholder Technique. Yes, a brightly colored Potholder should be used to signify the importance of the moment. This potholder should never be used in a jokingly manner, or to stop the other from speaking because one person has a point to make, but refuses the conversation. The conversations at this time are clearly focused on a serious issue:

1. The potholder signifies that both parties must “Pay Attention!!”
2. No interruptions allowed from either.
3. The potholder is passed to the other who then can and must respond. This encourages both the opportunity and need for a response.
4. The Listener will probably receive more information than usual to absorb. The Listener can and should take short notes to remember thoughts, this will keep the conversation flowing without interruptions.
5. Only one Potholder is used.
6. The Potholder is passed between the parties as it is needed.
7. Ask determining questions to uncover underlying feelings. Ask questions like, “How are you feeling at this moment?” and “What does this really mean to you?” or “What can I do to be a better friend to you?”

## Food for Thought

The previous information is provided as a practical challenge for those who may feel that their love relationship is not feeling quite fresh, and an open adventure added to the journey of being in a life-related relationship. We can all agree that positive information provided may not fit into each relationship, but if changed to fit the uniqueness of those reading this challenge, nothing but good can come from making attempts to validate one another all over again.

1. How can I take this information to create that “white space” for my partner to see me?
2. Can I do some of these things and be willing to provide PDAs (Public Displays of Affection) at the shortest moments?
3. Does the way I treat the love of my life make my children proud to speak about us and our relationship in a positive light to their friends?

### Additional Lesson Topics

Below are several lesson topics I have used with the classes I taught in preparation of this book and my Doctoral Dissertation:

- What is leadership and where does it begin? (I Chron. 11:1-25) - The focus should challenge if we should believe leaders are born or taught. Then question what kind of Christian Leader we are in the community and if our choices in taking a role of a follower fits the characters of the Apostles.
- How to overcome circumstance weighed down by situation (Philippians 4:5-13) – The focus should be on the baggage from our past, and how we can unload and unpack emotional downfalls to climb the mountains facing us during our daily grind.
- Prove yourself to me, Jesus (Mark 10:35-43) – the focus is the idea that Christians are privileged to receive blessings based on genealogy, position, financial status, and geographical location.

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