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## Discernment Practices for Second Chair Leaders

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

DISCERNMENT PRACTICES FOR SECOND CHAIR LEADERS

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

BY

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Portland Seminary  
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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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## DEDICATION

To my mom, who always believed in me and inspired me to pursue my dreams. It broke my heart to say good bye to you this year, but I know you are still cheering me on from heaven.

And to Phil, my biggest supporter, most loving editor, and favorite second chair leader in all the world. In marriage and in ministry, you are the best partner I could ever have imagined.

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and prayer that helped me to lead well from the second chair and stay encouraged in the process of “dissertating.”

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## Table of Contents

DEDICATION .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	IV
ABSTRACT .....	IX
SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Unique Challenges .....	2
PASTOR JANE .....	4
Her Story .....	4
Shared Pain Points .....	5
MISSIONAL PAIN POINTS .....	5
Not Perceived as a Leader .....	6
Need for Institutional Intelligence .....	8
Challenge of Power Differences .....	9
RELATIONAL PAIN POINTS .....	11
Difficult Relationship with Their First Chair .....	12
Personal and Spiritual Health of the FCL .....	13
Caught in the Middle .....	14
Challenge of “Leading Up” .....	15
Challenge of Leading Down .....	16
Challenge of “Leading Sideways” .....	17
PERSONAL PAIN POINTS .....	17
Job Satisfaction and Insecurity .....	17
Vocational Call .....	18
Whether to Serve as SCL or FCL .....	19
Whether to Remain in an Unhealthy Setting or Move On .....	21
Discovering Core Values and Purpose .....	23
LEADING WELL FOR THE LONG HAUL .....	24
Need for Discernment .....	24
Need for Resources .....	25
SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS .....	29
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AS AN INDIVIDUAL .....	30
Leadership Books .....	30
Leadership Conferences .....	31
Analysis of Professional Growth Through Books and Conferences .....	32
PEER SUPPORT .....	34
Mentoring Communities .....	34
Cohort-based Retreats .....	35
Analysis of Peer Support Solutions .....	36



PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION .....	39
Leadership Crisis Intervention .....	39
Leadership Coaching .....	40
Leadership Consultants.....	41
Analysis of Professional Intervention Solutions .....	42
SELF-CARE .....	42
Self-led Retreats .....	43
Contemplative Prayer .....	44
Developing Healthy Habits.....	45
Analysis of Self Care Solutions.....	46
PASTOR JANE’S JOURNEY CONTINUES.....	48
SECTION 3: THESIS.....	51
Introduction.....	51
THE NATURE OF DISCERNMENT.....	52
The Role of Discernment.....	52
The Goal of Discernment.....	53
Metaphors for God’s Will.....	54
The Nature of Discernment.....	55
ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DISCERNMENT.....	56
The Ability to Hear God’s Voice .....	57
The Importance of Self-Reflection.....	57
Discernment Best Practiced in Community .....	58
A FRAMEWORK FOR SCL DISCERNMENT PRACTICES.....	59
Discernment By Looking to the Past.....	60
Discernment By Looking to the Present .....	61
Loving God with the Head.....	62
Loving God with the Heart.....	64
Loving God with the Hands .....	68
Discernment By Looking to the Future .....	72
PASTOR JANE SEEKS DISCERNMENT.....	74
CONCLUSION.....	78
SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION.....	80
Overview of Program .....	80
Opening and Closing Retreats.....	81
Personal Realities .....	82
Relational Realities.....	83
Missional Realities .....	84
Wrap Up and Next Steps.....	84
SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION .....	85
Goals, Scope, Content and Standards.....	85
Audience .....	85
Location .....	87

Budget.....	88
SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT .....	89
APPENDIX A: ARTIFACT .....	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	214

## ABSTRACT

Second Chair Leaders (SCLs) face unique challenges in leading ministry organizations from the second chair. Research indicates that those who lead from the middle of an organization (i.e. from the second chair) are at greater risk of experiencing depression and burn-out than those who lead from the top of an organization, yet most leadership resources are written by and for those in first chair, or top-tier roles . While there may be helpful information from these leadership sources, they do not often adequately address the specific leadership concerns facing SCLs.

This study addresses the unique needs of Second Chair Leaders by exploring discernment practices that can help them thrive in ministry for the long haul. These practices will be woven throughout the three major areas of concern for an SCL, which include Personal Realities, Relational Realities, and Missional Realities. As a practical application of the research from this project, a one-year curriculum artifact is included which provides a process for SCLs to join in community with peers to personally apply the learning. Through this process, SCLs will apply discernment practices that can help them gain clarity in their personal calling and core values; build better working relationships with their first chair leader, peers, and those they lead; and make wise and courageous decisions in their personal and professional life as they lead from the second chair.

SECTION 1:  
THE PROBLEM

**Introduction**

*“It needs more skill than I can tell, to play the second fiddle well.”<sup>1</sup>*

This quote from Charles Spurgeon speaks to the fact that it can be difficult for someone to work hard but receive little notice or opportunity in the second chair role. In the world of music, a second chair musician is much like the understudy of the first chair, continually practicing and working on their craft, hoping one day to have the opportunity to serve in a first chair role. However, despite the effort and skill of a second chair, the first chair receives most of the accolades as well as opportunities for solos. The second chair often exists in the shadow of the first chair.<sup>2</sup>

The focus of this dissertation is on those second chair ministry leaders who lead in the shadow of those sitting in the first chair. In the context of this study, “A second chair leader is a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value throughout the organization.”<sup>3</sup> They provide significant ministry leadership, but do so from the middle of the organization, rather than from the top. While they may add value throughout the organization, they may still find it challenging to lead from the second chair, perhaps receiving less acclaim and support than the top leader in their organization.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Salt-Cellars: Being a Collection of Proverbs, Together with Homely Notes Thereon*, vol. 1 (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1889), 284.

<sup>2</sup> String Ovation Team, “First Violin: Characteristics of a Great Concertmaster,” Connolly Music, accessed July 31, 2018, <https://www.connollymusic.com/stringovation/characteristics-great-concertmaster>.

<sup>3</sup> Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson, *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 2.

Even though they may love the work they do, they may still desire more authority, support, training, recognition, resources, or opportunities.

The term “second chair leader” comes from Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson’s book on *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams*, which specifically focuses on second chair leaders (SCLs) in the church. This study seeks to deepen and broaden that work to consider SCLs in a variety of ministry settings, as well as exploring a number of unique challenges they face in their role.

### **Unique Challenges**

Second chair leaders face a different set of challenges than those above or below them in an organization. These challenges arise from three overlapping areas of concern, comprised of Personal Realities, Relational Realities, and Missional Realities.

In regard to Personal Realities, being in the middle of an organization creates unique stressors. This observation is supported by research from Columbia University and the University of Toronto which notes that “employees in mid-level positions had higher rates of depression and anxiety than employees who occupied positions nearer either end of the hierarchy.”<sup>4</sup> The Personal Realities of an SCL are also impacted in terms of their need for a clear sense of vocational call, as they seek to discern whether they should remain in a second chair role or seek to move into a first chair.

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<sup>4</sup> Eric M. Anicich and Jacob B. Hirsch, “Why Being a Middle Manager is so Exhausting,” *Harvard Business Review* (March 2017): 4, EBSCOhost.

SCLs also face a number of relational challenges since they are in the unique position of communicating with “C-level” leaders, such as CEOs, CFOs, and COOs, while also being “See-level” leaders themselves.<sup>5</sup> In other words, they are leaders who can *see* what is going on at the ground floor. “SEE-level leaders are the lynchpin between the strategy set at the top and the execution of that strategy through the ranks.”<sup>6</sup> They are often charged with implementing the C-level (or first chair) leader’s vision while noticing See-level concerns that could impact or even undermine the vision. This means that See-level, or second chair, leaders have a significant organizational role but in order to fulfill their leadership role they need training in communicating well with those above and below them.

In addition to the unique personal and relational challenges, SCLs also face missional challenges such as the need to make wise decisions about how to help shape organizational culture and strategy. As Patrick Lencioni notes, developing organizational health is the “single greatest advantage” of any organization.<sup>7</sup> This means it would be wise for first chair leaders (FCLs) to engage leaders at every level in helping create a healthy organizational culture. Unfortunately, this is a challenge for many SCLs because they are not always given a place to contribute to developing the mission and culture of the ministry, even though nationally, SCLs outnumber FCLs by about 20 to one.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Richard S. Wellins and Patterson S. Weaver Jr., “From C-Level to See-Level Leadership (Cover Story),” *T+D* 57, no. 9 (September 2003), 60, EBSCOhost.

<sup>6</sup> Wellins and Weaver, 60.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick M. Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2012), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Wellins and Weaver, 60.

## PASTOR JANE

### **Her Story**

To help flesh out the challenges facing SCLs, let us meet Jane, a fictional character based on composite traits of real SCLs. She is an Associate Pastor at a growing church, who loves her work and is grateful for the opportunity to serve. However, she is beginning to feel more frustrated than joyful in her work. As an SCL, she often finds herself implementing and managing the vision of Dave, the Lead Pastor, which she knows is part of her role, but she feels the stress of not being able to use many of her own gifts and visions.

Jane begins to wonder if she would be more fulfilled serving as a lead pastor, with more freedom to shape the vision and ministry. While this appeals to her, she recognizes that as a woman she might never have the opportunity to serve as a lead pastor. Jane also wonders whether God is calling her to continue providing good leadership from the second chair. She enjoys focusing on adult ministries, which she is primarily responsible for, rather than being responsible for the entire church. In her current role, she experiences joy in leading a high impact staff and team of volunteers serving the spiritual needs of more than three hundred adults in the church, helping them grow in their personal walk with God while also reaching out to those outside of the church.

Although Jane enjoys her job, she periodically feels frustrated by organizational dynamics. Sometimes she feels caught between the needs of her team and the expectations of Pastor Dave; she is not always sure she agrees with his approach to discipleship and outreach, and she struggles to provide strong leadership without undermining his authority. While trying to discern God's call in her ministry career, she

needs to find some way to be content in her current role amidst competing expectations, an abundance of administrative details, and the periodic sense of unfulfillment.

Finally, Jane is also beginning to recognize that the demands of second chair leadership have left her feeling emotionally isolated, mentally overwhelmed, physically fatigued, and spiritually dry, making it even more challenging to discern God's leading in her life while providing solid spiritual leadership to the church. She needs to find a way to thrive in this role or risk simply burning out.

### **Shared Pain Points**

As illustrated by the story of Pastor Jane, SCLs have unique pain points that make it challenging to thrive personally and professionally amidst the demands of their role. While Jane's story focuses on a second chair role in the church, similar pain points exist for SCLs in other types of Christian organizations as well, including parachurch, nonprofit, mission organizations, and Christian colleges. In exploring pain points for SCLs in any ministry organization, we will examine the three basic areas of Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities.

### **MISSIONAL PAIN POINTS**

Missional Realities for an SCL involve such things as how the SCL is involved with shaping and leading organizational culture, communication, values, mission, and goals. In order for an SCL to truly be a leader, it is important that they be given a place to help shape these things because, as JR Woodward notes, "While management acts within



culture, leadership creates culture.”<sup>9</sup> SCLs do more than merely manage culture, but sometimes it is difficult to create culture from the second chair, not only because they may experience organizational constraints in their role, but also because “the emotional processes, ways of relating and being, decision making, symbols, values and other parts of the organizational culture naturally work together to keep things the same.”<sup>10</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to address these issues in depth; however, there are several representative areas that will illustrate the ways in which Missional Realities affect SCLs.

### **Not Perceived as a Leader**

One missional challenge for SCLs relates to how people perceive them in their second chair role. The terms “middle leader” or “second chair leader” can be confusing to some, since such roles have traditionally been referred to as “middle *managers*,” not leaders. As Jim Sabella notes in his dissertation, “It is generally accepted that the term ‘leader’ is reserved for those who serve in the upper levels of an organization, while ‘manager’ is reserved for those serving in the middle of an organization.”<sup>11</sup> However, Sabella goes on to argue that given the process orientation of many leadership models

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<sup>9</sup> JR Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 127.

<sup>11</sup> James Sabella, “Exploring Leadership in the Middle: an Application of Schon’s Reflective Conversation – a Decision-Making Process for Assemblies of God World Missions Area Directors” (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2019), 15, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/304>.

(such as “Transformational Leadership,”<sup>12</sup> “Authentic Leadership,”<sup>13</sup> Servant Leadership,”<sup>14</sup> and “Adaptive Leadership”<sup>15</sup>), leadership is not restricted to a person’s organizational position or title. Anyone who engages in the *process* of leadership, regardless of their position within the organization, is a leader. A recent Gallup publication supports this conclusion, indicating that the primary role of middle managers is to be effective in how they “lead and develop people,”<sup>16</sup> rather than how they manage. From a ministry perspective, a process-oriented definition of leadership for SCLs would say that “Leadership is a Christ-centered, relational process that moves people toward God’s transformational purposes in us and the world through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

While this may be true from a leadership model perspective, it may not be perceived as true for people who work with an SCL, who may see them more as a manager than a leader. People both inside and outside of the organization may want to connect with and serve under the leadership of the FCL, perceiving that person to be the one with power, platform, and resources, rather than desiring to connect with or serve under the leadership of the SCL, perceiving them to lack authority and status. This can undermine the SCL’s sense of esteem and value, both personally and within the

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<sup>12</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 8th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2019), 163.

<sup>13</sup> Northouse, 197.

<sup>14</sup> Northouse, 227.

<sup>15</sup> Northouse, 257.

<sup>16</sup> Jim Clifton and Jim Harter, *It’s the Manager: Gallup Finds that the Quality of Managers and Team Leaders is the Single Biggest Factor in Your Organization’s Long-term Success* (Washington, DC: Gallup Press, 2019), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from MaryKate Morse’s definition of leadership, Cannon Beach, OR, March 2018.

organization.<sup>18</sup> It can also challenge the SCL's ability to gain the respect and resources needed to effectively lead their team in ways that connect with the larger organizational mission.

### **Need for Institutional Intelligence**

Yet another missional challenge for SCLs exists in regard to their ability to advance in their organizational leadership knowledge, experience, and skill. While senior leaders may have access to consultants and training in how to better lead a ministry organization, SCLs may not have the same access. This means that while senior leaders may be growing in their institutional intelligence, allowing them to be more effective missional leaders, the SCL may not be receiving encouragement or training to understand organizational dynamics and how best to lead and build the organization. If an SCL is going to make a lasting difference in their organization and indeed in the world,

It will mean fostering institutional intelligence: learning to work with others, within institutions. It means understanding how institutions work, how they can be most effective, and how you can contribute to a greater whole by learning to work within institutional systems. It means growing in your capacity to appreciate how institutions are founded, how they work, how they grow and adapt, and how they are governed.<sup>19</sup>

The SCL may become frustrated if the FCL does not express interest in the professional development of the second chair, instead seeing them more as a person to whom they can delegate tasks rather than as a missional leader themselves in need of ongoing learning opportunities. It can be frustrating for SCLs to feel they must take full

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Fryling, phone interview by author, June 28, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon Smith, *Institutional Intelligence: How to Build Effective Organizations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 8-9.

responsibility for growing in their understanding of organizational and missional development. This can lead to unspoken resentment between the two of them, and the SCL feeling stuck in their role without opportunity for advancement.

### **Challenge of Power Differences**

One specific area of missional challenge for SCLs is the difference in power between themselves and their first chair leader. FCLs have the final say on decisions, budgeting, resource allocation, staffing, priorities, and vision. SCLs may have input on these things, but the FCL generally makes the final decision. If the relationship between the two is not strong and trusting, there will not be a healthy exchange of ideas and information. This can lead to unhealthy interactions such as the SCL undermining the FCL by withholding important information (a passive-aggressive power move), or the FCL completely disregarding the SCL's input (which can be an aggressive power move). In either case, the relationship becomes strained, leading to the possibility of poor decision-making, serious miscommunication, unhealthy organizational culture, and diminished ministry outcomes.

When these tensions between FCLs and SCLs remain unaddressed, it displays a disregard of Scripture's teaching about being the Body of Christ, where each person has an important place and role. As humans, we are prone to compete with one another for status and position, which is why God says that "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (I Corinthians 12:22b-23). Ideally this would not only mean that the SCL treat the FCL with care and respect, but the FCL would do the same for the SCL, since

they are in a “weaker” position in terms of organizational power. Unfortunately, this does not always happen.

Another potential point of power difference for SCLs arises in regard to gender. Many SCLs in Christian ministries are women, and many FCLs are men. This sets up another imbalance of power in the working relationship. As Sheryl Sandberg notes, “The blunt truth is that men still run the world. This means that when it comes to making the decisions that most affect us all, women’s voices are not heard equally.”<sup>20</sup> While Sandberg is speaking primarily of the gender gap in the secular world, research has shown that this gap is still at least as wide in the Christian arena, if not wider. This is because “prejudice against the other is pervasive. . . . It is all about power and control, not love and self-sacrifice.”<sup>21</sup> This can be further complicated by the denominational and theological perspectives of a particular Christian organization in terms of whether they take a complementarian or egalitarian perspective on the role of women in ministry leadership. However, even in egalitarian ministries, there can still be unconscious gender bias that affects the working relationship between women and men, opportunities for women as leaders, and the personal well-being of women in ministry. This is reflected in Barna’s research on pastors which reveals that “Women who lead churches are more likely than men to say they feel lonely or isolated from others.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2015), 5.

<sup>21</sup> William David Spencer, *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publisher, 2008), xx.

<sup>22</sup> Barna Research Group, *The State of Pastors: How Today’s Faith Leaders are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Malibu: Pepperdine, 2017), 16.

As part of my research, I interviewed a number of female SCLs, many of whom work for male FCLs. While some shared stories of the positive relationship they have with their first chair leader, there was widespread acknowledgment that gender issues cause challenges in such things as not being taken seriously, not being given a seat at the decision-making table, and not being given access to resources and opportunities for growth and leadership advancement. Some of this access happens in informal settings, such as if male leaders play a round of golf and the female leader is not included. Often relationships are built and decisions are made in these informal settings where women may not be invited. While gender power inequality in ministry leadership is a significant issue, it is beyond the scope of this study to adequately address it.

## RELATIONAL PAIN POINTS

The Relational Realities SCLs regularly face involve the ways they must communicate and relate throughout the organization. When an organization is large enough to have at least one SCL, this means it is also large enough to have complex communication between and among leaders and followers, a fast pace of ministry and growth, abundant problems to solve and people to care for, and little time to provide adequate personal and professional support for leaders. In addition, “it is often difficult for individuals to develop as leaders when they feel caught between their staff and upper-level administrators within their organization.”<sup>23</sup> These relational challenges are further

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<sup>23</sup> Ryan Buller, “Leading from the Middle: An Overview of Current Research and Trends on the Topic,” *Journal of Access Services* 15, no. 1 (2018): 44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15367967.2018.1423982>.

complicated by the SCL's need to lead others effectively both up and down the organization, which requires relational congruence. Author and ministry consultant Tod Bolsinger describes this as "the ability to be fundamentally the same person with the same values in every relationship, in every circumstance and especially amidst every crisis," something that can tax the relational capacity of any SCL.<sup>24</sup> All of this can result in SCLs struggling to maintain healthy relationships and lead well from the second chair.

### **Difficult Relationship with Their First Chair**

Of the nearly forty SCLs I interviewed as part of my research, many shared stories of challenges with their first chair leader. Some of these challenges include working with an FCL who struggles with insecurity, pride, jealousy, or some type of weakness; they may also struggle with poor leadership skills due to a lack of experience, training, personal dysfunctions, or other leadership deficiencies. This meant that the SCL had to figure out how to navigate the FCL's dysfunctions in a way that provided support when needed, feedback on difficult issues when needed, and strong but adaptable leadership that complemented the leadership of the FCL. Many SCLs, although desiring to provide biblical leadership and support for the FCL, found this overwhelming and sometimes exhausting to navigate.

According to Mike Bonem, author and coach who works with SCLs, the relationship between an FCL and an SCL is similar to a dance. "When two people dance well together, they transcend the technical aspects. There's grace in their moves. They

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<sup>24</sup> Bolsinger, 67.

anticipate each other's actions. They can be spontaneous and well-coordinated at the same time."<sup>25</sup> However, this type of working relationship does not come quickly or easily. It takes time, intentionality, and a willingness to offer grace for mistakes or offenses. In addition, if the FCL is not committed to putting effort into building the relationship, the SCL may struggle to carry the relational load.

### **Personal and Spiritual Health of the FCL**

The personal and spiritual health of the FCL can also impact the personal and spiritual health of the SCL. This was primarily reflected in my interviews with younger or less experienced SCLs (generally Millennials), who tended to be more adversely affected by an FCL's poor personal and spiritual health. These younger leaders found it challenging to thrive spiritually and personally if their FCL was not also thriving and setting a good model for them.

Interestingly, many of the more seasoned SCLs I interviewed did not feel adversely affected by any lack of spiritual maturity in their FCL. Many expressed an understanding that it is not the role of the FCL to care for the SCL's personal and spiritual health. These things are in the SCL's control and not dependent on the FCL. One mature leader put it this way: "If I consider my first chair to be in poor spiritual health, it's not going to drag me down. It may cause me to question whether I want to be led by that person, but the flip side is that an unhealthy first chair is not discouraging to my own spiritual health, although it would make it very hard to lead from the second chair."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Mike Bonem, *Thriving in the Second Chair: Ten Practices for Robust Ministry (When You're Not in Charge)* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), 12.

<sup>26</sup> Phil Sommerville, interview by author, Rocklin, CA, June 15, 2019.



## Caught in the Middle

While SCLs can struggle in the relationship with their FCL, they also have the unique challenge of being part of two teams: the leadership team above them and the team below them. In this way, they “see the vision at the top of the organization and the pain at the bottom.”<sup>27</sup> They must become experts at constantly switching roles and postures as they navigate interactions between these two groups, taking the role of a subordinate leader with their supervisor, and then switching to more of an FCL role in leading those on the team below them. Some SCLs thrive on this constant switching of roles, while many others find it draining.

This vertical code-switching, as we call it, can take a toll. . . . On the emotional side, conflicting roles lead to increased feelings of stress and anxiety, reflecting the tension between incompatible social expectations. Physically, the high stress levels that accompany such conflicts are risk factors for a large number of health problems, from hypertension to heart disease.<sup>28</sup>

Not only must SCLs be adept at leading their FCL while simultaneously leading their own team; frequently they must also be skilled at leading “sideways” as they collaborate with other SCLs across the organization. Each direction of leadership requires different relational skills, as well as the agility to quickly adapt approaches.

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<sup>27</sup> Jean-Michel Caye, Rainer Strack, Paul Orlander, Julie Kilmann, Ernesto G. Espinosa, Florent Francoeur and Pieter Haen, “Creating a New Deal for Middle Managers: Empowering a Neglected but Critical Group,” *World Federation of People Management Associations* (Report from The Boston Consulting Group, July 2010): 1, <https://www.bcg.com/documents/file52425.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Anicich, 3-4.

### *Challenge of “Leading Up”*

Part of the “vertical code switching” an SCL must engage in involves what many have called “leading up.”<sup>29</sup> As John Maxwell observes, “If you take the approach of wanting to add value to those above you, you have the best chance of influencing them.”<sup>30</sup> Learning to lead an FCL can be one of the most challenging things an SCL must do. However, when the SCL is able to add value and have influence on their FCL, they have a better chance of making progress and leading the organization well from the second chair.

As noted by a number of those SCLs I interviewed, however, many of them struggle to know how to add value and have influence with their FCL, which can lead to relational friction, misalignment of vision, and a great deal of internal and organizational stress. The skill of “leading up” is not something SCLs are usually taught; most often they must learn this in the trenches of ministry. While the specifics of how to do this will vary from one SCL/FCL partnership to the next, Dee Hock, former CEO of VISA credit card argues that “managing superiors is essential. Devoting 25 percent of our time and ability to that effort is not too much.”<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, not all SCLs have the opportunity to develop the type of trusting relationship with their FCL that can allow them to effectively “lead up.” As one SCL

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss so You Both Win* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), 280.

<sup>30</sup> John Maxwell, *The 360 Degree Leader: Developing Your Influence From Anywhere in the Organization* (Nashville, TN: HarperCollins Leadership, 2011), 81.

<sup>31</sup> Dee Hock, “The Art of Chaordic Leadership,” Meadowlark Institute, last modified January 2000, 4, [https://www.meadowlark.co/the\\_art\\_of\\_chaordic\\_leadership\\_hock.pdf](https://www.meadowlark.co/the_art_of_chaordic_leadership_hock.pdf).

shared with me, “I reported to fifteen different first chair leaders in eighteen years.”<sup>32</sup>

While this example is extreme, it is not uncommon in many ministries to have frequent organizational or senior leadership change, which does not allow enough time for the SCL and FCL relationship to develop, because “Partnerships are built on trust, and trust cannot be microwaved.”<sup>33</sup>

### *Challenge of Leading Down*

Another challenge some SCLs shared with me during my research was the need to protect those they lead from any organizational chaos or poor leadership happening above them, without maligning or undermining the FCL or the organization. In essence, the SCL serves as a buffer between those organizationally above them and those below them. At times, this can cause them to feel squeezed in the middle, and at other times it can cause them to feel misunderstood by one or both sides.

In addition, SCLs must learn to “lead down” in ways that resonate with the needs of their team. As recent research from Gallop indicates, “The top-down leadership techniques of the past have not adapted to a workplace that now demands coaching and collaboration to thrive.”<sup>34</sup> However, not all SCLs have been trained in the leadership techniques of coaching and collaboration, making this another challenging aspect of leading their teams well.

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<sup>32</sup> Rachel Johnston, interview by author, Rocklin, CA, June 11, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Bonem, *Thriving in the Second Chair*, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Clifton and Harter, 21.

### *Challenge of “Leading Sideways”*

Another important leadership role requiring collaboration is that of “leading sideways.” Working with other SCLs can be an enjoyable process for many, but it depends greatly on the nature of the relationships and the projects involved. “When you take the organizational lead and involve others in the process, it is good for both the organization and for your relationship with your peers.”<sup>35</sup> However, SCLs may have to be careful not to overstep their boundaries or appear to be pushy or controlling. If the SCL peer relationships are not healthy, or if the project is unclear or potentially involves turf battles, then leading sideways can become yet another difficult task for the SCL.

### PERSONAL PAIN POINTS

Now that we have examined the challenges for SCLs regarding Missional and Relational Realities, we will focus in on the Personal Realities that can impact the health and effectiveness of an SCL. Although these vary from one person to the next, there are some commonalities that exist between SCLs.

#### **Job Satisfaction and Insecurity**

When the organizational dynamics and the working relationship between the FCL and SCL are relatively healthy, most SCLs find great satisfaction and joy in their work. However, some of those I interviewed shared experiences of toxic working environments

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<sup>35</sup> Renee F. Bergman, “Leading Up, Leading Down, and Leading Sideways,” *Voices & Views* (May 2007), <https://www.nixonpeabody.com/en/ideas/articles/2007/05/16/leading-up-leading-down-and-leading-sideways>.

or dysfunctional relationships with their FCL, making it difficult to function well and feel a sense of satisfaction in their work.

In addition, my interviews revealed a general sense of insecurity for SCLs, knowing they serve at the pleasure of the FCL. If at any time the FCL decides the SCL is not a good fit or they want to go a different direction, the SCL could be asked to leave, something which several interviewees had experienced. In addition, if at any time the FCL was not happy in their own role or if they had some type of moral failure, they would either decide to leave or be let go by the board. This would often lead to the SCL needing to leave at some point as well so that the new FCL could bring in their own team. Many SCLs expressed a certain amount of frustration with how closely their own role was tied to that of the FCL, leading to low levels of job security and the real possibility of having to uproot their family and move on, often not of their own choosing and sometimes with very little notice. Many of the more seasoned leaders I spoke with had experienced this type of situation, but also acknowledged that God had used this difficult experience to deepen their faith and remind them that in reality they serve at the pleasure of God, not the FCL.

### **Vocational Call**

An important personal reality SCLs face involves discerning God's call in their lives and how it fits within their role in the organization. Scripture says that "we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). Given this biblical truth, it makes sense that as SCLs discern God's specific call in regard to those good works, they will experience deeper meaning and purpose. Discerning this call is a matter of vocation. As Quaker

author Parker Palmer explains, “Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity.”<sup>36</sup>

An important step in discerning vocational call involves SCLs coming to know themselves more fully, enabling them to uncover their deepest passions, and giving them clarity on their calling. As theologian Frederick Beuchner explains, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”<sup>37</sup> While it can be relatively easy to find the world’s deep hunger, because it is everywhere, it can be more difficult to discern one’s deep gladness. The daily demands of life and ministry can obscure an SCL’s passions and deep gladness, making it difficult to be clear whether or not they are operating out of their true calling.

#### *Whether to Serve as SCL or FCL*

One ongoing question for many SCLs is whether to stay in a second chair role or move to a first chair role. Many, if not most, FCLs are in a terminal role, having moved their way up through the various levels of experience within ministry and arriving at a level of leadership with greater freedom to exercise authority, cast vision, and use their gifts. However, many SCLs are not in a terminal role. Although some have come to recognize that they are called to remain in a second chair role as a way of fully living out their giftedness and ministry calling, others are in the beginning or middle stages of their

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<sup>36</sup> Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 4.

<sup>37</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC* (New York: HarperOne, 1993), 95.

vocational life and are still discerning where they belong. Still others have discerned a sense of calling to increased leadership authority, but the opportunities have not been available. This is often true for many women and minorities; many introverted SCLs can also find it difficult to move to higher levels of leadership in American ministries because “evangelical churches can be difficult places for introverts to thrive, both for theological and cultural reasons.”<sup>38</sup>

As a result, many SCLs are in an ongoing state of discerning their call and fit for a particular ministry role. This can cause internal tension between being content in their current role versus desiring to move to a different role. Bonem and Patterson note that “this tension stems from our own understanding of our dreams and calling,” which can lead an SCL to move to one end of the spectrum or the other. At one end of the spectrum, they may push too hard and fast to pursue a dream, much like the Old Testament story of Joseph, who related his God-given dream to his brothers and sought to fulfill his dream of ruling over them in his own time and his own way, rather than waiting on God’s timing. At the other end of the spectrum, the SCL may begin to feel that their dreams will never come to pass, so they may move toward complacent acceptance of their situation. Neither of these extremes are helpful for an SCL seeking to discern God’s call for the future while being faithful in the present. Although “contentment is a choice for every second chair leader,”<sup>39</sup> this can be a difficult choice to live out on a daily basis.

As a result, SCLs have an ongoing need to determine if they are still where God wants them to be, or whether God may be preparing to move them into a first chair role

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<sup>38</sup> Adam S. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Bonem and Patterson, 121.

or perhaps a second chair role in a different ministry organization. Discerning this can be a difficult thing for SCLs in Western Christianity, where there are embedded cultural values that bigger is better, and that larger, more “significant” ministry roles (i.e. first chair roles) are the direction all SCLs should be heading. However, as leadership expert Robert Clinton asserts, “A leader is not to consciously seek to expand his sphere of influence as if bigger were better. A leader is to respond to God’s challenge to accept varying spheres of influence in order to find God’s proper sphere for him.”<sup>40</sup>

This ongoing discernment takes regular, prayerful attention on the part of the SCL, and a humble willingness to embrace the possibility that God may be leading them to the counter-cultural call to remain in a second chair role. This tends to be a primary theme in conversations with the many SCLs I have served as spiritual director over the past fifteen years. Discerning vocational call and fit for a specific ministry is often a primary motivation for many SCLs to seek out spiritual direction, because there are few safe places where they can talk about these things in a prayerful, reflective way.

#### *Whether to Remain in an Unhealthy Setting or Move On*

Another challenging question many SCLs must consider is whether or not to remain in an unhealthy ministry setting or working relationship. The Bible illustrates that there are times when God calls an SCL to remain in their role and speak truth to power, such as when God directed the prophet Nathan to confront King David by telling a parable, allowing David to recognize himself in the story (II Samuel 12:1-14). Through

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 102.



this creative approach to the subject, Nathan was able to help lead David, his FCL, to repent of his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and of having her husband murdered. This was a risky and dangerous thing for Nathan to do, since King David had the power to have the prophet banished or even killed for insubordination, but Nathan played a key role in fulfilling his call to serve under a king who needed both correction and support.

However, there are also times when it might be preferable to make a move out of an unhealthy ministry setting into a setting where they can better thrive and offer their leadership gifts. It can be challenging for SCLs to discern whether they should make this type of move, since the pain of a situation may make it difficult for the SCL to listen for God's leading in an open way, given the emotional weight of the decision. Further complicating the issue is the fact that making a ministry change may necessitate the SCL relocating their family and letting go of important relationships from their ministry. These emotional and relational considerations increase the stakes of discerning what to do, especially if the SCL is deeply invested in their work and the people they serve. Yet, as Peter Scazzero explains, "We mistakenly believe that our responsibility as a leader is to always keep things going – even if they aren't working – and to keep our people from experiencing the pain of loss."<sup>41</sup> At times, however, when an SCL tries to buffer their followers from pain by absorbing the pain themselves, it can lead the SCL to burnout and may cause additional pain to their followers if the dysfunctional situation or behavior of the FCL becomes known.

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<sup>41</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 274.

## Discovering Core Values and Purpose

An even deeper issue than vocational call relates to the SCL's own core values and purpose. Core values are those things we hold as most important in our lives, shaping who we are and how we live. Author Simon Sinek calls this a person's "why," and he claims that "very few people or companies can clearly articulate WHY they do WHAT they do. . . . By WHY I mean what is your purpose, cause or belief?"<sup>42</sup> Many SCLs have never done the work of reflecting on what values are most central to their lives. The problem with this, according to Brene Brown, is that

We are called to live in a way that is aligned with what we hold most important regardless of the setting or situation. This, of course, is the challenge of living into our values: those moments when our values are in conflict with the values of our organization, our friends, a stranger in line at the grocery store or polling station, or even our family.<sup>43</sup>

The challenge of identifying and then living out of their core values is an issue many SCLs struggle with. Since an SCL may feel like they are serving at the pleasure of the FCL, they may at times find themselves sacrificing or compromising one or more of their own core values so as to fit better with the values of the FCL or the organization. Even if the compromises are small, over time this will cause the SCL internal dissonance which, if not remedied, will lead to burn out or even leaving the ministry. For these reasons, it is important that the SCL take time to discern their core values and life purpose. Once these things have been discerned, it will aid the SCL in making wise

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<sup>42</sup> Simon Sinek, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009), 39.

<sup>43</sup> Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead: Daring Greatly and Rising Strong at Work* (New York: Random House, 2018), 187.

decisions in an ongoing way since they will be able to use their core values as a touchstone for other decisions.

## LEADING WELL FOR THE LONG HAUL

### **Need for Discernment**

As we have seen, SCLs face many pain points unique to their role that can lead to stress, confusion, burnout, or worse. They would be greatly helped to thrive in ministry for the long haul by gaining the ability to face leadership challenges with an increasing “capacity to rebound, or ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility.”<sup>44</sup> As a recent Barna study concluded, “The Christian community does not need stronger leaders; we need more resilient leaders.”<sup>45</sup>

Underlying the challenges facing SCLs is a common thread that can make the difference between resilience and distress, between thriving and burning out. This common thread is discernment, and is a key to facing the demands of second chair leadership with courage, humility, and wisdom. As leadership and spiritual formation expert MaryKate Morse explains, “Discernment does not mean to abdicate responsibility for making a decision, but to listen for the Holy Spirit’s perspective on the decision.”<sup>46</sup> It

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<sup>44</sup> Fred Luthans, “The Need For and Meaning of Positive Organizational Behavior,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 23, no. 6 (September 2002): 702, <https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/docview/224879449?accountid=11085>.

<sup>45</sup> Barna, 9.

<sup>46</sup> MaryKate Morse, *A Guidebook to Prayer: Twenty-four Ways to Walk with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 214.

takes great discernment to navigate the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities that an SCL must face in order to lead well.

For an SCL, “making a sound decision is not unlike a physician making a sound diagnosis. There should be a viable and rigorous process that leads to a sound decision.”<sup>47</sup> This process comes through discernment practices that involve watching for the movement of God, critical self-reflection, examining assumptions, and looking to the past, present and future before and in the midst of making leadership decisions and engaging in leadership activities. This requires training and practice in discernment, rather than simply relying on a good idea or even experience. “Experience, one often hears, is the best teacher, but that is true only if you reflect on it and extract its real lessons.”<sup>48</sup> As an SCL grows in their ability to reflect on the movement of God and discern God’s leading, they also gain clarity in their own call and core values, wisdom in building a healthy relationship with their first chair leader, strength to endure the stress of ministry leadership, and confidence to lead well from the second chair.

### **Need for Resources**

What I have noticed in my research is that most Christian books and resources on leadership have been written by and for leaders serving in top leadership (or first chair) roles such as senior pastor, CEO or executive director. This observation was confirmed in my interview with Robert Fryling, the former Publisher for InterVarsity Press and current

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<sup>47</sup> Sabella, 60.

<sup>48</sup> Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *How Great Leaders Think: The Art of Reframing* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014), 12.

leadership consultant with extensive knowledge of academic and professional Christian leadership books and resources. Fryling noted that in his experience, there is a lack of Christian leadership resources specifically addressing the needs of SCLs.<sup>49</sup> If an SCL wishes to gain specific insight into effective second chair leadership, they may find more resources from a secular perspective in such sources as the *Harvard Business Review* and other well-researched secular leadership publications; however, these sources tend to miss the spiritual discernment component that a Christian SCL needs in order to thrive in a ministry leadership role.

In addition, many of the Christian leadership resources surprisingly do not specifically address the role of godly discernment in leadership, whether from the first or second chair. It may simply be assumed that if a Christian leader is growing in leadership skill, they are simultaneously growing in their ability to discern God's leading. This is a faulty assumption. Many SCLs find as their leadership role grows over time, they do not always know how to simultaneously grow in their ability to hear from God and make wise decisions from the second chair. Henry and Richard Blackaby express similar concern, stating that they "are concerned that many Christian leaders are reading secular books (on leadership) and accepting their teachings uncritically."<sup>50</sup> They go on to say that when their book *Spiritual Leadership* was first released, the "most common question . . . was, how do we know what God's agenda is? We discovered many people, even pastors of churches, were disoriented to God's voice."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Fryling, phone interview by author, June 28, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, rev.ed. (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2011), xiii.

<sup>51</sup> Blackaby, 42.

As a result, there is a gap in resources to help SCLs thrive in ministry settings. In order for ministry SCLs to thrive personally and professionally, this gap needs to be addressed with resources that connect directly to the unique needs of second chair ministry leaders, specifically in how to discern and follow God's leading while leading from the second chair. The goal of this study is to offer a solution uniquely crafted for the needs of SCLs, providing a lifelong foundation for thriving in their ministry leadership through developing skill and practice in godly discernment.

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen, SCLs have unique ministry challenges in seeking to lead well from the second chair. (See Figure 1 below for summary.) The skill of discernment can provide an important means to help them navigate the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities of second chair leadership, better equipping them to make wise and courageous decisions both personally and professionally. This is why the next step in addressing SCL pain points is to consider discernment practices that can help an SCL gain confidence, skill, and wisdom in leading from the second chair. However, before exploring my proposed solutions for SCLs to grow in discernment in Section Three, we will examine some leadership solutions offered by others.

**Figure 1. SCL Realities and Challenges**

<b>SCL Realities</b>	<b>Unique SCL Challenges</b>
<b>Personal Realities</b>	Higher stress level than those above or below in organization
	Ongoing need for clarity of personal calling
	High responsibility, low authority
	Low job security and satisfaction for some
<b>Relational Realities</b>	Must lead up, sideways, and down (i.e. constant vertical code-switching)
	Power differential between FCL and SCL (especially if SCL is female and FCL is male)
	SCL success directly tied to the health of relationship with FCL
	May feel squeezed in the middle
<b>Missional Realities</b>	Not always given place to contribute to organizational mission and culture
	Not always free to use their own leadership visions
	Must implement FCL directives they may disagree with
	May be perceived as a manager, rather than as a leader
	Less access to organizational leadership development

## SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

As discussed in the previous section, there are three main areas of concern that impact the ability of an SCL to lead well from the second chair, involving Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities. Woven throughout each of these three areas is the SCL's need for discernment in order to keep close to the heartbeat of God as they lead from the middle of an organization. "In discernment . . . we seek, among good options, that which better aligns us with God's creative purposes,"<sup>52</sup> allowing an SCL to lead with wisdom, courage, and love.

There are a number of ministry leadership solutions available in which SCLs can participate, geared for professional growth, self-care, ongoing peer support, and healthy self-care. Although these aids are widely available, very few focus on becoming a discerning leader, and even fewer are specifically geared toward the needs of second chair leaders. Although each of these solutions might have their place in specific circumstances, none on its own fully meets the needs for discernment and ongoing supportive resources.

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<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 9.



## PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Ongoing professional growth is a concern for all leaders, whether in ministry or not. Two resources that are widely available to ministry leaders are leadership conferences and leadership books.

### **Leadership Books**

There are many excellent Christian leadership books on the market that can provide insight and biblical teaching to help a ministry leader gain godly wisdom and practical skill. One author who has written a series of helpful books and resources on the personal and spiritual health of a leader is Peter Scazzero. His approach to emotionally healthy leadership has helped ministry leaders around the world connect deeply with God and with themselves, enabling them to grow as discerning leaders. Scazzero explains that “it was specifically through the crucible of leadership that God peeled off layers of my false self and taught me to integrate beneath-the-surface transformation with the tasks and responsibilities of leadership.”<sup>53</sup> Scazzero contends that leaders cannot be who God intended them to be and lead the way God designed them to lead unless they allow God to help them face their false self and become emotionally healthy and mature. The false self “is made up of what I have, what I do, and what others think of me,”<sup>54</sup> which does not provide an SCL with a secure sense of self, potentially leading an SCL into unhealthy behaviors and possibly even burn out. Scazzero’s materials provide SCLs with important

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<sup>53</sup> Scazzero, 21.

<sup>54</sup> M. Basil Pennington, *True Self, False Self: Unmasking the Spirit Within* (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2000), 31.

opportunities for self-reflection and growth both personally and as a leader. These materials could be even more powerful if studied within a safe and supportive community of SCLs.

### **Leadership Conferences**

Another opportunity for SCLs to grow personally and professionally is by attending a leadership conference.<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, while there may be excellent teaching and encouragement through attending a conference, if an SCL attends on their own they may find it challenging to apply their learnings once they return to their ministry, since others have not shared in the learning. These types of events also tend to be highly programmed, with little time for rest or reflection, and seldom time to learn about or engage in discernment practices. However, if the SCL is able to attend with others from their ministry, it can have a greater impact both on the SCL and the entire team. Getting away from the workplace together and focusing on issues of building the team and improving effectiveness may provide some much needed encouragement and equipping. Large leadership conferences such as the Global Leadership Summit,<sup>56</sup> run by Willow Creek Community Church, can have some value in encouraging and equipping SCLs, even if they are not targeted to their specific needs.

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<sup>55</sup> Michelle Bowman King, "Are Conferences and Workshops Valid and Effective?" *The Learning Professional* 38, no. 5, (October 2017): 10, ProQuest.

<sup>56</sup> Willowcreek Association, "The Global Leadership Summit," conference website, accessed January 2020, <https://globalleadership.org>.

### **Analysis of Professional Growth Through Books and Conferences**

Reading books on leadership offers a cost-effective way for personal and professional growth, while conferences can be much more expensive. In either case, the skills gained may not be directly translatable to the specific leadership challenges of SCLs. Either practice will only have impact to the degree that the SCL is able to translate the learning into application. As adult learning theory expert, Jane Vella, asserts, “Without the engagement of the learners, there is no lasting learning.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, if an SCL merely reads or attends a conference without active engagement, the learning may not be retained and practiced in an ongoing way.

In addition, if the SCL is unable to adequately reflect on the learning from a book or conference, it may be of little use to them in their leadership role. In a seven-year research project on the resilience of pastors (including many second chair pastors), the authors of the study discovered that reflection-on-action is a key, though often missing, practice for leaders. As they reported,

All pastors do reflection-*in*-action even if they don’t know they are doing it. It is the unconscious musing over what is taking place at the moment. However, our experience leads us to believe that the majority of pastors do not take time for reflection-*on*-action, pondering what took place, how people spoke or acted and what could be learned from the experience.<sup>58</sup> [Emphasis added.]

Another possible drawback of looking to books or conferences for leadership guidance is the fact that it can be challenging to implement the learning unless the FCL is supportive. Ideally, the FCL would join the SCL in implementing the learning within

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<sup>57</sup> Jane Vella, *Taking Learning to Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 113.

<sup>58</sup> Bob Burns, Donald Guthrie, and Tasha Chapman, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told us about Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2013), 258.

their ministry context. However, if the FCL does not actively participate in the learning and application, it may do little to build team cohesion, trust, or effectiveness. Even if the FCL is supportive, if he or she has not set aside planned time to process and apply what is learned together as a team from the reading or conference, the impact will have little lasting effect. Research has shown that conference participants “are more likely to experience lasting benefits — and see changes in practice — if they have sustained support for new learning at their worksite.”<sup>59</sup>

Finally, although reading leadership books or attending a leadership conference may provide additional skills and relational tools in the work environment, they may not adequately address an SCL’s specific needs in regard to Personal, Relational and Missional Realities. In other words, the practices may be helpful for growth of individual leadership skills and/or for team effectiveness, but are not likely to provide the SCL with the personal support and discernment practices needed to thrive in ministry for the long haul. SCLs may struggle to lead well without a community of practice in the skills of discernment, since

Individual perception, reasoning, and understanding are always limited. Even a person who feels absolutely certain that a specific revelation comes from God may be mistaken as to how it is to be applied. Because God often reveals part of the picture to one person and another part to another person, it is prudent to consult one another to discern God’s counsel, guidance, and direction, even if there is no apparent reason to do so.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> King, 10.

<sup>60</sup> Suzanne G. Farnham, Joseph P. Gill, R. Taylor McLean, and Susan M. Ward, *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2011), 46-47.

## PEER SUPPORT

In remaining encouraged and resilient in ministry for the long haul, all Christian leaders share a need for authentic, Christ-centered community, but many struggle to find it. “Human beings were made for living in community, and it is in community that we flourish and become most fully human,”<sup>61</sup> but unfortunately, instead of finding community, many leaders experience isolation. As MaryKate Morse states,

Christian leaders are often tired and alone. They are usually over-worked and underpaid, and they wrestle with identity and relationship issues. Some are proud. Some are insecure. Some are depressed and burned out. Some are exhausted. The typical solution of working harder does not solve the problems. Following the next model or program doesn’t produce the promised outcomes either. Ministry is an unforgiving calling in its unique level of temptation and suffering.<sup>62</sup>

### **Mentoring Communities**

Morse’s remedy for these ministry challenges is to participate in what she and her mentor, Leighton Ford, call “Mentoring communities (which) create places where a leader’s walk, personal and with a mentor and peers, comes together.”<sup>63</sup> The idea of mentoring communities is one that Morse and Ford have journeyed through for many years, seeking to follow the model of Christ as he led the disciples in a mentoring group who then went out and mentored others, and changed the world. This type of support and accountability provides the encouragement leaders need to push forward when problems

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<sup>61</sup> Christine Pohl, *Living Into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 3.

<sup>62</sup> MaryKate Morse, *Lifelong Leadership: Woven Together Through Mentoring Communities* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2020), 14.

<sup>63</sup> Morse, *Lifelong Leadership*, 15.

arise, and it also allows them to reproduce themselves and thereby multiply their fruitfulness through others.

### **Cohort-based Retreats**

Some SCLs are able to find this much-needed peer support by participating in contemplative retreats within a cohort of ministry leaders. One organization that provides opportunities for ministry leaders to go on guided spiritual retreats is called Wellspring, located in Northern California. They offer a ministry called “SoulCare,” which is “a nine month retreat series focused on a cohort of 24 leaders each year.”<sup>64</sup> This ministry is free to those who are selected to participate, making it affordable for leaders in second chair roles. As they explain on their website, their intent is to “lovingly rejuvenate leaders and in doing so, transform the ways they lead their staffs, churches or organizations. We aim to positively impact leaders’ longevity and fruitfulness in ministry.”<sup>65</sup>

One of my interviewees, Pastor Jeremy Drew, had the opportunity to participate in Wellspring’s ministry when he was on staff at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church.<sup>66</sup> Pastor Drew shared that participating in Wellspring’s extended retreat opportunities and one-year leadership program provided him with a way of being reenergized personally and spiritually so that he did not have to over-burden his wife with all of his ministry

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<sup>64</sup> Wellspring, “Leading SoulCare,” ministry website with leadership resources, accessed January 2020, <https://wellspringca.org/leading/soulcare/>.

<sup>65</sup> Wellspring, January 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Interview by author, June 12, 2019, Rocklin, California.

problems. Drew found a safe place to share his leadership and ministry concerns, explore his interior life with God, and be refreshed to do the demanding work of leading from the second chair. However, he also noted that he might have felt freer to share his specific ministry concerns if instead of participating with other leaders from his own church, he had been part of a cohort of SCLs from a variety of other ministries.

Two other organizations that provide cohort-based, contemplative leadership training and retreats are the Transforming Center, based out of Chicago, IL,<sup>67</sup> and an organization called Leadership Transformations, with locations across the country.<sup>68</sup> Each organization sets up leadership cohorts that remain together over a period of two years and have regular times of retreat and learning together. In addition, similar to Wellspring, they each seek to provide safe places for leaders to experience community and deep connection with God, while learning healthy rhythms for living the Christian life amidst the demands of ministry.

### **Analysis of Peer Support Solutions**

Mentoring communities and cohort-based leadership retreats each have value in providing significant opportunities for SCLs to find the support needed to thrive in leadership for the long haul. An advantage of mentoring communities is that they can be easily reproduced and are therefore more widely accessible. They can also provide ongoing support for SCLs to help them grow personally and professionally. However,

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<sup>67</sup> Transforming Center, “Transforming Center: Strengthen the Soul of Your Leadership,” ministry website, accessed January 2020, <https://transformingcenter.org>.

<sup>68</sup> Leadership Transformations, “Formation–Discernment–Renewal,” last modified January 2017, <https://www.leadershiptransformations.org/#public>.

they may not always provide SCLs with a process for discernment as a leader. In addition, the ability to support one another through the unique pain points that SCLs face in ministry, as well as the ability to grow together in practicing discernment, will be affected by the skill and wisdom of the members of the mentoring community.

In terms of the cohort-based programs explored in this study, they each focus on developing a supportive community of leaders who learn together how to become healthier leaders both personally and spiritually. There is great value in these goals as they address the Personal Realities of leaders; however, they do not directly address the additional needs of SCLs to gain wisdom and skill in the Relational and Missional aspects of leadership. For example, they do not focus on the need of an SCL to “establish and manage relationships with everyone on whom they depend,”<sup>69</sup> which includes not only those whom they lead, but also their FCL and peers within the organization. Becoming a “master at top-down, bottom-up and lateral mobilization”<sup>70</sup> is one of the many important ways an SCL leads “by working levers of power up, across and down in their organizations.”<sup>71</sup> While having peer support as well as healthy personal and spiritual practices will help an SCL approach their leadership with more resilience and balance, it will not necessarily give them the necessary tools as leaders to reflect on and improve in the relational and missional challenges they face.

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<sup>69</sup> John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter, “Managing Your Boss,” *Harvard Business Review* 71, no. 3 (January 2005): 99, EBSCOhost.

<sup>70</sup> Behnam Tabrizi, “The Key to Change is Middle Management,” *Harvard Business Review Digital Articles*, (October 27, 2014): 3, EBSCOhost.

<sup>71</sup> Tabrizi, 2.



A similar gap exists in the “spiritual leadership literature about practices that support leaders” who need to develop “as both effective and moral leaders.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, developing into a wise and skilled spiritual leader takes not only a supportive community of peers and healthy personal and spiritual practices; it also takes a learning process that allows the leader to continually develop various leadership competencies that help them to not only be wise but also effective. This idea echoes Peter Senge’s concept of a learning organization in which “people are continually learning how to learn together,”<sup>73</sup> involving the ability to identify and increase awareness of how mental models “impact our decisions and behaviors.”<sup>74</sup> This type of learning community engages in various leadership practices, then reflects on them within community and processes what has been learned, leading to increased leadership wisdom and application.

In the cohort models discussed previously, there are aspects of this type of community of learning; however, they are not specifically directed toward the leadership competencies needed by SCLs for navigating the relational and missional aspects of leading from the second chair. In addition, these cohort programs limit the number of participants each year and also tend to include leaders in any type of ministry leadership role. This means they are less accessible to a wide range of SCLs and less tailored to their unique needs in terms of the Relational and Missional Realities they face.

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<sup>72</sup> Teresa J. Rothousen, “Integrating Leadership Development with Ignatian Spirituality; A Model for Designing a Spiritual Leader Development Practice,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 145, no. 4 (June 2017): 827, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3241-4>.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 3.

<sup>74</sup> Maia Duerr, “The Contemplative Organization,” *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 17, no. 1 (2004): 44, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810410511297>.

## PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION

There are a variety of types of professional intervention available for those in leadership in ministry, including crisis support, coaching, and consultants. Each offers significant advantages for sustaining the leader, but also has significant drawbacks.

### **Leadership Crisis Intervention**

Any SCL who is in ministry for the long haul will likely experience a time of crisis at some point. As a result of leadership pressures, they may find their marriage, family, personal health, or ministry position is at risk. In a crisis situation, sometimes what can be most helpful is a short-term, more intensive experience with trained leaders who can help them tend to their wounds, hear the voice of God afresh, and discern next steps. One ministry organization that provides this type of intensive leadership care is the Leadership Design Group,<sup>75</sup> based out of Colorado Springs.

Many years ago, my husband and I benefitted from their two-week leadership intensive, which consisted of meeting several hours per day with a licensed counselor and trained spiritual director to help us process a devastating ministry experience we had been through. Although this program can be cost prohibitive, we were fortunate that our denomination paid for this experience. One drawback of this particular program for us was that while it provided excellent, personalized help in a time of crisis, it only lasted for two weeks. During the program, we discerned the need to make a major life change. It would have been helpful to have someone walk with us through this major change after

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<sup>75</sup> Leadership Design Group, "Designing Leadership Through Mentorship," accessed December 30, 2019, LeadershipDesignGroup.com.

the two-week program ended, but we were left without ongoing leadership coaching for the major transition we experienced.

Another option for leaders in crisis involves meeting with a Christian therapist or spiritual director. There is some overlap between how a therapist and a spiritual director provide help, which is why it is important to remember that “the Holy Spirit is living and active and can work through all of these modalities. Therefore, when seeking therapy, counseling or coaching, choosing a . . . practitioner who is living a life of faith, is knowledgeable about Church teachings and open and receptive to the movement of the Holy Spirit, is a wise decision.”<sup>76</sup> However, sometimes in the midst of a crisis it can be difficult to quickly establish the rapport and depth needed to address immediate needs when an SCL only meets weekly or even monthly with a therapist or spiritual director, especially if the SCL needs to make a quick but important decision.

### **Leadership Coaching**

One-on-one leadership coaching is another possible solution, and a “highly effective way of accelerating (one’s) development as a leader,”<sup>77</sup> with strategies that can be targeted specifically for SCLs as they face the unique challenges of Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities. One organization that helps match coaches with “coachees” is the Fuller Seminary DePree Center. Through the Center, an SCL can meet with a coach for four one-hour sessions, and the coaching focus can vary depending on

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<sup>76</sup> Allison Ricciardi, “The Difference Between Counseling and Spiritual Direction,” *SpiritualDirection.com*, last modified February 12, 2014, <https://spiritualdirection.com/2014/02/12/the-difference-between-counseling-and-spiritual-direction>.

<sup>77</sup> Gregg Thompson, “Leadership Coaching,” *Leadership Excellence Essentials* 32, no. 5 (May 2015): 10, ProQuest.

the needs of the SCL, but can include such things as business expertise, leadership development or spiritual direction. The total cost for this coaching is only \$300, with scholarships available, making this affordable for a typical SCL.<sup>78</sup> While this particular option is cost effective and can be tailored to the specific needs of the SCL, it is also limited in that there are only four sessions of coaching available. These four sessions may help an SCL gain short-term insight, but it may not adequately address the needs of the SCL over time.

### **Leadership Consultants**

While coaching may be helpful for an individual SCL, another possible solution is to bring in an outside leadership consultant. These types of experts can bring in a fresh perspective and an experienced eye that can help pinpoint specific areas for improvement and leadership growth within an organization. “Consultants take on the role of process facilitators. The goal of process facilitation is to increase the client system’s capacity for learning so that it can make its own decisions and fix its own problems.”<sup>79</sup> Expert consultants can provide more precise leadership coaching than a book or conference could provide; however, consultants can come with a large price tag, running into the thousands of dollars. Unless the FCL sees the value of hiring a consultant, this option may not materialize since the SCL does not usually have ultimate authority over the budget.

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<sup>78</sup> Fuller DePree Center, “Fuller DePree Center,” ministry website with leadership resources, last modified January 2020, <https://depree.org/>.

<sup>79</sup> Kathleen N. Cabler, “The Impact of Organizational Development (OD) Methodology on Leadership Training: A More Intentional Consulting Approach,” *Journal of Practical Consulting* 6, no. 1 (Summer 2018): 39, EBSCOhost.

### **Analysis of Professional Intervention Solutions**

Overall, professional intervention can offer short-term support for SCLs in their role; however, it may not adequately address their need for help in facing the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities of leadership from the second chair over time. As noted by research from Rothausen, leaders develop over time through a series of experiences and trigger events, which generally require more than short-term solutions.<sup>80</sup> Rothausen goes on to suggest that “the primary leader development cycle, then, comprises planning followed by experience followed by reflection, with reflection feeding back into planning, with assessments, education, and relationships supporting and influencing these cycles, through the challenge, learning, feedback, and support that comes from these activities.”<sup>81</sup> Most interventions tend to address only one or two items in this cycle of leadership development, such as planning or reflection, leaving the SCL to navigate the remainder on their own, without ongoing relational support in the midst of longer-term leadership experience.

### **SELF-CARE**

Anyone in leadership or ministry of any kind should be familiar with strategies for self-care. Secular leadership sources do not usually address spiritual concerns, such as discerning God’s leading; however, most secular research on well-being and resilience in leadership is in line with findings from Christian sources, providing some useful input for

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<sup>80</sup> Rothausen, 812.

<sup>81</sup> Rothausen, 815.

SCLs seeking to thrive for the long haul. The general consensus among both secular and Christian sources is that the personal well-being of a leader can make all the difference in their ability to effectively navigate the stresses of leadership. One important measure of this involves psychological well-being, which is interrelated with physical, emotional and spiritual health.<sup>82</sup> Well-being “seems to create higher capacity to work effectively, interact with others well, and pursue important goals.”<sup>83</sup> This suggests that for SCLs to thrive for the long haul, it is important to find ways of caring for their personal well-being. Some of these might include personal retreats, contemplative prayer, and developing healthy habits.

### **Self-led Retreats**

If an SCL is unable to participate in a cohort-based type of retreat, they can still gain some of the benefits of a retreat by following the directions found in resources such as Ruth Haley Barton’s book, *Invitation to Retreat*, which lays out the process of creating a contemplative spiritual retreat for oneself. As Barton argues, “No matter how far along we are in the spiritual life, there is no time when retreat – or strategic withdrawal – ceases to be an essential practice.”<sup>84</sup> Personal retreats can provide time and space for a leader to be personally renewed and recharged for the demands of leadership.

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<sup>82</sup> Ivan T. Robertson and Cary L. Cooper, “Full Engagement: the Integration of Employee Engagement and Psychological Well-being,” *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 31, no. 4, (2010): 325, ProQuest.

<sup>83</sup> Matt Bloom, “Flourishing in Ministry – Emerging Research Insights on the Well-Being of Pastors,” Paper for the Flourishing in Ministry Project, University of Notre Dame, IN: Creative Commons, (2013): 14, [http://wellbeing.nd.edu/assets/198819/emerging\\_insights\\_2\\_1\\_.pdf](http://wellbeing.nd.edu/assets/198819/emerging_insights_2_1_.pdf).

<sup>84</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 12.

## Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer involves a variety of prayer practices which allow a person to slow down and listen for the still, small voice of God. This type of prayer focuses more on listening than on talking, and it positions an individual to “experience afresh the mystery of a life on fire for God and a life set free from the tomb. The contagious idea is that with prayer – that connection with the Trinity – we can flourish spiritually despite circumstances.”<sup>85</sup> There are a variety of contemplative prayer practices that can help SCLs listen for God’s guidance, receive healing, and calm an anxious heart. These include such practices as Lectio Divina,<sup>86</sup> the prayer of Examen,<sup>87</sup> or Centering prayer.<sup>88</sup> Contemplative prayer can help an SCL to be present to God and better able to respond to life’s circumstances out of the peace and confidence of a loving relationship with God.

In addition, being able to pay attention to God in the present moment can help an SCL move from what is known as System I Thinking to System II Thinking. This involves moving beyond the rapid, limbic brain response to a stressful situation (System I), to a more thoughtful response (System II), allowing the executive functions of the brain to move beyond impulsive, emotional responses to a more controlled, problem-solving approach.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Morse, *A Guidebook to Prayer*, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Morse, *A Guidebook to Prayer*, 126.

<sup>87</sup> Morse, *A Guidebook to Prayer*, 85.

<sup>88</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 207.

<sup>89</sup> Golnaz Tabibnia and Dan Radecki, “Resilience Training that Can Change the Brain,” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 70, no. 1 (March 2018): 60,

## Developing Healthy Habits

Another possible solution for SCLs in leading well from the second chair is to apply healthy habits throughout their day. Many workplace wellness programs focus on the benefits of healthy habits to enable people to better manage work-related stress.<sup>90</sup> These programs often include such elements as education and support programs for healthy eating and exercise. For leaders, whether secular or Christian, healthy physical habits can increase focus and energy, and provide a reduction in cortisol (the “stress” hormone) and an increase in endorphins (the mood-boosting hormone).

Another healthy habit that can help SCLs involves developing healthy mental practices. With the growing body of research and writing on the neuroscience behind managing stress, many are now encouraging employees to manage stress by developing a variety of habits that can help rewire a person’s neurotransmitters in the brain and allow them to gain increased resilience and a positive mental focus in the face of stress. As researcher Shawn Achor asserts, “People who cultivate a positive mind-set perform better in the face of challenge.”<sup>91</sup> He goes on to explain that developing a positive mind-set happens when a person develops habits that contribute to mental health. In his research, those who practiced specific daily habits aimed at mental positivity ranked significantly

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<https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000110>.

<sup>90</sup> Soeren Mattke, Hangsheng Liu, John P. Caloyeras, Christina Y. Huang, Kristin R. Van Busum, Dmitry Khodyakov, and Victoria Shier, *Workplace Wellness Programs Study: Final Report* (RAND Corporation, 2013): 105, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt3fgzhg](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt3fgzhg).

<sup>91</sup> Shawn Achor, “Positive Intelligence (Cover Story),” *Harvard Business Review* 90, no. 1/2 (January 2012): 100, EBSCOhost.



higher than the control group, demonstrating an overall higher level of happiness and satisfaction in their lives.

Harvard Professor Susan David's research also affirms the importance of daily habits, especially small ones, for developing resilience and what she calls "emotional agility."<sup>92</sup> She notes that many self-help programs encourage people to pursue lofty goals, "but research actually supports the opposite view: that small, deliberate tweaks infused with your values can make a huge difference in your life. This is especially true when we tweak the routine and habitual parts of life, which, through daily repetition, then afford tremendous leverage for change."<sup>93</sup>

### **Analysis of Self Care Solutions**

Any of these self-care practices can positively impact the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health of SCLs. Taking time away in a personal retreat, engaging in contemplative prayer, and building small, repeatable habits into a daily routine can help SCLs become more proactive in how they choose to respond to stressful situations and people. However, unless an SCL is involved in an ongoing community of peers, they may not be able to sustain the habits they seek to incorporate into their life. For leaders to stay the course, ongoing peer support and accountability play an important role. "To be accountable means to answer to someone who cares about what we do and how we do it

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<sup>92</sup> Susan David, *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life* (New York: Avery, 2016), 6.

<sup>93</sup> David, 13.

– someone who has an investment in our work.”<sup>94</sup> In addition, Grandy and Sliwa explain that “it is within community that individual integrity is given meaning and an opportunity to be practiced.”<sup>95</sup> Not only does a community of peers provide a place for practice and support, but it also helps keep the SCL on track toward their ultimate goal of becoming the person and leader God designed them to be. MacIntyre “affirms the essential intertwining of the individual, and his or her own narrative quest, with the community, and its shared sense of *telos*.”<sup>96</sup>

In addition to the need for peer support, SCLs need ongoing leadership training in order to increase the skills and competencies needed to thrive in their role, since they “must lead across boundaries, often without formal authority. And the rapid pace of change in business strategies, work processes, and technology creates a need for leaders who can flourish in a state of constant ambiguity.”<sup>97</sup> This type of flourishing comes from having intentional leadership training. As leadership development experts Wellins and Weaver report regarding their research, “Thirty-four percent of those organizations that had superior financial performance also had high-quality leadership development programs.”<sup>98</sup> This research was primarily focused on secular business settings; however, it is reasonable to infer that ministry organizations would be similarly strengthened by

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<sup>94</sup> Farnham et. al., 63.

<sup>95</sup> Gina Grandy and Martyna Sliwa, “Contemplative Leadership: The Possibilities for the Ethics of Leadership Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 143 (2017): 427, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2802-2>.

<sup>96</sup> Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore, “MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization,” *Organization Studies* 27, no. 3 (March 2006): 333, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840606062425>.

<sup>97</sup> Wellins and Weaver, 61.

<sup>98</sup> Wellins and Weaver, 65.

providing high-quality leadership development. In addition, while this research was focused on the return on investment to an organization, it is also reasonable to infer that the individual leaders greatly benefited from personalized leadership training.

### PASTOR JANE'S JOURNEY CONTINUES

To help gain a picture of how these possible solutions may impact a particular SCL, we return to the story of Pastor Jane. After five years in her current role, she is feeling restless and wonders whether this is a sign that she should begin looking for a new pastoral call at a different church where she may have more opportunity to cast vision and make a bigger impact. However, although she loves her work, she wonders whether the restlessness is a result of feeling used up. Her prayer life feels dry, and she hasn't been practicing consistent self-care, given the demands of her ministry and family life. Although Dave, her lead pastor, is a godly man, he tends to be a workaholic, and there is subtle but real pressure for her to follow in his footsteps.

Jane believes that “discerning God’s will should be central to the process of decision making for the people of God,”<sup>99</sup> but she realizes she can’t begin to discern God’s leading in this season of her life until she recovers a sense of perspective by taking some time away. So, she signs up for a regional pastors’ conference that has an excellent line up of inspirational speakers, workshops, and fun activities. Dave agrees that Jane needs some time away and that this conference has a great reputation, but Jane senses he isn’t completely happy about her being away for several days, leaving him to be the

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<sup>99</sup> Leon Kendell Cameron Jr., “From Decision Making to Discernment: Using Ignatian and Friends Models of Discernment in a Baptist Context” (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2013), 3, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/47>.

primary pastor on call. However, she decides not to let this subtle pressure dampen her joy as she hops in her car and drives to the conference.

When Jane arrives home three days later, she's exhausted. The conference schedule was non-stop from early morning till late at night, and because she wanted to get everything out of it, she tried to attend as many of the events as possible. The sessions were inspiring, and she enjoyed connecting with other ministry leaders, but the event left her feeling like she needs a vacation to recover before going back to work. She knows this is unrealistic.

Two weeks later, in the middle of a high stress day at the office, Jane begins to feel a stress headache coming on. She decides to try calming her internal stress by engaging in the Centering prayer practice she recently read about. She closes her office door, gets comfortable, slows down her breathing, and centers herself in God. After ten minutes of simply being open and resting in God's presence, she begins to feel her headache easing. She opens her eyes and thanks God for this gift in the middle of a difficult day.

While it is helpful to have a tool for calming her internal stress, this doesn't necessarily help her with the many questions swirling in her mind. She wonders if she still belongs in ministry, and specifically in this ministry. She feels uncharacteristically indecisive. If only God would send her a postcard with specific directions, she would gladly follow. She continues praying by pouring her heart out to God, asking for guidance and help in making wise decisions. Then she waits.

## CONCLUSIONS

As we see in Jane's story, she is struggling in her personal leadership journey as an SCL. She continues trying various possible solutions, but has not yet found the right mix of resources and support to help her navigate the challenges of her SCL role and experience spiritual renewal in her relationship with God. She recognizes that if she does not make some changes soon, she is on the road toward burnout.

While each of the solutions explored in this section can provide some help to SCLs like Jane, they each fail to meet some of the specific needs of SCLs to lead with wisdom and courage as they navigate the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities of leadership in the second chair. These solutions are not intended to cover all possible alternatives; however, they provide a representative sample of offerings available to most SCLs in ministry. However, to more fully address the leadership needs of SCLs, in the next section we will explore my proposed solution which will bring together some of the best elements of healthy Christian leadership with research from secular sources on leading well from the middle, or second chair. This solution will offer a cohort-based process for SCLs to reconnect with God and themselves in the company of other SCLs in order to learn and apply spiritual discernment practices so they can thrive for the long haul.

## SECTION 3:

### THESIS

#### **Introduction**

As discussed in the first section, SCLs seeking to lead well from the second chair face three realities: personal, relational, and missional. A common thread through each of these leadership realities is the need for discernment, which can help the SCL lead well by gaining clarity about their vocational call and core values; developing greater sensitivity to God's leadership in how to "lead up," "lead sideways," and "lead down"; and discerning appropriate organizational communication, systems, and processes in regard to culture, vision, and mission. This will not guarantee "success" in the ways measured by society, but it will provide stronger confidence that the SCL is playing their part in leading others toward God's purposes and plans.

Since discernment is an underlying theme across each of these leadership realities, first we will explore the role of discernment in the life of an SCL. Then we will focus on various discernment practices that can provide SCLs with a process for listening for God's leading that can be applied to the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities of second chair leadership. We will end this section by revisiting Pastor Jane to see how she might be helped by engaging in some of the discernment practices discussed in this section.

Based on the experiences of the SCLs I interviewed for this study, it is much easier to endure the inevitable suffering that comes in ministry and persist in the face of challenges if one has some assurance they are following God's lead. When a person has

this type of confidence, they will generally be more resilient in the face of difficulties, more open to engaging in authentic community with their peers, more able to find security in their relationship with God rather than in their ministry role or their relationship with their FCL, and more clear about their vocational calling and how it plays out in their current season of ministry. However, this discernment is seldom arrived at quickly or easily. It takes training and practice in developing critical self-reflection skills, and involves a great deal of waiting on God, deep listening, and deeper surrender.

## THE NATURE OF DISCERNMENT

### **The Role of Discernment**

As we see from Pastor Jane’s questions in the previous section, she would be helped by gaining practical help in discerning God’s leading. The term discernment “comes from the Latin word *discernere*, which means ‘to separate,’ ‘to distinguish,’ ‘to determine,’ ‘to sort out.’ . . . Discernment is ‘sifting through’ our interior and exterior experiences to determine their origin.”<sup>100</sup> This does not often involve distinguishing between an obvious evil and an obvious good, which is usually easier and more apparent. Instead, the work of discernment is needed when there may be more than one possible good choice. As leadership guru Jim Collins observes, “Good is the enemy of great.”<sup>101</sup> Sorting out the merely good from God’s best is not an easy task, and can take time and deep wisdom. However, the process of discernment is worth the effort, as it can elevate

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<sup>100</sup> Farnham et. al., 21.

<sup>101</sup> Jim Collins, *From Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap, and Others Don’t* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 1.

someone's life and ministry from simply accomplishing tasks to living out of their core values and God-given passions as they partner with God to accomplish the unique things for which they are created.

### **The Goal of Discernment**

A temptation of many leaders is to seek God primarily when they have a specific need for direction or wisdom. However, the goal of discernment is not necessarily to produce a specific outcome in a person's life or ministry. "The goal of spiritual discernment is not material prosperity or personal safety; it is a deepening intimacy with God through fulfilling [God's] intent for one's life."<sup>102</sup> In the process of pursuing discernment from God, the SCL will ultimately be growing in their relationship with God while also becoming more of a discerning person.

While the big goal of discernment is to help someone draw closer to God, the daily purpose of discernment is to gain understanding of God's will and then to do it. Jesus modeled this process as he spent the night in the Garden of Gethsemane wrestling with God's will, and finally coming to the place of saying, ". . . not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). This gives us a picture of the ultimate goal of discerning God's will: complete surrender and obedience to as much of the plan as God has revealed.

Jesus is also an example of the goal of discernment in that he kept a close relationship with his Father, because as he said, ". . . the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does

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<sup>102</sup> Keith Foisy, "Listening Prayers for Talkative Evangelicals," (DMin diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2019), 69, <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin/359>.



the Son also does” (Luke 5:19). Through loving obedience, Jesus constantly had his eye on his Father, watching to see what his Father did and then following closely. This process of listening and watching for God’s movement in one’s life and then quickly obeying is a key to becoming a discerning person. As an SCL follows God’s lead more and more, their attention to God’s movement is heightened, and their ability to distinguish God’s voice from the many other voices in their life increases. They will also thrive in their ministry role as they gain confidence in their decision.

### **Metaphors for God’s Will**

Unfortunately, Christians are often confused about what God’s will is and how to find it. Author and spiritual director Larry Warner provides an effective metaphor for God’s will as being like either a meadow or a bulls-eye.<sup>103</sup> God’s will is like a meadow with a large fence around it, and as long as we are stay within the boundaries of God’s general will, we are free to do whatever we want. The boundaries, rather than restricting choices, provide a great deal of freedom. However, there are some actions that are wiser than others. This is where wisdom enters the picture together with discernment, allowing us to make wise choices within the context of God’s will. As Pastor Andy Stanley observes, people run into problems within God’s larger will when instead of seeking the wise thing to do, they ask themselves, “How close can I get to sin without sinning?”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Larry Warner, “The Will of God,” b Discerning, last modified 2005, [http://www.b-ing.org/lent\\_reflections/index.php#7](http://www.b-ing.org/lent_reflections/index.php#7).

<sup>104</sup> Andy Stanley, *The Best Question Ever* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 33.

Instead, Stanley says that “we are meant to analyze every opportunity and invitation through the lens of wisdom.”<sup>105</sup>

In moving from practicing wisdom within God’s general will, Warner goes on to explain that at times God’s will moves from the more general “meadow,” to being more specific, like a “bulls-eye.”<sup>106</sup> God may direct a specific person to do a specific thing, leading them to pursue the bulls-eye of God’s specific will for that person. For this reason it is important to develop ongoing discernment practices that can help keep an SCL close to God and operate both out of discernment and wisdom. When a leader is within the meadow, God often gives them freedom to choose a number of directions while remaining within the boundaries of the fence. However, for SCLs seeking wisdom and clarity about God’s will, it is important that they wait on God and seek guidance, which will help them discern if they are free to make a choice within the meadow, or whether God may be leading them toward a specific bulls-eye.

### **The Nature of Discernment**

Unlike the stereotypical church business meeting where people make decisions and then ask God to bless their plans, discernment involves receiving guidance from God before making a decision. For the leader who is becoming more like Jesus, there is a growing partnership between the SCL and God. The word *guidance* provides a great image of what this type of partnership looks like. In pulling the word *guidance* apart, it could be thought of as *G+U+I+ Dance (i.e. God, You and I dance)*. Much like a dance in

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<sup>105</sup> Stanley, 33.

<sup>106</sup> Warner, 2005.

which both members of the partnership move together in tandem, there is a leader and a follower. When an SCL receives guidance in their dance with God, they are able to follow God's lead as they make decisions within the boundaries of God's will while leading others in following God. The SCL must participate in the dance, which will involve a great deal of energy, skill, practice, and even failure at times. It also involves the humility to be led by God rather than to take control of the dance.

One model for entering this dance involves a three-step process of "(1) observing events and patterns around you; (2) interpreting what you are observing (developing multiple hypotheses about what is really going on); and (3) designing interventions based on the observations and interpretations to address the adaptive challenge you have identified."<sup>107</sup> This model from Heifetz, Linsky and Grashow is a secular approach to discernment which can be adopted by SCLs for spiritual discernment as they seek God's guidance for interpreting events, as well as guidance in designing appropriate interventions.

#### ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DISCERNMENT

Given the role, goal, metaphors, and nature of discernment we have explored, we turn now to a discussion of some assumptions we can make regarding discernment. These assumptions include the fact that humans have the ability to hear God's voice, that self-reflection is a key component of practicing spiritual discernment, and that discernment is best practiced within community.

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<sup>107</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2009), 34.

### **The Ability to Hear God’s Voice**

One assumption behind the concept of discernment is that human beings have the ability to hear from God and follow God’s call. This idea is supported throughout Scripture, particularly in John 10:4 where Jesus tells a parable featuring himself as the Good Shepherd, saying that “his sheep follow him because they know his voice.” While the Bible teaches that people have the ability to hear from God and recognize God’s voice, there is no single “right” way to do this. Just as God has created each person to uniquely reflect the *imago Dei*, there is an infinite number of ways in which God can speak and move in people’s lives.

### **The Importance of Self-Reflection**

Another assumption is that self-reflection is a key to discernment. As John Calvin states in his *Institutes*, “There is no deep knowing of God without a deep knowing of self and no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God.”<sup>108</sup> Saint Augustine expressed this same idea when he prayed, “Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee.”<sup>109</sup> The ability to practice critical self-reflection allows leaders to lead in a more authentic, God-honoring way as they reflect on who God is and how God works in their life. “Paradoxically, we come to know God best not by looking at God exclusively, but by looking at God and then looking at ourselves – then looking at God,

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<sup>108</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536 Edition.*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 15.

<sup>109</sup> St. Augustine is quoted in Pierre Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality in the Middle Ages* (London: Burns & Oates, 1924), 291.

and then again looking at ourselves. . . . Both God and self are mostly fully known in relationship to each other.”<sup>110</sup>

### **Discernment Best Practiced in Community**

An additional assumption throughout these practices is that SCLs will best be able to persist in them by entering into a committed community of peers with whom to pray and offer support. That is because “human beings were made for living in community, and it is in community that we flourish and become most fully human.”<sup>111</sup> In this type of community, SCLs are provided with a safe place to explore God’s guidance, leading to deepened wisdom, confirmation, and the necessary support to take action on what has been discerned. Supportive community is particularly important when an SCL must wait for a long period of time for God to speak.

However, as Ruth Haley Barton notes, developing community can be a challenge for many SCLs. “For some reason it is much easier to talk about community and even to try and create community for others than it is to actually *be* a community at the leadership level.”<sup>112</sup> Barton explores a number of reasons why it can be a challenge to find and maintain an authentic community of leaders, but regardless of the reasons, the end result is that many leaders do not have the type of committed leadership community that allows them to move beyond ministry tasks to the deep community to which Jesus called his

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<sup>110</sup> David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 26.

<sup>111</sup> Pohl, 3.

<sup>112</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God’s Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 79.

disciples. That is why part of the recommended solution for SCLs provided in the attached artifact involves committing to this discernment process in the company of peers.

### A FRAMEWORK FOR SCL DISCERNMENT PRACTICES

The framework we will employ in helping second chair leaders grow in discernment involves exploring God's activity in the SCL's past, present, and future. This framework can help SCLs find clarity in their own sense of call and where God may want them to serve in the current season of their life. It can also reveal ways in which the SCL may be living out of their false self rather than out of their authentic self in Christ, preventing them from living and leading from a place of freedom. Identifying these issues can help SCLs remove obstacles to hearing God's voice. Ultimately, these involve what theologian Walter Burghardt referred to as taking "a long, loving look at the real."<sup>113</sup> SCLs will become better leaders as they spend focused time joining God in lovingly examining the real, day-to-day aspects of their life, enabling them to grow in their ability to recognize the movement of God, both in their own lives and in the lives of those around them. As they spend time paying attention to the reality of God's presence and seeing reality through God's eyes of love, they will make wiser, more courageous decisions in their role as a leader.

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<sup>113</sup> As quoted by Vinita Hampton Wright, "A Long, Loving Look at the Real," Ignatian Spirituality, a Service of Loyola Press, accessed September 2019, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/a-long-loving-look-at-the-real/>.

### Discernment by Looking to the Past

The place to begin working with our framework is in the past. A key verse for looking to the past comes from Psalm 77:11a, which says, “I will remember the deeds of the Lord.” SCLs can gain insight into God’s leading by remembering their own past. Stories from the past reveal clues to the patterns of God’s unique work in a person’s life. By connecting the dots woven through a person’s journey, an SCL will gain clarity about what God may be saying and doing in the present moment. As author Deborah Loyd notes, “Mission is sustainable,” even a difficult mission, “when we know our why.”<sup>114</sup> Knowing our “why” comes from clarity about God’s call and work in our lives, which can come through prayerfully reflecting on the past.

A helpful tool for SCLs in this process is to create a timeline<sup>115</sup> of their life, including major events, important people, turning points, times of pain, and leadership lessons from God. This idea is spelled out in depth by Robert Clinton in his book *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*. In this seminal work, Clinton outlines the various stages of leadership emergence which can help an SCL in creating their own life and leadership timeline.<sup>116</sup> This can be especially helpful in reflecting on times of pain. As C.S. Lewis has poignantly remarked, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pain: it

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<sup>114</sup> Deborah Loyd, *Your Vocational Credo: Practical Steps to Discover Your Unique Purpose* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 102.

<sup>115</sup> In the attached artifact, we use the term “Storyline” instead of timeline, reflecting the concept that our past is our personal story set within God’s larger story.

<sup>116</sup> Clinton, 26-31.

is [God's] megaphone to rouse a deaf world."<sup>117</sup> God will not waste any suffering a leader may have experienced. In fact, painful experiences often provide some of the deepest spiritual learnings, providing clues to God's work in the SCL's life and leadership.

Reflecting on a personal timeline can also begin to surface an SCL's core values through the things that have been most important to them. This clarity provides another important filter for following God's call and making wise decisions. These core values may be such things as the importance of family, the role of lifelong learning, or the value of living with authenticity, courage, or faith. It is most helpful if the SCL can narrow the focus down to a few memorable core values which can be referred to easily. This will aid the SCL in discernment as they make decisions in alignment with those values, and help them identify places where they may not be living out of their values, leading them to make decisions that can bring them back into alignment.

### **Discernment by Looking to the Present**

A key verse for discernment in the present comes from Luke 10:27, which says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." While the past can reveal patterns and values to us, the present moment is where we live, and where God speaks, acts, invites, corrects, and engages with his people. A relationship with God is grounded in the past, but lived out in the present, which is the only time anyone has for connecting and communicating.

Loving God with our whole selves, says author Jane Vennard, means "praying with all of who we are: our physicality, our emotions, our intuitions, our imaginations,

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<sup>117</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 91.



our minds and all of our experiences. Therefore when we pray with body and soul, or love with body and soul, or belong with body and soul, we are believing, responding, surrendering with all of who we are."<sup>118</sup> To love God fully in the present involves bringing one's whole self into God's presence, which includes bringing our head, heart and hands to God. Engaging one's head, heart and hands provides a further framework for discernment in the present.

### *Loving God with the Head*

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of being present with God involves bringing one's attention to the present moment. As Leonard Sweet says, "Paying attention is the highest form of opening to life and to God."<sup>119</sup> Unfortunately, the way many seek to love God with their head can at times resemble more of a "checklist" spirituality in which they read a Scripture, think about the meaning, say a few words of prayer, end their "quiet time," and check this off their list. However, in Romans 12:2 Paul gives more explanation of what it means to love God with one's mind, exhorting believers not to "conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Here Paul draws a direct connection between what happens in one's mind and being able to know and do God's will.

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<sup>118</sup> Jane E. Vennard, *Praying with Body and Soul: A Way to Intimacy with God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1998), 5.

<sup>119</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 54.

An important element of being transformed “by the renewing of your mind,” involves what someone chooses to pay attention to. Often, busy ministry leaders find themselves engaged in the process of multi-tasking, trying to focus on multiple things at once. However, research in neuroscience reveals the fact that human beings cannot focus on more than one thing at a time. The closest anyone can get to multitasking is switching focus quickly from one thing to another and back again. In reality, this is not multi-tasking; it is simply rapid single-tasking.<sup>120</sup> Additional research has shown that when someone attempts to multi-task, their overall ability to perform a task is diminished.<sup>121</sup>

As the Creator of the human mind, God understands humanity’s need to take care in what they focus on, which is why God gives us the instructions to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. If an SCL is seeking to focus on multiple tasks at a time, they will have diminished capacity to do any single task well, including diminished capacity to focus on hearing God’s still, small voice giving them guidance.

One practice that can help an SCL love God with their mind comes from a second chair leader named Brother Lawrence, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Carmelite friar from France, whose collected teachings were later compiled into a book entitled *The Practice of the Presence of God*, giving instructions on how to focus one’s mind on God throughout daily tasks such as cooking or cleaning. This principle of abiding in, or “practicing,” God’s presence is one which SCLs could adopt as a way of being reminded through the day of God’s loving presence inviting them to respond in love for God. To aid in this process, the SCL

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<sup>120</sup> Fred Schindler, “The Myth of Multitasking [Microbusiness],” *IEEE Microwave Magazine* 16, no. 1 (Feb. 2015): 20-27, <https://doi.org/10.1109/MMM.2014.2367853>.

<sup>121</sup> Aalto University, “Multitasking Overloads the Brain,” *Neuroscience News*, last modified April 28, 2017, <http://neurosciencenews.com/multitasking-brain-overload-6531>.

could find an object in their daily work that could follow Brother Lawrence's example of using the sink and stove as altars of prayer. This could be something as simple as the steering wheel of their car that draws their attention to God on their commute to and from work, or a special object they place on their desk at work. Every time they see this object, it can serve as an altar of prayer, drawing their attention and heart back to God. This practice can help attune the SCL's mind to listen for God's still, small voice giving them guidance throughout the day.

### *Loving God with the Heart*

Another important way of discerning God's movement in the present is through loving God with one's heart. While loving the Lord with one's heart may seem like an obvious element of one's relationship with God, this can be a challenge for some SCLs, especially since ministry can, over time, cause emotional hazards for an SCL, leading them to become distanced from or even hardened in their own heart. As Peter Scazzero says, "A hardened heart is a big problem for a leader in any context, but it will utterly derail any hope of being able to clearly hear and do the will of God. We cannot engage in plans and decisions that honor God until we prepare our hearts and are intentional about keeping them soft and responsive to his leading."<sup>122</sup>

In order to keep an SCLs heart soft and responsive to God's leading, there are several simple yet profound prayer practices that come from Saint Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, a four-week retreat designed with the practical purpose of helping

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<sup>122</sup> Scazzero, 188.

people “grow in union with God, who frees us to make good decisions about our lives and to ‘help souls.’”<sup>123</sup> The first such practice is called *Lectio Divina*. This type of prayer involves meditatively reading a passage of Scripture several times, each time seeking to allow the words to move deeper from the head to the heart. In practicing *Lectio Divina*, SCLs will be approaching Scripture not just to study and master it, but to receive it like a love letter from God. This approach to Scripture puts the SCL in the place of openness and receptivity to hear whatever God may want to say through a given passage.<sup>124</sup> “*Lectio Divina* cultivates this personal, participatory attentiveness and thus trains us in the discipline of reading Scripture rightly.”<sup>125</sup> If practiced regularly, the SCL may find not only encouragement from God, but they will also grow in being able to recognize God’s voice and gain wisdom about decisions they are facing.

Another Ignatian practice that can help an SCL love the Lord with their heart involves seeing themselves through the eyes of Jesus. This practice can be particularly helpful for an individual who may be overly focused on their brokenness, weakness, or inadequacy, which can lead a person to become discouraged of ever becoming who God wants them to be. However, by learning to see themselves through the eyes of Christ, an SCL will remember how beloved they are, giving them a more accurate view of themselves, and inviting them to respond to God in loving gratitude. As an SCL meditates on God’s love, they become free to discern God’s leading, since they are not as

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<sup>123</sup> Kevin O’Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 14.

<sup>124</sup> See Appendix A in attached Artifact for *Lectio Divina* directions.

<sup>125</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation on the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 84.

bound by ego needs for approval from others. In the process of seeing themselves through God's eyes, the SCL will move from self-judgment or shame, to a place of acceptance and love. As David Benner explains, "Only after we genuinely know and accept everything we find within our self can we begin to develop the discernment to know what should be crucified and what should be embraced as an important part of self."<sup>126</sup> Benner goes on to say that,

A complete knowing of our self in relation to God includes knowing three things: our self as deeply loved, . . . our self as deeply sinful, . . . and our self as in a process of being redeemed and restored. Facing these deep truths about ourselves makes it possible for us to accept and know ourselves as we are accepted and known by God.<sup>127</sup>

As the SCL asks for the grace to see themselves through the loving eyes of Christ, they come to accept themselves and are better able to make wise and godly decisions from a place of freedom and alignment with their authentic self in Christ.

Another Ignatian practice that can bring a person's attention back to the present moment with God involves noticing consolation and desolation. Ignatius uses these two terms in a specific way, with "consolation" relating to one's heart turning toward God, and "desolation" relating to one's heart turning away from God. As David Benner explains, "Tracking moments of consolation and desolation helps us discern both the deepest desires of our heart and the sources of our deepest dis-ease. Consolation points us toward God's action in our lives. Desolation points us toward the action of the kingdom

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<sup>126</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 58.

<sup>127</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 72.

of self.”<sup>128</sup> In paying attention to consolation and desolation, a person can become more aware of disordered desires that could pull them away from God. “A disordered desire may be equally as engaging, exciting or interesting to us, but leaves a different aftertaste, of desolation, emptiness, or a lack of deep, peaceful, sustainable energy.”<sup>129</sup>

Ruth Haley Barton frames these ideas in terms of “resonance and resistance,” encouraging leaders to “be curious about why [they] are resisting and where that resistance is coming from.”<sup>130</sup> In other words, by paying attention to their internal world, the SCL will gain clarity about what would be most life giving for them, providing a filter through which to making wise, life-giving decisions. This is in keeping with Jesus’s desire that we would “have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Another more daily way of slowing down and listening carefully for God’s leading comes through the Ignatian practice called the Prayer of Examen. This prayer has five movements, and takes only ten or fifteen minutes to practice. The Examen is often used at the end of the day to reflect on the previous 24 hours and prayerfully observe where God was moving and speaking. Saint Ignatius believed that “God is found in what is real, so we pray from what is real in our lives,” thereby helping us “discern how God is calling us in small and large ways.”<sup>131</sup> The Examen can be a daily way of staying close to God, recognizing the ways God may be moving in one’s life, and staying open to the ways God may be inviting them to move, change, let go, etc. This prayer has a number of

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<sup>128</sup> David Benner, *Desiring God’s Will: Aligning Our Hearts with the Heart of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 117.

<sup>129</sup> Rothousen, 811.

<sup>130</sup> Barton, *Pursuing God’s Will*, 79.

<sup>131</sup> O’Brien, 75.

variations, but Mark Thibodeaux has simplified the steps into a memorable list of “R’s” as follows:

- *Relish* the moments that went well and all of the gifts I have today.
- *Request* the Spirit to lead me through my review of the day.
- *Review* the day.
- *Repent* of any mistakes or failures.
- *Resolve*, in concrete ways, to live tomorrow well.<sup>132</sup>

### *Loving God with the Hands*

The Bible equates love with obedience. As Jesus says in John 14:23, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.” This means that for an SCL to love the Lord with all their strength (i.e. with their hands), they must behave in ways that show obedience to Scripture, as well as obedience in responding to the things God is teaching them. This can be a daunting task, and one that is certain to bring humility to anyone seeking to love God in this way. There will never come a time when an SCL can love God with their strength/hands perfectly, because the process of sanctification is a lifelong journey.

This process of seeking to live obediently can involve some trial and error along the way. As the SCL senses God leading them to move in a certain direction, they may not have the full picture, but God may invite them to take small steps and listen for further directions as they go. God may also be using this as a test to provide the SCL an opportunity to hear God’s voice in a new way and trust in God’s leading. This is often how God worked in the lives of biblical characters and saints throughout the ages, giving them a glimpse of a direction and then inviting them to take a step of faith in that direction, even if they did not have the full picture. In following this process, the

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<sup>132</sup> Mark E. Thibodeaux, *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen: Fresh Ways to Pray From Your Day* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2015), xi.

character of the SCL will be shaped more like Christ as they come to value and prioritize the things of God, leading to greater capacity for discernment and wisdom.

In addition to taking small, obedient steps of faith and waiting for further guidance, another means of discerning God's will comes from the Ignation prayer of indifference. The word "indifference" does not carry the meaning of being apathetic or uncaring. Instead, it is a "positive desire for God and [God's] will,"<sup>133</sup> a prayer of surrender, allowing one's heart to release its attachment to anything other than God. This is the type of prayer Jesus prayed when he said, ". . . not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). "The fact that Jesus expressed a strong desire to do things a different way indicates there is nothing wrong with having a preference, an opinion or a strong desire. But Jesus' struggle acknowledges the fact that there could be – and often is – a difference between our own preferences and the will of God."<sup>134</sup> By practicing this prayer regularly, an SCL can again move toward more freedom in Christ, since they are no longer attached to a particular outcome, no longer motivated by a false love of anything or anyone other than God. They are thus "indifferent" to a specific outcome. This frees people from false attachments, which David Benner says are "ways of coping with the feelings of vulnerability, shame and inadequacy that lie at the core of our false ways of being."<sup>135</sup> Instead, SCLs are able to trust the outcome of their work and decisions to God, rightly understanding that only God is in control.

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<sup>133</sup> Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary, A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Trowbridge, UK: Cromwell Press, 1998), 31.

<sup>134</sup> Barton, *Pursuing God's Will*, 190.

<sup>135</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 82.



One practical way of pursuing the Ignatian model of indifference is through a simple prayer I developed and have used for many years that can help SCLs love God with their hands. This prayer involves pausing at intervals throughout the day to literally use their hands for an open-handed prayer practice. The prayer begins by sitting quietly in God's presence with hands open, palms facing up. In this posture of surrender, the SCL spends a few moments focusing on God's presence with them, thanking God for the good gifts received so far that day, and offering a prayer of surrender, symbolized by their open hands. As they offer up any decisions they are facing or activities they are engaged in, they express trust that God is in control of the outcomes. They finish this brief prayer with a few moments to focus on listening for God's still, small voice, offering reminders of God's goodness and love, which they are free to receive in their open-handed, receptive posture. By choosing to focus on God through this open-handed prayer practice, it is possible for an SCL to move through a busy day of ministry without letting stress or worry become their focus, but instead living in a non-grasping, more centered way, trusting the outcomes to God.

In considering how SCLs can love God through their head, heart and hands, and thereby grow in their ability to discern God's leading, the following chart lays out the key components of a spiritual formation model.

**Figure 2. Spiritual formation model for SCLs to love God with head (orthodoxy), heart (orthopathy), and hands (orthopraxy).**

Key Verse: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.” Luke 10:27

	<b>Head (Orthodoxy)</b>	<b>Heart (Orthopathy)</b>	<b>Hands (Orthopraxy)</b>
<b>Principles</b>	Discernment through loving God with your mind	Discernment through keeping heart tender toward God	Discernment through acting in obedience
	Paying attention to God	What we attach to is what shapes us	Taking small steps of obedience, leading to bigger steps
	What we focus on affects our ability to hear from God	Connecting deeply with God shapes our heart’s ability to love and lead	Behaving in ways that are consistent with values
<b>Scripture</b>	“... be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2	“...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart...” Hebrews 10:22	“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.” John 14:23
<b>Examples of Processes</b>	Practicing the presence of God	Connecting/listening to the Spirit through contemplative prayer and Scripture reading (e.g. Lectio Divina, Prayer of Examen, Consolation and Desolation)	Engaging in community provides support for taking steps of faithful obedience
	Prayer altar to draw attention back to God	Reordering sense of self / Seeing self through God’s eyes	Open-handed prayer of Indifference

### **Discernment by Looking to the Future**

In seeking discernment for the future, a key verse is found in James 1:5, which says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” By engaging in discernment practices that look to the future, an SCL is helped to sort through such big decisions as whether to stay in their current role or seek to move into a first chair leader role, whether to silently support their FCL or confront them about an issue, or whether to hire a particular person on their team. Often God helps an SCL gain practice in making wise choices by giving them smaller decisions to make, such as whether to make some small change to a program or whether to accept an outside speaking opportunity. Whether the decision is big or small, the SCL is growing in their ability to discern God’s voice, engage in the wisdom God provides, and respond out of love and obedience.

Using intuition can be a good place to begin the process of discerning God’s leading toward the future, since “intuition is part of knowing. Intuition furnishes the first experimental data, via hunches or educated guesses, which we can then test with reason.”<sup>136</sup> Intuition simply reveals information that people already have within them, but it may arrive in a more vague way, such as a gut feeling about something, presenting this data “to our conscious mind for its consideration.”<sup>137</sup> To get in touch with intuition may require some creative approaches.

There are many ways to gain access to intuitions . . . [and] be creative in adapting and adding to the prayer. Drawing (especially with your nondominant hand),

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<sup>136</sup> Liebert, 70.

<sup>137</sup> Liebert, 69.

working clay, hearing or performing music, and dance are especially fruitful sources of intuitive wisdom. Intuitions can also arrive through other senses: touch, odors, colors, symbols. They also come through dreams; if you invite a dream, you may very well receive one.<sup>138</sup>

As the SCL seeks discernment about a particular issue in their life, getting in touch with their intuition can be a helpful step, leading toward another possible step of using God-guided imagination. In this type of guided imagination, first the SCL can imagine themselves choosing one particular option and notice how they feel about it, including what they notice in their body's reaction to the choice and any other thoughts that arise by "living into" this particular option. Then they can imagine themselves choosing an alternate option and following the same process. It can be helpful to write down what they notice after this type of practice, to reflect more deeply on what God may have been bringing to their attention during this imaginative prayer. Sometimes it can also be helpful to imagine living with the different options for several days each, to allow deeper noticing to occur. Finally, it can also be helpful to share these thoughts with their small group or spiritual director for further reflection.

While there are many other possible discernment practices in gaining clarity about an important decision for the future, the final one we will consider involves using reason. Since Western culture tends to place a premium on reasoned decision-making over most other forms of discernment, this practice is last in the list, to avoid an SCL using reason first and then stopping there. This approach to reason involves prayerfully creating a list of pros and cons related to the matter for discernment. After completing the list, the last step is to weigh each of the items on this list. "Weigh" . . . means more than simply

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<sup>138</sup> Liebert, 69.

counting up the number of items on each list. The idea is to sense which alternative is *weightier* – that is, more significant, pulling you more to it (or repelling you more), impressing you with its clarity, logic, or rightness.”<sup>139</sup> In weighing the items on the list, the SCL will engage in noticing both consolation and desolation to gain clarity on which items are more significant to them personally.

### PASTOR JANE SEEKS DISCERNMENT

The last time we saw Pastor Jane, she was discouraged and praying for God’s guidance in making wise decisions about her future. As we look in on her one year later, Jane has been in a one-year leadership discernment program with a community of SCL peers, which has helped her begin noticing some repeated themes in how God has worked throughout her life. She is also experiencing more hope, sensing that God may be preparing her for something new.

One big change has been in her relationship with Dave, her lead pastor. At first, he seemed somewhat skeptical about the program she was in, but one day she decided to see if he might be willing to join her in taking the Enneagram assessment (part of her program), as a way of continuing to develop their working relationship. To her surprise, he said yes. What didn’t surprise her was learning that his Enneagram style was “eight.” This reflected what she had noticed for some time: Dave was a strong, bold and decisive leader, whose shadow side involved occasionally stepping on others in pursuit of his vision. She had been one of those Dave had stepped on at times. She had come to realize that he often didn’t even know that he was doing this. As an Enneagram “three,” Jane

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<sup>139</sup> Liebert, 111.

could see that her need for approval often drove her to seek Dave's approval, working harder and harder to accomplish things, but never seeming to do enough to gain his praise. This had set her up for a never-ending cycle of workaholism and striving that was sucking the life out of her and causing her to question whether she even belonged in ministry leadership.

In the midst of these insights, Jane was also learning to practice the open-handed prayer of indifference, allowing her to gradually release some of her need for approval. Some days this prayer was a real struggle, but as the weeks went by she could feel her internal stress and need to control things beginning to lessen. She began experiencing more peace than she had in quite some time. She also found that she and Dave were having more conversations about leadership styles and how to support each other better. Although they had talked about such things before, it was usually more focused on how to produce better results in their work, not on how to support one another personally as leaders. She also sensed he was beginning to trust her more, and was even allowing her to preach more frequently.

One evening, as Jane was engaging in the Prayer of Examen that she learned through the program, she reviewed her day and focused on a moment that left her feeling small. In a staff meeting, Dave had tried to compliment her on a new church-wide small group launch she had orchestrated, but the way he did it ended up minimizing her leadership role, making her feel unimportant. As she reflected on this, she sensed desolation arising from her Enneagram Three, craving more praise and support as a leader rather than being seen as a behind-the-scenes person. She sensed God inviting her to release her need to be seen as important and successful. She also sensed God nudging

her to talk with Dave about the situation, something she had never dared to do before. This would take courage, which she was coming to see as one of her core values. She knew her “System I”<sup>140</sup> brain would raise fears of rejection, making it hard to talk with Dave. However, by praying for strength and practicing some of the “real play”<sup>141</sup> exercises she was learning, she gained the courage to speak with Dave.

The next day, she asked for some time with Dave. She entered his office and could feel her heart beating faster and her throat getting dry. Through taking the “Everything DiSC”<sup>142</sup> profile in her program, she learned that communicating effectively with Dave (a high “D” in DiSC terms) meant that she needed to get quickly to the point. So she sat down, took a deep breath, and calmly began.

After sharing everything on her heart and mind, Jane paused and took a deep breath. She couldn’t believe she had gotten it all out, and that Dave had listened so closely. Her heart was still beating fast, but she also felt a deep sense of joy at how she handled this and lived out of her core value of courage. To Jane’s surprise, Dave received this well and it signaled the beginning of changes in their working relationship. She found herself taking more risks to speak up when she felt like she was being marginalized

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<sup>140</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 281. In discussing the “Loss Aversion” heuristic, Kahneman makes the point that our System I, limbic brain, tends to avoid loss more than it seeks to pursue winning. In other words, we have a greater fear of losing than desire for winning. This could keep someone from pursuing a highly likely positive outcome because the possible risk of loss feels more eminent.

<sup>141</sup> Amy Happ, “Turning Role-Plays into Real-Plays,” Training Industry, last modified February 17, 2016, <https://trainingindustry.com/articles/content-development/turning-role-plays-into-real-plays/>. A real play involves creating a context for a learning simulation without assigning specific roles. This allows participants to enter a simulation in more of a real way than trying to fulfill an artificial role play, leading to deeper learning and personal application.

<sup>142</sup> “Everything DiSC,” accessed on December 15, 2019, <https://www.everythingdisc.com/Home.aspx>.

or dismissed, and also to offer her creative ideas for improving the ministry. At times this caused some tension in her relationship with Dave, but she also sensed a growing trust on his part in allowing her greater leadership opportunities in the church.

After about ten months in the SCL leadership discernment program, Jane and Dave sat down for their bi-monthly meeting, and she could tell by his face that something was up. “Jane, I’ve got some news to share, and it impacts both of us.” Her eyes widened as she wondered what kind of bad news he might be about to share. Dave continued, “I’ve been offered a position at a church in my hometown back east, and my wife and I sense it’s time to head back to the area to help care for our aging parents. This opportunity just fell in my lap, but after praying with Tina, we both feel it’s the right time to make a change.”

“Congratulations, Dave! This sounds like an exciting new opportunity.” Jane said, but he could see the question on her face.

“So you’re probably wondering what this means for you.”

“I guess I’m just trying to take it all in,” Jane admitted.

“I wanted to let you know that this past year I’ve been impressed at the growth I’ve seen in you as a leader, and I wanted you to know that I’ve recommended to the board that they bring you on as the interim lead pastor of the church while the church goes through a search process to fill the position. They’re interested, but wanted me to see if you would be open to it before they approach you.”

Jane’s smile almost split her face. Throughout her discernment process, she sensed that God was preparing her for something. She would never have guessed this would be it, but she experienced a deep sense of consolation as she heard Dave’s news.



She was learning to trust this internal reaction as one barometer of God's leading, but she also recognized that she needed to seek confirmation. "This is truly an amazing opportunity – for both of us, Dave. My first reaction is that I'd be very interested in taking this on, but I'd appreciate having some time to pray and talk to my husband about this. When do you need an answer?"

After discussing more of the details about the upcoming transition, Dave left for another meeting and Jane paused to thank God for this opportunity and also for allowing her to be in the one-year discernment process right at this exact time. A year ago she was considering leaving the church but didn't know where she should go. She had long assumed that Dave would stay at this church until he retired, so she never even considered having a new opportunity without having to move. Now she could see why God seemed to have led her to stay right where she was. Jane was uncertain what it would be like to take on the primary leadership of the church, but this seemed like God's opportunity for her to try it out in a short-term role, which would give her more information about whether a lead pastor role might be a good fit for her in the future. She couldn't wait to share this with her husband, and also with her community of SCLs, so they could join her in discerning whether she should say yes.

## CONCLUSION

For SCLs to become discerning leaders, it will take practice and the encouragement of a supportive community. As they grow in discernment, they will become like the men of Issachar in the Old Testament, "who understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (I Chronicles 12:32). The Church and the world need leaders like this, and SCLs, who make up the largest number of leaders, have the

opportunity to become people who can discern what God is up to and lead others to join them in following God's lead.

## SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

After consideration, the artifact has emerged as a curriculum that I could personally lead in a beta version, to be continuously improved through repeated iterations, before making it more widely accessible.

Here is my proposed five year plan for developing and using the artifact:

- Stage 1: Finish developing the curriculum and self-publish it through Faith Alive 365, the 501c3 nonprofit ministry that my husband and I founded a number of years ago to publish ministry resources. (Year 1)
- Stage 2: Recruit and personally take 2-3 groups of second chair leaders through the process, making any needed improvements to the curriculum after taking each group through program. (Years 1-3)
- Stage 3: Rework the Facilitator's Guide to include more complete directions so that other SCLs can lead the program. Then recruit SCLs who have completed the program with me to become leaders who take other SCLs through the program, and provide mentoring for them as they lead. (Years 3-4)
- Stage 4: Find a major curriculum publisher to publish the entire program, allowing the program to be more widely accessible. In this updated and revised version, include directions for groups of SCLs to self-lead the program and create brief teaching videos to accompany the curriculum. (Years 3-4)
- Stage 5: Locate an appropriate First Chair Leader with whom to write the next set of curriculum, providing training to help FCLs in working with SCLs. (Year 5)

### **Overview of Program**

The curriculum is designed to be used in a one-year, cohort-based process. Ideally, the cohort would consist of nine to fifteen SCLs, a large enough group to be able to put them into triads for many of the learning activities, but small enough for the entire

group to get to know one another well and develop trust for deeper sharing. The program will begin with one month of introductory activities and interactions with the cohort in preparation for the first two-day retreat, which will take place at the beginning of month two. The group will then meet for one-hour weekly meetings throughout the year (with periodic breaks), ending with another two-day retreat for reflection and application in the eleventh month of the program, with two additional follow meetings after the retreat for closure. The weekly meetings will be conducted through Zoom, a web-based video conferencing software program. This will allow participants who live at a distance from one another to participate, only needing to be physically present for the two retreats.

### **Opening and Closing Retreats**

In order to hear the voice of God in fresh ways and get in touch with their own longings and desires for themselves and their ministries, it is important for leaders to get away from their work and be in a place of rest, beauty, and authentic fellowship. That is why this curriculum will begin with a spiritual retreat, rather than a leadership conference. What leaders often need most is not more input, but time to slow down and simply be.

At the opening spiritual retreat, the table is set, metaphorically speaking, and the invitation is given for the SCL cohort to disconnect from their ministries for two days, heeding Jesus's invitation in Mark 6:30-31 to "Come away to a deserted place . . . and rest a while." This type of retreat, or "strategic withdrawal,"<sup>143</sup> as Ruth Haley Barton calls it, sets the banquet table with space for the SCL to slow down long enough to listen for

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<sup>143</sup> Barton, *Invitation to Retreat*, 11.

God's still, small voice and rediscover their identity in Christ, rather than in their leadership role. It also begins to create the fibers and sinews of community that will develop and strengthen over time, allowing each individual SCL to drop the masks of their false selves and be authentic with one another.

The closing retreat at the end of the year will provide space and time for the cohort to debrief the program together and with God, sifting through the learnings about Personal Realities, Relational Realities, and Missional Realities to discover the gems they will keep and implement moving forward in their lives as SCLs.

### **Personal Realities**

The first major section of learning in the curriculum will explore the Personal Realities of the SCL. This will include a number of discernment practices to help them gain insight into themselves, grow in wisdom for making good decisions both personally and professionally as an SCL, and strengthen their relationship with God. The cohort will go through a set of learning experiences, designed to help the SCLs gain additional self-awareness into their own strengths and weaknesses, helping them target possible areas for growth.

The first project involves creating a personal timeline, or "Storyline," as it will be referred to in this program. The Storyline will allow SCLs to reflect on pain points, personal values, key patterns, and leadership lessons from the past. This will help SCLs step back from the intensity of their immediate life and ministry, gain perspective on what God has been doing through their life story, and discover clarity regarding their purpose and calling. It is not uncommon for SCLs to experience self-doubt or confusion in these areas, leading to additional stress and discouragement in their ministry role;

however, reflecting on the patterns, processes, and principles that God has been at work on in the SCL's life will bring encouragement and wisdom for making decisions. Clinton explains the elements of a Storyline this way: "Patterns deal with the overall framework, or the big picture, of a life. Processes deal with the ways and means used by God to move a leader along in the overall pattern. Principles deal with the identification of foundational truths within processes and patterns that have a wider application to leaders."<sup>144</sup> Ultimately, the goal of this Storyline activity is to help SCLs listen for the voice of God as it relates to their sense of call.

In conjunction with the Storyline Project, the SCLs will explore their own core values and look for ways in the past where they have either lived out of those values or failed to do so. This will provide another significant filter for SCLs to determine how to make wise decisions in their personal lives. In addition to weekly activities and experiences, the next major project the SCLs will engage in is the Enneagram, which is a useful tool in understanding one's signature sins and blind spots. Although, as Richard Rohr notes, "self-knowledge is tied in with inner work, which is both demanding and painful,"<sup>145</sup> by going through this challenging process within a community of supportive peers, the SCL is better able to engage in the necessary deep learning and application.

### **Relational Realities**

In the next section of the curriculum, SCLs will explore how to lead with wisdom and courage in regard to the Relational Realities of leadership. One activity that will

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<sup>144</sup> Clinton, 35.

<sup>145</sup> Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2008), xi.

provide concrete tools to help SCLs better lead up, lead sideways, and lead down involves taking the “Everything DiSC” behavioral assessment. This tool will be explored and applied to the relational interactions the SCL must engage in from the middle of the organization as they gain insight into their own preferred behavioral style and how that style interacts with the styles of their First Chair Leader, their peers, and the team they lead.

### **Missional Realities**

The Missional Realities of the SCL is the next element of the curriculum, exploring such things as the organization’s mission, purpose, goals, and culture. Specific attention will be given to helping SCLs explore how to lead in regard to Missional Realities from the second chair. In addition, SCLs will discern if and how their personal values and goals align (or fail to align) with organizational values and goals, to aid in discerning whether the SCL is a good fit for their current organization or whether they may need to make a change.

### **Wrap Up and Next Steps**

The final two months of the program will include the final retreat and also activities designed to help SCLs to reflect on the learning of the past year and explore next steps for them in their leadership. This will also be a time for the cohort to experience closure of the process, and consider ways they may wish to either continue the group support in the future and/or ways they may be able to share this process with other SCLs.

## SECTION 5:

### ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

#### **Goals, Scope, Content and Standards**

My goal for this artifact is that it would provide a meaningful process for a broad spectrum of SCLs to become wiser, stronger, more resilient leaders who lead well from the second chair and thrive in ministry for the long haul. To fulfill this goal, I will seek to make this resource as widely accessible as possible. Initially this will happen as I personally lead groups of SCLs through the program, and then train them to take the materials and lead their own groups of SCLs using the program materials. This will produce a multiplication of effort and prevent the program from being centered on me. As the curriculum continues to be tested and improved, I will seek publication by a major publishing house, allowing the program to be even more widely accessible.

Though the attached artifact focuses primarily on the first module of the curriculum (i.e. Personal Realities), the completed artifact will include robust learning experiences for the Relational Realities and the Missional Realities as well, followed by a module on overall application and next steps.

#### **Audience**

The target audience for this program is SCLs in a ministry leadership role, whether in a church, parachurch, nonprofit or mission organization, or Christian college. Initially, these leaders may come from a wide spectrum of ministry settings and levels of ministry experience. However, over time it may prove helpful to create cohorts of leaders



in similar ministries and/or experience levels. This will be one area for experimentation and further research.

### **Strategies**

For the initial launch of the program, I will recruit participants from my extensive network of ministry leaders, including SCLs at William Jessup University where I have taught for the past fifteen years, and SCLs in the Evangelical Covenant denomination, through which I have been an ordained pastor and spiritual director for nearly twenty-five years. In sharing about this program with ministry SCLs, I have received positive feedback and interest in participating, which bodes well for a strong launch.

For SCLs who are still working on an undergraduate or graduate degree, I will explore the possibility of SCLs receiving credit for participating in the program when led by a trained facilitator, as another way of increasing the value for participants. I will begin by approaching William Jessup University about this, since Jessup has a well-established process of awarding credit for prior learning as well as awarding credit for appropriate workplace training. I will then reach out to other Christian universities and seminaries as well, to broaden the network.

To help make the program affordable, I will approach a variety of denominations and ministry organizations about providing some scholarship money for leaders within their denomination. As an incentive, I will offer a certain number of leaders within these organizations the opportunity to participate at a greatly reduced price so they can become the word-of-mouth proponents of the program among their ministry leadership. Once the program goes through several iterations of improvement, I will also apply to the Lilly Foundation to seek grant monies to offer this program more widely.

## **Location**

The weekly meetings will be conducted via Zoom, which can be led from anywhere there is adequate Wi-Fi connection. However, the retreats will need an appropriate location, which I am working on securing. Two good local options include a retreat facility called Red Bench Retreat Center,<sup>146</sup> owned and operated by a friend who is a licensed Christian therapist, as well as a nearby Catholic retreat center. As this ministry grows and others lead the program in different parts of the country, they would need to find nearby retreat centers that would allow for a contemplative retreat at an affordable price.

## **Measuring Success**

There are several factors that will determine success in Stage One. These include:

- At least nine to fifteen SCLs complete the one-year program.
- Participants apply at least one significant learning from each module (i.e. Personal Realities, Relational Realities, and Missional Realities). These learning applications will be self-reported by participants throughout the program.
- SCLs who complete the program refer friends to the program and/or take on the leadership of their own cohort of SCLs.

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<sup>146</sup> redbenchretreatcenter.com.

## Budget

The primary purpose of this ministry is to provide a quality training program for SCLs, not necessarily to make money. However, there will be some expenses on my part, which will need to be offset by charging for the materials and time involved. The expenses include:

- \$14.99 per month for a Zoom subscription
- Cost of workbook: I will publish the workbook through Createspace, which uses a Print on Demand (POD) model,<sup>147</sup> with a cost to user of under fifty dollars.<sup>148</sup> For the cover design, I have a graphic designer we have worked with in the past for other books who will design the cover for somewhere between one hundred and three hundred dollars.
- The cost of retreats will be covered by the fees charged to SCL participants, as follows: 5 meals (2 breakfasts as \$6 per person, 1 lunch at \$10 per person, 2 dinners at \$15 per person, for a total of \$52 per person per retreat for food); \$2,500 for facility and cook. For a cohort of twelve SCLs, this would come to approximately \$260 per person for each retreat.

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<sup>147</sup> Terri Long, "Paperback Distribution: Createspace vs. Lightning Source," *HuffPost*, last modified December 6, 2017, [createspace.com](https://www.createspace.com).

<sup>148</sup> Long, 2017.

SECTION 6:  
POSTSCRIPT

The artifact, when it is fully scripted out, will provide second chair leaders the opportunity to join with a community of peers to learn and apply discernment practices that can provide them with godly wisdom, courage, and confidence to lead well from the second chair and thrive in ministry for the long haul. These discernment practices can be applied to the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities of leadership for SCLs, allowing them to grow not only as leaders but also as followers of Christ.

In sharing my research with second chair leaders in a variety of ministry settings, I continue to receive enthusiastic responses. For example, one SCL who serves a broad range of SCLs through her role at a denominational office expressed interest in having me lead this process for SCLs in the denomination once the artifact is complete. A common theme among SCLs is excitement about having a resource targeted to their specific needs as they lead from the second chair.

More research will need to be conducted on aspects of second chair leadership that need to be addressed, such as best practices for developing healthy personal boundaries, maintaining healthy spiritual rhythms, and additional specific tools and resources for building a strong relationship with the first chair leader. It may also be beneficial at some point to build a social media presence, including a blog where I and other SCLs can contribute ongoing research and inspiration, to accompany the workbook and leadership process, and also as a place where SCLs can continue to network, learn and encourage one another. Another area for continued research and publication involves addressing the unique needs of first chair leaders in regard to how they develop their

second chair leaders and build the working relationship between them. In addition, it would be helpful to research the needs of different sub-groups of SCLs, such as Millennials versus Boomers, men versus women, dominant culture versus minorities, those in the Church versus those in parachurch or nonprofits, and so on. Each of these groups may have unique needs that could be addressed more specifically.

APPENDIX A:  
ARTIFACT

Initially, this curriculum will be used solely by the author, Linda Sommerville, during a one-year beta test of the program. In the process of leading groups through this program, the author will make any needed adjustments to the workbook as well as mapping out a fuller training process for others to serve as facilitators for this program. As a result, certain assumptions are made in this version of the curriculum. For example, since the author is a trained spiritual director, this aspect is woven into the curriculum. However, alternate approaches will be laid out in the future for facilitators who do not have this specific training.



# **SQUEEZED** **IN THE** **MIDDLE**

Second Chair Leadership Practices  
for Thiving in Ministry

**A Leadership Workbook**

Linda Sommerville

*Squeezed in the Middle: Second Chair Leadership Practices for Thriving in Ministry. A Leadership Workbook*

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# Contents

WELCOME.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	6
PROGRAM SCHEDULE.....	13
PREPARATION.....	18
UNIT ONE: Orientation and Getting Started.....	19
Week 1.....	20
Weeks 2 and 3.....	27
Week 4.....	34
UNIT TWO: Entry Points to PERSONAL Discernment.....	44
Week 1.....	45
SUMMARY OF THE REMAINDER OF THE WORKBOOK.....	57
APPENDIX: <i>Storyline Project Samples</i> .....	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	64

# WELCOME

## to the Squeezed in the Middle Leadership Workbook

As a longtime second chair leader, I can relate to your hopes and dreams, as well as your challenges and pain points. In more than thirty-five years of ministry, I have served in many second chair roles including Youth Director, Christian camp program staff, Children's Director, Co-Pastor of a church plant, Pastor of Adult Ministries, adjunct faculty at four Christian universities and colleges, and Director of Adult Degree Completion at one of those universities. While I have no problem taking the lead on things, God has frequently called me to do so from the middle of an organization. Through it all, though, God has used these leadership labs to help me become more of the leader I was designed to be.

However, it is in my role as a spiritual director over the past fifteen years where my heart for second chair leaders (SCLs) has grown. I've had the privilege of walking with many SCLs through the joys and trials of leading from the second chair in a variety of ministry settings. Many of these faithful and courageous leaders have struggled to live with unfulfilled dreams while seeking to be content in their ministry role. Some have found their first chair leader (FCL) to be wise and gracious in helping them develop as leaders. Others have found their FCL to be a difficult person to work with, or too busy with their own leadership demands to give much time to encouraging and equipping them as SCLs.

### *Repeated Themes of Second Chair Leaders*

One repeated theme I've noticed is that many of these SCLs need clarity about where they are called to serve. Some have wondered if God might be preparing them to take on an FCL role somewhere. Others have wondered if they should stay in their current SCL role or move to another ministry. Still others have struggled to face the reality that due to their gender or ethnicity, they may not have the opportunity to move to another role.

Another repeated theme I've noticed is that many SCLs feel pulled in a variety of directions as they seek to build a positive working relationship with their FCL, develop positive and supportive relationships with their peers, and lead their own teams with courage and wisdom. The wide-ranging demands and expectations of the SCL can cause them to feel exhausted at times, and also to struggle with hearing the voice of God in the midst of their leadership challenges.

### *The Purpose of this Leadership Process*

These, and other SCL issues, form the backdrop for this project. I believe there are ways of leading well from the second chair that can bring you more joy and fulfillment, and allow you to thrive in ministry for the long haul. My hope and prayer is that as you engage in the experiences of this workbook and program, you will:

- Discover a renewed and deepened sense of vocational calling in this season of ministry.
- Clarify your Core Values in order to live and lead with integrity and authenticity.
- Apply godly discernment practices to help you stay vibrant in your walk with God and make wise and courageous decisions as a leader.
- Build meaningful relationships with SCL peers in ministry as you journey together.

# INTRODUCTION

## Not Just Another Leadership Book

While there are many excellent ministry related leadership books and development programs on the market, this one was designed specifically for you, the Second Chair Leader.

Why does this matter? Because most of the existing resources have been written by leaders in first chair roles who may or may not be able to address your specific needs. As a Second Chair Leader (SCL), your needs, responsibilities, and questions are different than those of a first chair leader. That's why this workbook and leadership development process have been developed by and for SCLs, providing you with practical resources and experiences to expand your leadership tool belt, discern where God may be leading you personally and professionally, and thrive in ministry for the long haul.

As part of the research for this project, I interviewed nearly forty SCLs from a variety of ministry positions including church pastors and staff<sup>1</sup> as well as leaders in other types of ministry organizations.<sup>2</sup> They represent men and women, younger and more seasoned leaders, many ethnicities and a variety of denominational backgrounds. The one thing they all have in common is that they are each in a second chair leadership role. These leaders shared stories of the joys of being a second chair leader as well as the pain points and challenges they face. Their stories help shape the backdrop for the leadership process in which you are about to engage.

### *Unique Needs of Second Chair Leaders*

As someone who leads from the middle of a ministry organization, you have unique needs. You may often have more responsibility than authority—which can bring headaches. You also face the challenge of leading up by providing support, feedback, and wise leadership to your first chair leader; leading sideways by forming strong peer partnerships to lead collaboratively; and leading down by inspiring and motivating your

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<sup>1</sup> This includes executive pastors, associate pastors, adult ministry pastors, worship pastors, and youth and children's ministry pastors.

<sup>2</sup> This includes Christian university provosts and department directors, parachurch program directors, a nonprofit ministry VP of advancement, missionary leaders, and Christian camp staff leaders.

team to serve together for common goals. Each direction requires different leadership approaches and the ability to rapidly switch between these different approaches, all while keeping members of the organization aligned and on mission.

While the challenges of leading others are many, self-leadership can take just as much, if not more, effort and skill for SCLs. It is often challenging to prioritize our own spiritual and professional growth when there is just so much work to be done. As Henry Nouwen writes, “we are usually surrounded by so much inner and outer noise that it is hard to truly hear our God when he is speaking to us. We have often become deaf, unable to know when God calls us and unable to understand in which direction he calls us.”<sup>3</sup> So, unless we have the accountability and support of a group of peers committed to learning and growing together, we are much less likely to focus on our own development or on listening carefully for God’s leading.

You are likely experiencing a variety of these challenges in your current role. Throughout this workbook we will explore these challenges in depth, grouping them into Personal Realities, Relational Realities, and Missional Realities, spending a good deal of time on each area. We will begin by diving into the Personal Realities, since self-leadership is an important place to begin and which provides the foundation for facing the leadership challenges in the other areas as well. Self-leadership includes such things as:

- Developing skill at noticing the patterns of God’s work in your life in the past.
- Engaging in the courageous work of facing your own shadow side.
- Practicing the presence of God in your daily life.
- Identifying and living out of your core values in your personal and professional life.

### *The Goal of this Workbook*

The goal of this workbook and leadership process is for you to become a more discerning leader who can follow God’s lead closely while leading others with wisdom, skill, courage, humility, love, and joy—all from the second chair.

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<sup>3</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1981), 67.

Whether you serve in a church, parachurch, nonprofit, mission organization, or Christian college, you know that ministry leadership can range from being exciting and spiritually invigorating on the good days, to being personally and professionally hazardous on the difficult days. The good news is that when God calls us into ministry leadership, we're not left on our own to struggle through it. God's presence is always with us, leading, guiding, encouraging and equipping.

However, learning to discern and follow God's guidance takes a lifetime of practice, especially for those seeking to lead others. This leadership development workbook and program has been developed to help you grow in this ability to discern God's leading in order to make wise decisions from the second chair.

### *Why this is Worth Your Valuable Time*

Let's face it, the challenges of ministry are not going to get any easier. And you're not likely to have fewer demands on your time in the future. Yet somewhere in the midst of the good work you are doing, God has more for you as a leader. That "more" can include:

- Living and leading from your passion.
- Finding better work/life balance.
- Gaining courage to speak the truth in love to your first chair leader.
- Growing in wisdom to make good decisions in your personal and professional life.

As you seek to be the leader God calls you to be, you can certainly continue to "learn on the job," while trying to find the support and leadership tools you need by attending a conference or reading a book. But in the fast-paced crush of ministry, you may find that personal health and leadership development will often take a back seat. Again, that's why this program was created for you.

Rather than taking a hodgepodge approach to personal and professional growth, this workbook and leadership program can provide you with the support and tools you need to grow in godly discernment, and develop your own leadership plan for applying that discernment to the many big and small challenges you face as an SCL.

This iron sharpening iron process, targeted specifically to your needs as a second chair leader, can provide you with the structure, wisdom, tools, and support to do more than merely make it through another year. This one-year facilitated program will equip you as

a second chair leader (SCL) to become more of the person and leader God designed you to be.

Upon completing this second chair leadership program, you will be able to:

- Lead with greater wisdom and courage from the second chair.
- Engage in discernment practices that will help you gain confidence in decision-making.
- Compare and contrast a variety of discernment approaches and assess which ones may be most helpful to you at this particular season of life and ministry leadership.
- Discern next steps personally and professionally.

### *Learning in Community*

This is a cohort-based program where you will engage in a supportive community of SCL peers with whom you will be able to process the challenges of ministry leadership, gain courage to lead well, practice hearing the voice of God, learn how to make wise decisions, and discern next steps both personally and professionally. This highly interactive program will provide you with support and accountability to stay engaged and invested in your own leadership development, even when the tyranny of the urgent threatens to pull you in a million different directions.

The value of going through this with a community of peers is that we learn things in deeper ways when we do it in community. Saint Benedict “viewed the faith community as God’s workshop or art studio—a place where God’s artwork in our soul takes place.”<sup>4</sup> This is a beautiful picture of what God can do through the cohort of SCL peers as you engage one another in community through the process of learning.

### *Learning Strategy*

This program provides you an opportunity to explore discernment skills that will deepen your relationship with God and give you greater courage and wisdom to lead others from

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<sup>4</sup> David Robinson, *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2017), 23.

the middle of the ministry organization. A variety of learning methods will be used to ensure that you gain the skills and confidence to lead well in this season of ministry.

Since everyone learns in different ways, this program will embody a variety of learning modalities, engaging your head, heart, and hands (i.e. cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning). While you may have a particular preference for one or more of these learning styles, by opening yourself up to engage in each learning modality you will give yourself the greatest opportunity for learning and growth.

These learning methods include the following:

#### **READING ASSIGNMENTS**

These will be brief and focused on helping you dig deeper into the topic for the week before you engage in practical skills.

#### **TEACHING TIMES**

These will also be brief, and designed to equip and encourage you, and prepare you for self-directed learning tasks.

#### **ZOOM ONLINE GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

These sessions take place weekly to help you engage in the subject and make personal discoveries and applications within a community of peers.

#### **TWO-DAY RETREATS**

These will take place at the beginning and end of the program. The first retreat will be a time to gain deeper connection with the cohort as well as explore leadership discernment practices. The closing retreat will provide space and time for the group to unpack and apply what has been learned throughout the year and prepare for next steps.

#### **PERSONAL RETREATS**

There will be three personal retreats in all, one at the end of Units Two, Three, and Four. Each retreat is an opportunity to have extended time for personal reflection and rest.

#### **STORYLINE PROJECT**

This important project will allow you to reflect on God's work in your life throughout your history and connect more of the dots in order to see how the experiences and people from your past impact your current ministry leadership, as well as your future.



## ENNEAGRAM ASSESSMENT

The Enneagram will provide deeper insight into your personal strengths, as well as your shadow side, and identify places where you may need to allow God to heal or transform you in order to be your most authentic self and lead well for the long haul.

## DiSC ASSESSMENT

This assessment will provide deeper insight into your preferred behavior and communication style, as provide practical skills for leading up, sideways, and down.

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Direction will periodically be offered in one-on-one sessions providing you with a partnership to explore the movement of God in your life.

## GROUP FACEBOOK PAGE

This will be a closed group page for your cohort only. It will help the group stay engaged with one another during the week around a weekly topic. The facilitator will post a question for discussion at the beginning of each week in preparation for the next Zoom meeting and you will join with the group in discussing the topic.

## WRITTEN JOURNAL ASSIGNMENTS

Journaling will help you prayerfully reflect on the weekly topic, consider personal and professional applications, and keep a written record of your learning.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES

These experiences are designed to give participants a process for understanding and applying what you learn by engaging your head, heart, and hands (i.e. cognitive, emotive, psychomotor learning). These experiences will be woven throughout the entire workbook and retreats.

### *Time & Financial Investment*

The amount of time you will invest in this leadership growth process will vary from week to week depending on the topic and learning activities, but on average it will involve approximately 3-5 hours of time per week, including the one-hour Zoom meeting. Your time is valuable, so the reading and activities you will engage in are not busy work. Each activity is crafted to provide you with a meaningful opportunity for self-reflection, interaction with your peers, and continued development. The current cost of the program will be communicated by your program facilitator, and it will include the costs of the opening and closing retreats, the Enneagram assessment, and the DiSC assessment. Payment plans can be worked out and paid over the course of the year.

### *Learning Framework*

The learning will happen in cycles of three. After an opening month of introduction and preparation, the learning framework includes three months for each of the following:

- Entry Points to PERSONAL Discernment
- Entry Points to RELATIONAL Discernment
- Entry Points to MISSIONAL Discernment

Under each of these SCL frameworks, there is another repeated Cycle of Three, which includes discernment practices that focus on the PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE. By repeating these cycles, you will gain deeper familiarity with discernment practices and become more skilled at engaging in and applying them both personally and professionally.

Each chapter in the workbook begins with a section entitled *Deeper Learning*, which will provide helpful content on the topic of the week. These readings will explore biblical insight as well as leadership theory and praxis, specifically as it relates to SCLs. The next section of each chapter is called *Engaging the Process*, which provides questions and activities both for self-directed learning as well as preparation for group learning.

Throughout this year-long process, the group facilitator will provide guidance, coaching, spiritual direction, and input to help you get the most out of each step in the journey.

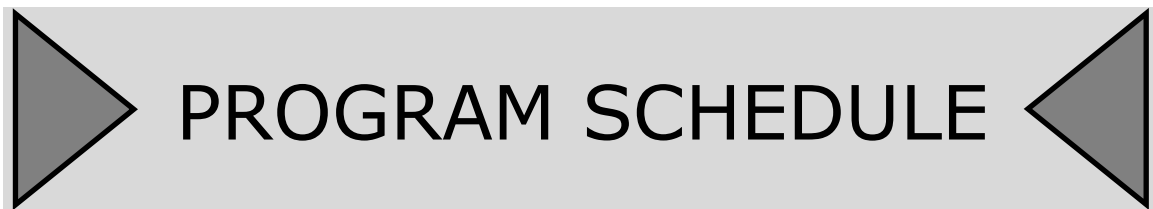
### *Defining Terms*

#### **First Chair Leader = FCL**

This leader is in a top leadership role in a ministry organization. Examples would be a senior or lead pastor, the CEO of a Christian nonprofit, the Executive Director of a parachurch or mission organization, or the president of a Christian college.

#### **Second Chair Leader = SCL**

This leader is in a significant, though not the top, leadership role in a ministry organization. Examples would be an executive pastor or adult ministries pastor; a program director in a Christian nonprofit, parachurch, or mission organization; an associate provost, division dean, or department director in a Christian college.



# PROGRAM SCHEDULE

## UNIT ONE: Orientation and Getting Started

- Week 1: ZOOM – Group orientation and discussion about Storyline project.
- Week 2: Half of group meets one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour appointments with facilitator to discuss Storyline project and engage in spiritual direction.
- Week 3: Other half of group meets one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour appointments with facilitator to discuss Storyline project and engage in spiritual direction.
- Week 4: ZOOM – Discuss challenges of being an SCL; discuss retreat preparation and Storyline project.

## UNIT TWO: Entry Points to PERSONAL Discernment

### *Past: Connecting with God's Work in Your Life*

- Week 1: Two-day Group Retreat.
- Week 2: ZOOM – Discuss reflection questions from retreat.
- Week 3: ZOOM – Half of group meets as a group with facilitator to further unpack individual timelines and core values.
- Week 4: ZOOM – Other half of group meets as a group with facilitator to further unpack individual timelines and core values.

### *Present: Living and Leading While Wide Awake*

- Week 5: ZOOM – (HEAD) Introduction to Enneagram applications (SCLs will take Enneagram assessment on their own before this meeting and complete some reading on the subject).

Week 6: ZOOM – (HEART) Further explore Enneagram applications: facing our shadow side and ways of hearing God.

Week 7: ZOOM – (HANDS) Discuss and apply biblical models of discernment (everyone will bring their own example to share).

Week 8: ZOOM – Discuss “Vital Behaviors” (in triads, then with whole group).

### *Future: Seeking Wisdom for Personal and Professional Decisions*

Week 9: ZOOM – Discuss & practice Framing a Discernment Question (Triads and large group discussion).

Week 10: ZOOM – Discuss & practice Holy Imagination and Action-Reflection model (Triads and large group discussion).

Week 11: ZOOM – Discuss & practice Weighted Pros & Cons.

Week 12: Personal Retreat (no group meeting).

## UNIT THREE: Entry Points to RELATIONAL Discernment

### *Past: God’s Work in Your Organization*

Week 1: ZOOM – Engage in an organizational leadership audit and begin to create a Storyline of your ministry.

Week 2: ZOOM – Explore your ministry culture – where it came from, how it came to be, where it is now (“Culture eats strategy for breakfast”).

### *Present: Leading Up, Sideways, and Down*

Week 3: ZOOM – (HEAD) “Everything DiSC” Behavioral Styles – understanding your own and others’ communication styles and how they are best led.

Week 4: ZOOM – (HEART) Identify behaviors and attitudes that build trust – the cornerstone of all leadership relationships (Seeing others through God’s eyes).

Week 5: ZOOM – (HANDS) Strategies for Leading Up, Sideways, and Down (vertical code switching, coaching vs. managing, appropriate boundaries, when and how to speak truth to power).

### *Future: Wisdom for Ministry Relationships*

Week 6: ZOOM – The SCL-FCL relationship – learning to read your FCL. Exploring biblical SCL-FCL relationships.

Week 7: ZOOM – Discuss relational boundaries of the SCL: How do personal relationships hinder/help the leadership role? The role of dual relationships. Developing courage to lead and make hard decisions in the context of relationship.

Week 8: ZOOM – Discuss and apply Consolation/Desolation in discerning relational needs of those you lead; offering/seeking forgiveness; when and how to challenge and encourage.

Week 9: Personal Retreat.

## **UNIT FOUR: Entry Points to MISSIONAL Discernment**

### *Past: God's Work in Your Ministry's Mission and Culture*

Week 1: ZOOM – Adding to organizational Storyline – considering mission and culture.

Week 2: ZOOM – Organizational Storyline – history of decision-making, approach to change.

Week 3: ZOOM – Organizational Storyline – exploring values, both stated and assumed. Half of group will also meet one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour spiritual direction appointments with facilitator.

Week 4: ZOOM – The other half of group meets one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour spiritual direction appointments with facilitator.

### *Present: Leading Amidst Change and Culture Shift*

Week 5: ZOOM – (HEAD) Discuss what it looks like to practice the presence of God in daily mission/culture of ministry.

Week 6: ZOOM – (HEART) Discuss and practice Awareness Examen (desolation/consolation) in relation to daily and ongoing organizational decision-making and approach to change.

Week 7: ZOOM – (HANDS) Discuss practicing open-handed prayer of indifference in your leadership role as SCL in relation to Missional Realities. Half of group will also meet one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour spiritual direction appointments with facilitator.

Week 8: ZOOM – Other half of group meets one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour spiritual direction appointments with facilitator.

### *Future: Seeking Wisdom for Culture-Shaping and Mission Alignment*

Week 9: ZOOM – Triads, then large group: Discuss and practice “holy imagination” within your leadership role as you seek to make wise decisions with limited authority.

Week 10: ZOOM – Triads, then large group: Discuss weighted pros and cons and how your ministry team each perceive the relative value and importance of various aspects of a decision.

Week 11: ZOOM – Discuss the role of tentative steps forward and seeking confirmation. Role of FCL in the process, and what to do if you’re not on the same page.

Week 12: Personal Retreat.

## UNIT FIVE: Putting it All Together

### *Spiritual Direction and Retreat Preparation*

Week 1: ZOOM – Meeting in triads for discussion and retreat preparation.

Week 2: ZOOM – Half of group meets one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour spiritual direction appointments with facilitator to reflect on the journey & next steps.

Week 3: ZOOM – Other half of group meets one-on-one via Zoom for one-hour spiritual direction appointments with facilitator to reflect on the journey & next steps.

Week 4: No meeting this week.

### *Reflections and Next Steps*

Week 5: Closing Group Retreat: Create map of possible next steps organizationally; creating personal compass and possible next steps personally.

Week 6: ZOOM – Meeting in triads to unpack and apply retreat learnings.

Week 7: ZOOM – Final Group meeting – closing reflections, blessings.



# PREPARATION

Before you begin this leadership course, there are a few things you will need to do to prepare.

## 1. UPLOAD ZOOM

Before our first meeting, be sure to upload the Zoom software and do a test run to be sure it operates properly on your computer. Zoom is a fairly simple program to install and use, but if you have any problems, please contact your group facilitator. You can also go to the following link to watch a brief Zoom tutorial which will help you get started: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials>.

## 2. JOIN THE GROUP FACEBOOK PAGE

You will be sent a request from your facilitator to join a private Facebook Group just for your cohort.

## 3. GATHER SUPPLIES

You will need to purchase or gather the following:

- Spiral-bound Art Sketchbook (11" x 14" or larger)
- Small, 1" sticky notes (4 different colors)
- New Journal (to be used specifically for this program)
- Bible – any translation





# UNIT ONE

## **Orientation and Getting Started**

Work should be completed before each week's Zoom meeting.

## UNIT ONE: Orientation and Getting Started

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### ▶ Week 1

#### TOPICS

- Introduction to the program and one another
- The “Big Why” and “Big How” of ministry as an SCL

#### GOALS

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- Explain the purpose, goals and format of this program.
- Apply Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 7:24-29 to personal life & leadership.
- Begin discovering personal Core Values.
- Begin creating a personal Storyline.

### ▶ DEEPER LEARNING

#### *Knowing Your “Big Why”*

**A**s a leader, it’s vital for you to know your “Big Why.” Your “Big Why” is what gets you out of bed in the morning. It’s that inner sense of being fully alive and using the gifts God has given you. It’s your purpose for being, and specifically for being in ministry leadership. When we are living out of who we were made to be, we experience deep inner satisfaction and energy, and we honor God’s design for our lives.

As Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” The important thing to

remember about this is that “You are not *your* handiwork; your life is not your project. Your life is *God’s* project.”<sup>5</sup>

Sadly, the pressures and demands of ministry often keep us so busy and distracted that we can lose touch with our passion. Or perhaps we’ve never really taken the time to dig down deep and mine for that treasure of finding what makes us feel most alive. However, this process is vital for thriving in ministry for the long haul and not becoming sidetracked by unimportant or time-sucking activities.

Knowing your “why” is at the core of understanding your call to ministry. As theologian Fredrick Beuchner says, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”<sup>6</sup> You may have noticed that finding the world’s deep hunger is relatively easy, because it’s literally everywhere. What can be surprisingly more challenging is discovering our deep gladness. That’s why we will spend a good chunk of time focusing on this in the days and weeks ahead.

### *Listening to Your Life*

Your “Big Why” is not something you create; it’s something you discover. It takes prayerful attention to the ways God has designed you, and then living in alignment with that design. As author Parker Palmer says, “Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity.”<sup>7</sup>

While this may seem easy and obvious, in reality it is neither. Listening for those inner truths and values takes prayerful attention. You must slow down, let go of your agenda, lay aside your ego, and truly listen for God’s still, small voice revealing the truth of who you are and who you’re called to be.

When you fail to clearly understand and live out of your unique calling, you are more susceptible to leading based on the tyranny of the urgent or the expectations of others,

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<sup>5</sup> John Ortberg, “One Flourishing Life,” last modified February 14, 2014, <http://www.johnortberg.com/one-flourishing-life/>.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC* (New York: HarperOne, 1993), 95.

<sup>7</sup> Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 4.

which can cause you to feel like an impostor, trying to be someone you're not. While urgent needs may be valid, they may not be needs that you are specifically called to meet.

When you fail to clearly understand and live out of your core values, you are more susceptible to being shaped by the values of your first chair leader, other popular ministry leaders, those you lead, or your ministry organization. Or, you may simply be living on autopilot, not paying attention to what you're doing and why you're doing it. And while the values of others may be good ones, they may or may not align with your personal values, which can lead you to experience internal stress or to engage in unhealthy compromise. If you don't take the time to get clear on what's important to yourself and where you sense God leading, you will find yourself drifting or being pulled along by societal norms, or by the demands of friends or family as you seek to please them.

So, in order to thrive and lead well from the second chair, you need to be clear about who you are and what you value.

In upcoming chapters of this workbook, you'll be invited to engage in a process of discovery that can help you gain clarity about your "Big Why" (i.e. your calling) in this season of your life. However, before we enter that process, we will begin in this chapter with an activity that will help you begin to identify and clarify your core values. This will become one of the foundational tools used throughout this program for making wise decisions and becoming more the leader God has called you to be as you lead from the second chair.

### *Knowing Your "Big How"*

While your purpose is your "Big Why," your core values are your "Big How." Your core values are those things you hold as most important in life and that help you prioritize your behavior and make decisions, both big and small. In other words, knowing your "Big Why" gives you direction, and knowing your "Big How" helps guide the way you pursue that direction. Values are like a compass, keeping you heading toward your True North.

For example, imagine you are a marathon runner with a big race coming up. This may take a lot of imagination for some of us, but hang in there with this scenario. Let's say you are out to dinner with friends and everyone is pressuring you to indulge in the rich, chocolatey dessert they have ordered. However, one of your core values is physical health and vitality. You know that eating a few bites of this one dessert is not going to

completely derail your training. However, you also know that in order to live out your value of physical health, you can choose to enjoy your friends' company without needing to eat the dessert.

Now, let's stay with the image of a marathon runner for a minute. Your alarm goes off at 5 a.m. and you get up to go for your morning run. However, just at that moment, your sleepy six-year-old comes into the room crying, with a fever. While you value your physical health, you also value family. Rather than wake your spouse, who had a late night at work, you decide this morning that your son's needs are more important than your value of physical health, so you take off your running shoes and stay home to care for him, allowing your spouse to sleep.

As you read these scenarios, they may not seem to relate directly to your role as a second chair leader. However, as we grow in making decisions based on our core values, we will be able to expand this to all spheres of our lives, giving us a framework for making those big and small daily decisions that constitute the basis of our lives.

For example, when I live out my value of courage in speaking the difficult truth to a friend, it directly impacts my ability to live with courage in how I speak truth to my first chair leader. When I live out my value of making family a priority in terms of how I spend my time when I'm at home, it directly impacts my ability to make wise choices about how to create balance between my work and family life.

### *What Not to Assume About Values*

There are several unhelpful things you may assume about values that could undermine the usefulness of the values clarification exercise below. For example:

- You might assume you already know what your values are, which might tempt you to jump to conclusions and move through this exercise quickly without doing the deeper work of discovery.
- You might also assume you know what your values *should* be; however, this may not line up with what your values *actually* are.
- Additionally, you might assume that your actions always support your values and are therefore a reliable way of determining your values. However, you may value some things deeply but for a variety of reasons do not fully act in line with those values.

- Finally, you might also assume your values are the same as they have always been. However, our values change over time as we grow and our season of life changes.

For these reasons, rather than rushing the process, you are encouraged to slow down and take some time with the values clarification exercise below. As you move through the remainder of the program, you will discover that clarity about your values will be a foundational building block for growth as a discerning, courageous, Spirit-led second chair leader.

## **ENGAGING THE PROCESS**

Complete the following before our first Zoom Meeting.

Before working on the Values Clarification exercise, please complete this first activity and post your answer to the Facebook group to help us begin getting to know each other:

### Choosing a Leadership Metaphor

Before our first Zoom meeting, take a few minutes to consider what type of metaphor might be a good image of what it's like for you to be a second chair leader in your specific ministry organization by completing this sentence: "Being a second chair leader in my ministry setting is like being a \_\_\_\_\_."

Here are a few ideas to get you started. Feel free to pick one or come up with your own.

- Juggler
- Bridge
- Athletic Coach
- Lighthouse
- Switchboard Operator
- Enforcer
- Doormat
- Traffic director
- Glue
- Ghost
- High Wire Acrobat
- Scapegoat

- Understudy for Broadway Play
- Stage Director for a Broadway Play
- Diamond miner
- Interpreter
- Inventor
- Co-Pilot
- Target
- Two-sided tape
- Jack (or Jane) of all trades
- Navigator

After selecting a metaphor from the list (or coming up with your own), **go to the group Facebook page and share the metaphor** you came up with, explaining in a sentence or two why you chose it. To add interest, you may want to go online and find an image for your metaphor to post with your explanation. Be sure to read the posts of your peers and add any comments or questions you may have as a way to begin to get to know one another.

## Clarifying Your Core Values (*the "Big How"*)

This activity will be a first pass at discovering your core values. In the coming chapters you will engage in additional activities that will bring your values into even clearer focus. So, consider this a warm up activity to help you begin the process.

Take 30-40 minutes to engage in this exercise. If you get stuck on any of the following, you might consider taking a short, meditative walk to reflect on the questions. Sometimes physical movement can help in the process of brainstorming or remembering.

Alternatively, you might find it helps free up your memory or creative juices if you doodle or color in coloring book for adults while reflecting on the following questions. Use these activities only if they are helpful to you. If not, then simply find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted to reflect and write on the following.

1. First, think of times in the past when you were most fulfilled or happy. What was happening that contributed to your sense of satisfaction? What values might these experiences reveal? For example, were you fulfilled because you were doing something adventurous or creative? Were you receiving an award for your

leadership on a project? Were you connecting deeply with someone? Were you making an impact on others? Jot these down in your journal (and date it).

2. Now, at the other end of the spectrum, think of times when you felt stressed, hurt, angry, frustrated, or in pain. What was happening? What value might you have been suppressing? For example, were you shading the truth rather than living with honesty and integrity? Were you letting others put you in a box, rather than stepping out in courage? Jot these down.
3. Now think of people you most admire. They could be people currently alive or people from the past. They could also be people you know personally or people you admire as heroes from a distance. What qualities do you most admire? These qualities will often contain hints to things you value, such as their generosity, compassion, wisdom, or faithfulness. You might also admire the way they care for their family, the way they pursue and achieve important goals, the way they live out their faith in a difficult situation, and so on. Jot these down.
4. Go back and read what you've written for each of the above. You may have identified as many as 20-40 values. Now it's time to pare that down. Look for any value-related words that you can group into themes. Jot down the themes in your journal, with the supporting values that come under each theme.
5. If it's helpful, you may also want to take the free, online Life Values Inventory at [www.lifevaluesinventory.org](http://www.lifevaluesinventory.org). It may provide some clues in discovering your core values, but keep in mind that it does not contain a complete list of all possible values, so it may only be of help in getting you started.

## **PREPARING FOR 1<sup>ST</sup> ZOOM MEETING**

- Be sure to arrive a few minutes early to the first Zoom meeting to ensure you are able to log in and join the group.
- Bring your Bible, Workbook, Second Chair Leader Metaphor, and journal.



## UNIT ONE: Orientation and Getting Started

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### ▶ Weeks 2 and 3

#### TOPICS

- Reviewing Storyline Project
- Spiritual direction

#### GOALS

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- Make some initial observations about ways God has worked in your life and leadership in the past.
- Begin creating your Storyline.
- Explain the purpose and process of spiritual direction.

*There will not be any group Zoom meetings these two weeks. In their place there will be one-on-one spiritual direction conversations with your facilitator. Spend these two weeks doing the reading below and begin working on your Storyline Project.*

### ▶ DEEPER LEARNING

#### Writing Your Story with God

##### *Seeing the Big Picture by Looking Backward*

Often in the busyness of ministry, we can be so focused on what we're doing or what's coming next, that we can't remember what happened yesterday, let alone last year or many years ago. Our Western cultural value of progress can get us so caught up in moving forward at lightning speed that we can forget where we're going and why we're going there.

However, our God is the God of history, who continually called the Children of Israel to remember what God had done in the past. After all the miracles they had experienced of

God's presence, power, and provision in rescuing them from slavery in the land of Egypt, God still needed to instruct them to remember. In Deuteronomy 4:9, God says, "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them."

It's amazing that even after such dramatic and miraculous displays of God's love and power, they were still quick to forget. It can be easy for us to think, "If God did something like parting the Red Sea for me, I certainly wouldn't forget!" However, that is exactly what we do, over and over.

King David also understood the value of remembering, and incorporated it into a number of the psalms he wrote, including Psalm 143:5 where he says, "I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done." David's practice of remembering was a means of worship, reminding him that although he had the position of king, God is the true King. As SCLs, we need to be reminded of this as well. We may be in a significant leadership role, but God alone is the true Leader.

There are a number of reasons why God still calls us to remember. Some of those reasons include the fact that:

1. It keeps our focus on God's character, power, and presence, rather than on ourselves and our problems.
2. It gives us clues about the ways God has worked in the past, so that we can be more observant about what God is doing in the present.
3. It builds our faith to walk into an unknown future with God.

Remembering helps us become more discerning, effective leaders who understand the patterns and processes God uses to equip us for ministry. As leadership expert Robert Clinton observes, "Those who study patterns and processes, and use insights from them in life and ministry, will be better prepared leaders."<sup>8</sup> Looking back at our history will play an important part in making us more effective leaders by helping us see things through God's eyes. It will also increase our understanding of God's call on our lives, leading us to worship God.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 8.

### *What is Spiritual Direction?*

As part of your learning process, this week you will be meeting one-on-one with your program facilitator for spiritual direction to begin unpacking some of your history with God that will be illustrated in your Storyline Project. For some of you, the ministry of spiritual direction will be a new concept. However, this is not a new ministry. It has existed in the Church for centuries as a way for one Christian to accompany another in their spiritual journey.

Spiritual direction is a relationship that allows one to assist another in discerning God's activity and presence in his or her life...A spiritual director listens with one ear to God and the other to the directee, always encouraging the directee to recognize where God can be found throughout the journey.... The Holy Spirit is really the Director of the time together as both parties pay attention to God's movements and call.<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes when people hear this type of description, they say, "Oh, spiritual direction is like coaching." They may also think it's like therapy, mentoring, or discipling. While there can be some overlap between these different ministries, and sometimes they can even end in the same result, there are differences. Many of these other ministries are goal-focused or solution-focused. However, spiritual direction is more process-focused and open-ended, as the director and directee follow the movement of God during their meeting. Sometimes, this can result in the conversation taking surprising directions, but it all becomes part of what God is saying and doing in the directee's life.

When you meet with your program facilitator for spiritual direction, they may ask some questions, but they will also join you in looking to God for guidance in what to discuss. The direction appointment will likely include some times for silent prayer to center yourself in Christ and listen more intentionally. Much of the meeting will just seem like ordinary conversation, since all of life has spiritual significance. However, during the course of the meeting, there will often be one or more specific things that rise to the surface, inviting further prayer and reflection.

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<sup>9</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 116.

## ENGAGING THE PROCESS

### Facebook Connection

Take a few minutes to post your thoughts about the following Facebook questions for the week. Be sure to post it all in the same thread so your input doesn't get separated from everyone else's. Try to write your initial post during week 2, then in week 3 read other posts and respond to at least a couple of your cohort mate's posts.

- When was a time in ministry when you felt most free and able to be yourself and use your gifts?
- If you could summarize this experience in one word, what would that be?
- What does this tell you about what helps you feel most authentic and alive in leadership?

### Storyline Project

As you just read above in "Writing Your Story with God," it is important to remember the past so that we can draw closer to God and understand the patterns and processes God has used in our lives to bring us to where we are now. The Storyline Project is designed to help you do this in a more concrete and visual way. You will be working with this project in your spiritual direction session with your facilitator, and we will also be exploring it more deeply during our upcoming retreat. **You will gain more from those interactions if you've taken time to begin this project of remembering before your session with your facilitator.**

This project will take some time but it will also reveal important learnings from your life. In order to finish before the first retreat, you will want to begin working on it right away and block out some days/times in the coming three weeks to work on it. You don't need to finish the entire project in one setting. You can break it into smaller chunks, one step at a time, blocking out chunks of uninterrupted time to work on it. Each time you come back to it you will likely remember more things you want to include. Also, before each time you work on it, be sure to spend time asking God to help you remember the things that are most important for you to notice at this time.

The point of this project is self-learning and reflection on what God has been doing in your life. Don't get hung up on trying to make it look perfect; just pay attention to what

you notice and discover along the way. You may experience confirmation of things you are sensing from God, or you may encounter moments of surprise as God helps you remember something you hadn't thought about for a while. As you finish the project, you will also hopefully begin connecting some of the dots and seeing the bigger picture of God's story in and through your life.

So, gather the supplies below, spend time asking God to guide your thoughts as you work, and then jump in and get started. It doesn't have to be perfect; it just needs to help you get more concrete in remembering your past. If you get stuck, try going for a short, prayerful walk, and see if God brings new things to mind.

### *Supplies for the Storyline Project*

- Bible – any translation
- Large spiral-bound art paper book (at least 11" x 14" in size)
- Small 1" sticky notes (at least 4 different colors)
- Journal

### *Step 1: IMPORTANT PEOPLE AND EVENTS*

***NOTE: See sample Storylines in Appendix.***

- Select a color of sticky notes for Step 1.
- In this step, you will consider the who, what, where, and when of the various experiences of your life.
- Reflect on the people who have been most impactful in your life (for better or worse) and write each name on its own sticky note. Do the same for major events and experiences such as moving to a new house, learning a new skill, losing a job, completing college, experiencing the loss of a friend or loved one, etc.
- Place these on one of the pages in your art book for now. You will work with these more once you have completed the steps below.

### *Step 2: SIGNIFICANT SCRIPTURES & MOMENTS WITH GOD*

- Select a different color sticky note for Step 2.
- Reflect on significant moments with God in your past. It could be a time when you received an answer to prayer, a time when God taught you an important lesson, or a time when you experienced the presence of God or sensed God speaking to you about something.

- Also reflect on what verses or passages of Scripture may have provided you with specific guidance, comfort or direction in your life.
- Write each of thee on a separate sticky note and save on another page of your art book for now. (*Note: some of these may be the same as things you wrote in Step 1. Simply exchange the Step 1 sticky notes for a Step 2 colored sticky note.*)

### *Step 3: SEQUENCING STICKY NOTES*

- Draw a line horizontally across the middle of several of your art pages.
- Begin grouping your sticky notes according to time period, from left to right.
- Below the line, write in the year or season of that section of the Storyline. Since you don't know yet how much space you will need, it's best to leave extra space so you can add later as needed. Even though the picture of the sample Storyline shows a period of twenty years on one page, this is likely too many years for one page. Going by decades may be a better timeframe.
- Leave some space on each page because you will likely be adding additional sticky notes as you continue to work on the project.

### *Step 4: THEMES*

- Go back and write a title (i.e. theme) for each page. For example, the first page might be titled "Early Childhood," the next might be "Teens and College Years," and so on. Try to pick a title that reflects the age and/or life stage. Keep going to new pages for each time period of your life.

### *Step 5: HIGHS AND LOWS*

- Begin to place the sticky notes above, on, or below the horizontal line to indicate whether they were highs, lows, or neutrals, moving from left to right. You are the expert on your experience, so feel free to craft this in a way that makes sense to you and helps you reflect on the meaning and significance of each item. You can always adjust it later if you need to.
- Place the positive ones above the line and the exceptionally positive ones higher than others, and do the same for those below the line. This will begin to give you a visual graph of the highs and lows of your Storyline.
- Place the sticky notes for your Goals and Aspirations along the bottom of the page in the place where they generally fall in your Storyline history.

### *Step 6: GRAPHING YOUR STORYLINE*

- Draw a line that goes up and down to connect the sticky notes. Indicate highs and lows based on how high or low the impact was of the events, lessons, and people in your life. This will look something like a seismograph or stock market graph, mapping out the twists and turns of your Storyline.
- As you create the graph, you can either keep the sticky notes on the Storyline, or you may want to transfer the words from the sticky notes directly onto the page to preserve them better as you continue to work with the Storyline over the coming year.

### *Step 7: DREAMS & ASPIRATIONS*

- Select a different color sticky note for this step.
- Reflect back on the dreams and aspirations you had in the various seasons of your life. What were some of your hopes, goals, and desires?
- Write each one on a separate sticky note and place them along the bottom of the Storyline in the general sequence of when they happened.

### *Step 8: LEADERSHIP LESSONS*

- Spend some time reflecting on the Storyline, asking God to give you eyes to notice any LEADERSHIP LESSONS you may have learned along the way.
- Write these leadership lessons on the back of the previous page in your art book.

### *Step 9: BRING STORYLINE TO RETREAT*

- Bring your Storyline book to the retreat where we will spend more time unpacking the things you have noticed in working on this project to see how it may help you gain insight into what God has been doing in your life and how it may affect our current ministry and decision making.

## UNIT ONE: Orientation and Getting Started

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### ▶ Week 4

#### TOPICS

- Challenges of leading from the second chair
- Personal stress levels

#### GOALS

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- Describe some of the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities of an SCL.
- Assess ministry leadership stress level, and begin identifying areas in need of change.

### ▶ DEEPER LEARNING

#### Challenges of Leading from the Second Chair

**A**s an SCL, you face different types of challenges than those above or below you in your ministry organization. These challenges arise from three overlapping areas of concern which encompass Personal Realities, Relational Realities, and Missional Realities. In the coming months, we will drill down deeper into the challenges of each of these realities, as well as exploring some discernment practices that can help you navigate these challenges with greater wisdom, courage, and skill.

For now, we will spend time this week getting a brief overview of each of these realities, to help orient us to the things we will be discussing and discovering in the coming weeks and months.

#### *Personal Realities*

In regard to Personal Realities, being in the middle of an organization creates unique pressures. One of these pressures relates to the level of stress you face in your role.



Researchers have found that “employees in mid-level positions had higher rates of depression and anxiety than employees who occupied positions nearer either end of the hierarchy.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, if you were a first chair leader or a lower-level team member, you would experience less stress on a daily basis than you do as a second chair leader. Some of this happens because you can feel squeezed in the middle of everyone and everything. Some of it happens because your role may not be as clearly defined as those above or below you in the organization. And some of it happens because SCLs are often expected to be leaders and experts at a wide range of skills and roles, which can lead to high stress, low job satisfaction, and even burnout.

The Personal Realities of an SCL are also impacted by their need for a clear sense of vocational call, as they seek to discern whether they should remain in a second chair role or seek to move into a first chair. You may be facing this right now. Perhaps you’re experiencing one of the following:

- You feel ready for a new challenge and are considering whether God may be calling you to move into a first chair role.
- You’re becoming bored or frustrated in your current SCL role, or you’re experiencing difficulty in your relationship with your FCL, which is causing you to consider whether to move to an SCL role in a different ministry organization.
- Although you may struggle in your current role, you wonder if God wants you to persevere and remain in your role, doing the hard work of implementing change over the long haul from the second chair.
- You enjoy your current SCL role, but wonder if rather than being content, you’ve begun to be complacent and are simply coasting rather than following God’s call on your life in this season.

These types of questions can be hard to process. First of all, you may find yourself in a fast-paced ministry where it’s difficult to find the space to slow down long enough to prayerfully reflect on these issues and make wise decisions. You may feel the underlying

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<sup>10</sup> Eric M. Anicich and Jacob B. Hirsch, “Why Being a Middle Manager is so Exhausting,” *Harvard Business Review* (March 2017): 4, <https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=122087637&scope=site>.

uneasiness of knowing something needs to change, but you keep moving from one project or crisis to another, without time to hear God's still, small voice.

Second, it can be difficult to know whom to talk to about these things. It may be unhelpful or inappropriate to discuss these thoughts with your FCL, your peers, or those you lead. If you're married, you can and should pray about and discuss this with your spouse; however, since any changes you make will directly impact your spouse as well, it can be difficult for them to provide you with objective feedback, so you may also need outside input. And if you're single, it may be challenging to find someone who understands your situation deeply enough to provide meaningful feedback to help you make wise decisions.

The Personal Realities of second chair leadership involve your call, your values, your decisions, your health, and your relationship with God. These realities affect your whole person, and unless you find ways of effectively navigating them, you may find yourself burning out in ministry or falling into a variety of unhealthy or addictive coping behaviors.

### *Relational Realities*

As an SCL seeking to be effective in ministry, you need wisdom, courage, and strong communication skills to navigate the Relational Realities, which involve the challenge of leading up, leading sideways, and leading down. Some of the relational challenges of leading in these different directions include the following:

***Leading Up:*** SCLs are seldom trained in how to do this and may struggle to know how to approach it. Many others have simply found this to be exhausting at times, constantly needing to reframe things with their FCL to get buy-in for their own projects and priorities, or constantly needing to monitor their FCL's mood and mindset to find ways to interpret or translate their team's concerns.

Additionally, many SCLs find it deeply challenging to work with an FCL who may be insecure, prideful, jealous, or have other emotionally dysfunctional issues – in other words, someone who is human. If this is true for you in your role, you may truly desire to protect and support the FCL, but struggle to know when to support them versus when and how to confront them. You may also find yourself thinking, "I could do a much better job than my FCL." This type of thinking can increase the challenge of being able to support them when they seem to be making poor decisions.

***Leading Sideways:*** If you're tasked with working on a project with peers in your organization but the project is either fuzzy or involves turf struggles, the relationships with peers can be threatened. For these reasons, leading sideways involves leveraging influence more than authority. It can involve a great deal of skill, patience and strategic communication in fostering trust so that you and your peers can engage in meaningful collaboration, rather than shutting down, competing with, or undermining one another. That being said, of the various directions you will lead, leading sideways will likely be the least challenging. However, if you do not pay attention to leading with strategy, wisdom, and grace, you may find this direction of leadership causing you a great deal of stress, and derailing important ministry.

***Leading Down:*** This can be a more straightforward direction of leadership, and there are many leadership books and resources available to help you navigate this since it has more in common with first chair leadership. However, you may also find at times that because you are a second chair leader who may not have complete control over things like budgeting, ministry priorities, as so on, you may lack the resources, authority, or support to effectively lead your team. You may also struggle to lead them when your FCL makes unexpected (and perhaps unwelcome) changes in the direction of a project or priority that you and your team are working on, and you are the one who must present this to your team in a positive way, without undermining your FCL's leadership.

For example, perhaps the CEO in your non-profit ministry has charged you with implementing a new program. However, as you lead your team in this program roll-out, you see that staff morale is low due to the overtime they are being expected to put in with the extra work of the roll-out. You also notice that some of them are questioning the value and need for this new program, which is causing them to whisper around the water cooler and drag their feet in getting the work done.

While you share some of their same concerns, you know that as the SCL you need to lead your team in surrendering negative attitudes to God and recognizing that God is truly the one you are serving, not just the CEO. However, you also need to find a way to communicate the real concerns of you and your team to the CEO, who may not be open to hearing anything negative about their pet program, even if it could help improve the process and end result.

One woman I interviewed--we'll call her Laura--shared her desire to effectively "lead up" and help her FCL lead well. However, she struggles to know how to do this without being

manipulative. Laura referred to the scene in popular movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, when the mother tells her daughter that as the wife, she has great power in the marriage relationship because although the husband may be the head, she is the neck who can turn the head any direction she wants. While this provided a moment of comic relief in the movie, Laura shared that this type of SCL/FCL relationship feels manipulative. Instead of being a “neck,” she desires to serve her FCL by providing wise counsel and strong partnership in the ministry they lead.

The need to lead up and down at the same time can result in you, the second chair leader, feeling squeezed in the middle. Over time, this squeezing can cause deep stress and leave you feeling dry and ineffective.

### *Missional Realities*

In addition to the unique personal and Relational Realities, as an SCL you also face Missional Realities. One such missional challenge is the need to make wise decisions about how to help shape organizational strategy and culture from the second chair. As Patrick Lencioni notes, developing organizational health is the “single greatest advantage” of any organization.<sup>11</sup>

This means it would be wise for FCLs to engage leaders at every level in helping create a healthy organizational culture. Unfortunately, you may find that as an SCL, you’re not always given a place to contribute to shaping the mission and culture of the ministry. The inability to shape culture can contribute to having your strategies or initiatives continually undermined, since cultural norms often resist change. As leadership guru Peter Drucker is famously known for saying, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.”<sup>12</sup>

Another missional challenge you may face is that you may be perceived more as a manager than a leader. People both inside and outside of the organization may want to connect with and serve under the leadership of the FCL, perceiving that person to be the one with power, platform, and resources, rather than desiring to connect with or serve under your leadership, perhaps perceiving you to lack authority and status. This can cause you to feel undermined as a leader, and under-valued both personally and within the

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick M. Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2012), 5.

<sup>12</sup> As quoted by Tod Bolsinger in *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 235.

organization.<sup>13</sup> It may also challenge your ability to gain the respect and resources needed to effectively lead your team in ways that connect with the larger organizational mission.

In addition to the fact that you may not have authority to help shape mission and culture, and the fact that people may not perceive you to be a significant leader, there is also the issue of power differences. Many SCLs struggle to lead well within the power structures of the organization. This can be especially true for SCLs who are women or ethnic minorities.

As part of my research, I interviewed a number of female SCLs, many of whom work for male FCLs. While some shared stories of the positive relationship they have with their first chair leader, there was widespread acknowledgment that gender issues cause challenges in such things as not being taken seriously, not being given a seat at the decision-making table, and not being given access to resources and opportunities for growth and leadership advancement.

Some of this access happens in informal settings, such as if male leaders play a round of golf and the female leader is not included. Often relationships are built and decisions are made in these informal settings where women may not be invited. These kinds of power differentials can further marginalize SCLs from having meaningful input on the mission and vision of the ministry. This can result in SCLs feeling devalued, and it can also lead the organization to miss out on the wisdom and experience the SCL brings to the ministry.

### *A BIBLICAL CASE STUDY: Nathan and David*

The prophet Nathan provides us with a picture of the challenge of speaking truth to power. As a prophet during King David's reign, God called Nathan to bring a word of conviction to the king about his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. You can read the story in 2 Samuel 12.

I can just imagine Nathan thinking, "Well, I had a good run. I guess it's time to say my good byes before I'm off to the gallows." The consequences for Nathan speaking truth to power could be life-threatening. He had to count the cost before opening his mouth.

When a first chair leader is doing something foolish or sinful, we can be tempted to do one of two things, both of which have great potential to be harmful. On the one hand, if

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Fryling, phone interview by author, June 28, 2019.

we fear reprisal, we may simply avoid saying anything and turn a blind eye, hoping things will work themselves out or someone else will say something. On the other hand, we may become so frustrated or angry that we look for an opportunity to march right into our FCL's office and confront them with pointed finger and accusatory tone, potentially leading them to become defensive, completely dismiss what we have to say, or attack back.

However, as second chair leaders seeking to grow in wisdom, we can take a note from Nathan's play book. God didn't give Nathan any guarantees about how David would respond; however, God did give Nathan wisdom and creativity in the way he approached this sensitive leadership moment. Nathan got around the king's defenses by telling a story. David became so enthralled with the injustice of a rich man stealing a poor man's lamb that he impulsively blurted out, "Who is this thief? He should be put to death!"

At that very moment, as David is outraged by such unrighteous behavior, Nathan looks him in the eye and says, "You, sir, are that man!" Boom. Drop the mic.

David's heart was pierced with conviction from God through the creative and gracious words of Nathan, a second chair leader with little power but great influence. By approaching David in this way, Nathan helped the king receive the message, while also preserving their relationship. This was risky, but it paid off by providing a way for David to repent and be restored, and move forward as the leader God called him to be.

The prophet Nathan is an example of the challenges faced by an SCL. However, Nathan also serves as an example of how godly discernment results in highly effective leadership, even in challenging circumstances. In order for you to thrive as an SCL, one of the most important things you can do is strengthen your ability to discern God's voice, calling and direction.

## **ENGAGING THE PROCESS**

### Self-Assessment of Stress as an SCL

Sometimes when we're in the middle of a stressful situation, it can be difficult for us to accurately determine just how extreme our stress actually is. While not the final word on the subject, this assessment can help you gain another perspective on your level of stress, which can help you make wise decisions about next steps in your life and leadership.

**Step 1**

Rank each of the following statements on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being never and 5 being always. Don't overthink your response. Answers based on your first, instinctual reaction will most likely be the most accurate.

- \_\_\_\_\_ People don't see me as a real leader because of my second chair role, so they try to do an end run around me to go to the first chair leader, perceiving the FCL to be the one having the real power and platform.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Even though I'm in a public role, I feel invisible as a result of the fact that I don't often receive credit for what I do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I struggle to lead with confidence, knowing that my FCL could at any time decide to completely change my priorities and tasks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel caught between whom I'm supervising and whom I'm supervised by, needing to protect those I lead from organizational chaos happening above me, while needing to constantly interpret to my supervisor what's going on below me in a way that they can receive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am misunderstood because few people actually know what I do, and it can be difficult to explain it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is difficult to develop a healthy relationship with my FCL because of our personality differences, or because they struggle with insecurity, pride, jealousy, or other areas of personal weakness or dysfunction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I believe I would be more fulfilled serving as an FCL than I am in serving as an SCL.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I do not feel that I have much job security in my role as an SCL.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I get frustrated when I see a problem that I could fix, but am unable to do so because it's not my role to fix it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am the relational buffer in our organization during times of change, needing to absorb the complaints of those below me, while also speaking the truth in love to my FCL.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I face a lack of opportunities for growth or leadership influence based on my gender or ethnicity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am not given the resources, tools, training or access I need to succeed in my leadership role.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is difficult to develop a healthy relationship with my FCL because of a differences in our vision, theology, or philosophy of ministry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I struggle with discerning God’s call in this season of my life and ministry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am challenged to be content in my role as a second chair leader, while also dreaming big dreams for God.

## **Step 2**

Add up the scores from your answers to get a picture of the level of stress you’re facing in your role as a second chair leader.

The total numbers below indicate the likely current level of stress in your role:

- 65-75:** Your stress level is extremely high. You are heading toward burnout, if not already there.
- 55-65:** Your stress level is moderately high, possibly involving serious physical, emotional, mental, and/or spiritual strain.
- 45-55:** Your stress level is moderate and somewhat manageable, depending on the season of the year and the situation.
- 35-45:** Your stress level is moderately low and you are able to lead well with a manageable amount of challenges facing you.
- 34 or below:** Your stress level is low, allowing you the freedom to lead and accomplish your goals while enjoying strong relationships up and down the organization.

## **Facebook Connection**

After completing the “Self-Assessment of Stress as an SCL,” take a few minutes to post your thoughts about the following Facebook questions for the week. Be sure to post them all in the same thread so your input doesn’t get separated from everyone else’s.



- How accurate did you feel the results were from the self-assessment?
- What might this suggest to you about the need for discernment or change in your ministry leadership?

## Storyline Project

If you have not yet completed your Storyline Project, be sure to block out time this week to finish it so you can bring it to the retreat.

### **PREPARING FOR ZOOM MEETING**

- Take time to prayerfully consider which of the three realities you find most challenging right now in your ministry leadership: Personal Realities, Relational Realities, or Missional Realities.
- Bring your Workbook and “Stress Self-Assessment” to the Zoom meeting.



## UNIT TWO

### **Entry Points to PERSONAL Discernment**

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Weeks 1-4

***Past: Connecting with God's Work in Your Life***

Work should be completed before each week's Zoom meeting.

## UNIT TWO: Entry Points to PERSONAL Discernment

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### ▶ **Week 1:** *Past: Connecting with God's Work in Your Life*

This week you will be going on a retreat with your cohort. To prepare, read through the following material and then bring your Workbook, journal, and Storyline with you to the retreat. **Note: There is an exercise in Engaging the Process that needs to be completed BEFORE coming to the retreat.**

*THEME:* "Open Doors."

*TOPICS:*

- Biblical discernment
- Values clarification
- God's work in my past
- Community Covenant

*GOALS:*

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- Explain the purpose and goal of biblical discernment and engage in biblical models of discernment.
- Analyze and begin to discern the patterns and processes of God's work in your past history.
- Describe your personal core values with value statements.
- Operationalize your core values with behavioral action steps.
- Covenant with fellow SCLs for community, support, and learning.
- Practice reflective listening skills with others and with self.
- Surrender control to God through prayer of indifference.

## **DEEPER LEARNING**

### The Role of Discernment in Leadership<sup>14</sup>

*Read the following chapter before the retreat*

#### *Facing Pain Points*

As you know from firsthand experience, second chair leaders face many pain points unique to their role that can lead to stress, confusion, burnout, or worse. As a recent Barna study concluded, “The Christian community does not need stronger leaders; we need more resilient leaders.”<sup>15</sup>

It can be tempting to try and pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and muscle our way through these challenges. However, God reminds us in Isaiah 55:9 that “my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” Although it may seem like accessing more power is the way to achieve your goals, God’s ways may lead you toward a different path.

So, how can you become more resilient and thrive in ministry for the long haul in the midst of these challenges without simply powering your way through? Great question! The purpose of this entire workbook and leadership program is aimed at providing you with the tools and practices that can help you do just that. So read on...

#### *Discernment: The Common Thread*

Underlying the various challenges facing SCLs is a common thread that can make the difference between resilience and distress, between thriving and burning out. This common thread is discernment, and is a key to facing the demands of second chair leadership with courage, humility, and wisdom. Discernment practices help us step back from thinking we have to have all the answers, and instead turns our focus toward listening for God’s still, small voice.

As leadership and spiritual formation expert MaryKate Morse explains, “Discernment does not mean to abdicate responsibility for making a decision, but to listen for the Holy

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<sup>14</sup> This section on discernment is adapted from the author’s dissertation, *Discernment Practices for Second Chair Leaders* (DMin diss. George Fox University, Portland, OR, 2020), 56-60.

<sup>15</sup> Barna Research Group, *The State of Pastors: How Today’s Faith Leaders are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University, 2017), 9.

Spirit’s perspective on the decision.”<sup>16</sup> It takes great discernment to navigate the Personal, Relational, and Missional Realities that an SCL must face in order to lead well.

An SCL “making a sound decision is not unlike a physician making a sound diagnosis. There should be a viable and rigorous process that leads to a sound decision.”<sup>17</sup> This process involves watching for the movement of God and listening for God’s voice before and in the midst of making leadership decisions and engaging in leadership activities. This requires training and practice in discernment, rather than simply relying on a good idea or your past experience. “Experience, one often hears, is the best teacher, but that is true only if you reflect on it and extract its real lessons.”<sup>18</sup>

As you grow in your ability to reflect on the movement of God and discern God’s leading, you will gain:

- clarity regarding your own call and core values.
- wisdom in building a healthy relationship with your first chair leader.
- strength to endure the stress of ministry leadership.
- confidence to lead well from the second chair.

### *The Role of Discernment*

The term discernment “comes from the Latin word *discernere*, which means ‘to separate,’ ‘to distinguish,’ ‘to determine,’ ‘to sort out’ ... Discernment is ‘sifting through’ our interior and exterior experiences to determine their origin.”<sup>19</sup> This does not often involve distinguishing between an obvious evil and an obvious good, which is usually easier and more apparent. Instead, the work of discernment is needed when there may be

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<sup>16</sup> MaryKate Morse, *A Guidebook to Prayer: Twenty-four Ways to Walk with God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 214.

<sup>17</sup> James Sabella, “Exploring Leadership in the Middle: an Application of Schon’s Reflective Conversation – a Decision-Making Process for Assemblies of God World Missions Area Directors,” (DMin diss., George Fox University, Portland, OR, 2019), <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/304>.

<sup>18</sup> Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *How Great Leaders Think: The Art of Reframing* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Suzanne G. Farnham, Joseph P. Gill, R. Taylor McLean, and Susan M. Ward, *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (New York: Moorehouse Publishing, 2011), 21.

more than one possible good choice. As leadership guru Jim Collins observes, “Good is the enemy of great.”<sup>20</sup>

Sorting out the merely good from God’s best is not an easy task, and can take time and deep wisdom. However, the process of discernment is worth the effort, as it can elevate your life and ministry from simply accomplishing tasks to living out of your core values and God-given passions as you partner with God to accomplish the unique things for which you are created.

### *The Goal of Discernment*

A temptation of many leaders is to seek God primarily when they have a specific need for direction or wisdom. However, the goal of discernment is not necessarily to produce a specific outcome in a person’s life or ministry. “The goal of spiritual discernment is not material prosperity or personal safety; it is a deepening intimacy with God through fulfilling [God’s] intent for one’s life.”<sup>21</sup> In the process of pursuing discernment from God, you will ultimately be growing in your relationship with God while also becoming more of a discerning person.

While the big goal of discernment is to help someone draw closer to God, the daily purpose of discernment is to gain understanding of God’s will and then to do it. Jesus modeled this process as he spent the night in the Garden of Gethsemane wrestling with God’s will, and finally coming to the place of saying, “...not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). This gives us a picture of the ultimate goal of discerning God’s will which is complete surrender and obedience to as much of the plan as God has revealed.

Jesus is also an example of the goal of discernment in that he kept a close relationship with his Father. Jesus said, “...the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does” (Luke 5:19). Through loving obedience, Jesus constantly had his eye on his Father, watching to see what his Father did and then following closely.

This process of watching for God’s movement in your life and then quickly obeying is a key to becoming a discerning person. As you follow God’s lead more and more, your

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<sup>20</sup> Jim Collins, *From Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap, and Others Don't* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Keith Foisy, “Listening Prayers for Talkative Evangelicals,” (DMin diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 2019), 69, <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin/359>.

attention to God's movement is heightened, and your ability to distinguish God's voice from the many other voices in your life increases. You will also thrive in your ministry role as you gain confidence in your decisions.

### *Metaphors for God's Will*

Unfortunately, Christians are often confused about what God's will is and how to find it. Author and spiritual director Larry Warner provides a metaphor that can help us understand the nature of God will. Warner describes it as being like either a meadow or a bulls-eye.<sup>22</sup>

Warner says that God's will is like a meadow with a large fence around it, and as long as we stay within the boundaries of God's general will, we are free to do whatever we want. For example, so long as a married couple honors their marriage vows to one another, there are many ways within the boundaries of marriage to show love and respect to one another. The boundaries, rather than restricting choices, provide a great deal of freedom. However, within the boundaries of the meadow, there are some actions that are wiser than others. Again, in regard to marriage, it might be wiser to have regular times to connect on a date night rather than taking a *laissez-faire* attitude, hoping the marriage will remain strong without intentional time together.

This is where wisdom enters the picture, together with discernment, allowing us to make wise choices within the context of God's will. As Pastor Andy Stanley observes, people run into problems within God's larger will when instead of seeking the wise thing to do, they ask themselves, "How close can I get to sin without sinning?"<sup>23</sup> Instead, Stanley says that "we are meant to analyze every opportunity and invitation through the lens of wisdom."<sup>24</sup>

In moving from practicing wisdom within God's general will, Warner goes on to explain that at times God's will moves from the more general "meadow," to being more specific, like a "bulls-eye."<sup>25</sup> God may direct you to do a specific thing, a "bulls-eye" of God's specific will for you. For these reasons, it is important to develop discernment and wait

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<sup>22</sup> Larry Warner, "The Will of God," b Discerning, 2005, [http://www.b-ing.org/lent\\_reflections/index.php](http://www.b-ing.org/lent_reflections/index.php).

<sup>23</sup> Andy Stanley, *The Best Question Ever* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 33.

<sup>24</sup> Stanley, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Warner, "The Will of God," 2005.

on God's guidance, so you have wisdom to make choices within the meadow of God's will, or discern whether God may be leading you toward a specific bulls-eye.

### *The Nature of Discernment*

Unlike the stereotypical church business meeting where people make decisions and then ask God to bless their plans, discernment involves receiving guidance from God before making a decision. Through waiting on the Lord and seeking spiritual insight, you gain wisdom on the best way to proceed, and the partnership between you and God continues to grow.

The word *guidance* provides a great image of what this type of partnership looks like. In pulling the word *guidance* apart, it could be thought of as *G+U+I+ Dance (i.e. God, You and I dance)*. Much like a dance in which both members of the partnership move together in tandem, there is a leader and a follower. When you receive guidance in your dance with God, you're able to follow God's lead in making decisions within the boundaries of God's will while leading others to follow God as well. Your role is to fully participate in the dance, which will involve a great deal of energy, skill, practice, and even failure at times. To dance beautifully, however, will involve the humility to be led by God rather than to take control of the dance.

This dance can come through a three-step process of:

- (1) Observing events and patterns around you;
- (2) Interpreting what you are observing (developing multiple hypotheses about what is really going on); and
- (3) Designing interventions based on the observations and interpretations to address the adaptive challenge you have identified.<sup>26</sup>

This three-step model from Heifetz, Linsky and Grashow is a secular approach to discernment which can be adopted for spiritual discernment as you seek God's guidance for interpreting events, as well as guidance in designing appropriate interventions.

Throughout the coming weeks, and especially at the upcoming retreat, we will reflect more on the patterns and processes God has been using in our past to speak into our lives

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<sup>26</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2009), 34.



and shape our character and calling. As we observe these patterns and processes, we will then begin to prayerfully interpret what we are noticing and what it may mean. Finally, we will seek God’s wisdom in creating interventions that will help us use what we’ve noticed and apply it in our personal and professional lives.

## **ENGAGING THE PROCESS**

Do this exercise **BEFORE** coming to the Retreat.

### Core Values – Your “Big How” Revisited

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on the Core Values you began to identify before our first Zoom meeting on page 25 and that you wrote in your journal. How do they seem to you now? How well do they reflect your unique strengths and weaknesses? Which ones help you to live out your most authentic self? Are there any that may not quite fit and need changing? Go ahead and tweak this as needed.
2. You may still have too many values to be actionable, so pare it down. There’s no perfect number of values, but it will be helpful to get it down to 3-7 total. Once you’ve pared it down, rank them in order of priority here.
3. Now take each value and create a value statement. This will add power to your values, make them more memorable, and help clarify what this value means to you. Look for emotional concepts and trigger words that help connect the values with something personal. For example, if integrity is one of your core values, you might say something like: “Integrity: speaking the truth in love and having my outer actions line up with my inner convictions.” Write a value statement for each of your core values in the space below and/or in your journal.

Here are some tips for writing a values statement:

- **Use words that are personal and inspiring to you.** We tend to forget or ignore things that are mundane or expected. We may also forget value statements that we’ve picked up from someone else, rather than truly being personal to us.
- **Use images and words that evoke emotional responses.** This will help you remember and connect more deeply with your values.

- **Keep them brief and concrete.** You don't need to explain everything about each value, simply hit the highlights. It needs to be short enough to be memorable.

## VALUES TO ACTION

Do **NOT** do this activity BEFORE the retreat. You will do this during the retreat.

Review the 3-7 core values you listed on the previous pages or in your journal.

Take your top three and do the following for each:

- List the value or value statement.
- List 2-3 behaviors that will help you put this value into action.
- List 1-2 behaviors that might undermine your value or lead you to not fully live out this particular value.
- Give yourself a score of 1-10 on how well you are living out this value. Then, briefly describe a time when you were fully living into this value.
- You may find it helpful to revisit this list on a monthly basis, to identify areas for continued improvement.

### ***SAMPLE***

VALUE: Learning / Growth

List 2-3 concrete behaviors that will put this value into action.

Read one leadership book this month

Subscribe to and watch/listen to a ministry leadership podcast

List 1-2 behaviors that might undermine your value or lead you to not fully live out this particular value.

Watching too much TV or spending too much time on social media or playing games on my computer

Give yourself a score of 1-10 on how well you are living out this value. Then, briefly describe a time when you were fully living into this value.

Score: 6

When I wanted to grow in my ability to create and cast vision, I read, reread and practiced the steps in Andy Stanley's book *Visioneering*

VALUE 1:

List 2-3 concrete behaviors that will put this value into action.

List 1-2 behaviors that might undermine your value or lead you to not fully live out this particular value.

Give yourself a score of 1-10 on how well you are living out this value. Then, briefly describe a time when you were fully living into this value.

VALUE 2:

List 2-3 concrete behaviors that will put this value into action.

List 1-2 behaviors that might undermine your value or lead you to not fully live out this particular value.

Give yourself a score of 1-10 on how well you are living out this value. Then, briefly describe a time when you were fully living into this value.

VALUE 3:

List 2-3 concrete behaviors that will put this value into action.

List 1-2 behaviors that might undermine your value or lead you to not fully live out this particular value.

Give yourself a score of 1-10 on how well you are living out this value. Then, briefly describe a time when you were fully living into this value.

# SUMMARY

## of the Remainder of the Workbook

The lessons included in the first five weeks of the Workbook provide samples of each of the various types of learning activities and experiences that will be provided throughout the remainder of the program when it is completely scripted out. The remainder of this Workbook will be completed following the outline as given in the Participant Workbook on pages 13-17. Below is a description of topics to be covered in the remaining units.

### *Unit Two: Personal Realities*

The remainder of Unit Two on Personal Realities will contain teaching and learning activities on the following:

1. Examining personal obstacles (*Scazzero, Blackaby, Fryling*)
  - a. What are the hurts or sins from my ministry experience or my past that may be tripping me up? To what degree am I leading from a place of freedom vs. bondage in regard to fear, insecurity, addiction, inaccurate view of self?
  - b. What lessons does God keep repeating in my life? What have I learned and what do I still need to learn?
2. Learning how God speaks in my life (*Liebert, Gallager, Morse*)
  - a. How have I heard from God in the past?
  - b. What are some of the ways God may be speaking to me now?
  - c. How do I discern whether a thought is from God or from my own ego needs/insecurities?
3. Becoming more authentically me (*Ignatius, Barton, Brown, Benner*)
  - a. How am I uniquely wired? (signature gifts)
  - b. What brings me most joy? What drains me most?

- c. In what ways would my leadership change if I were more authentic and/or brave? Would I remain in the second chair but lead differently? Would I pursue a first chair role or switch to a different second chair ministry?

### ***Unit Three: Relational Realities***

Unit Three will contain teaching and learning activities on the following:

1. Leading up (*Friedman, Useem*).
  - a. Providing godly, strong leadership when working with a first chair who may have a serious deficit or dysfunction such as: uses spiritual abuse to lead, leads in non-collaborative/dictatorial way, or is inexperienced or young in leadership.
  - b. Discerning when/how to support versus challenge first chair leader.
2. Leading sideways (*Hock, Heifetz*)
  - a. Collaborating as a peer without overstepping bounds.
  - b. Showing up without showing off.
3. Leading down (*Gallup, Brown*)
  - a. Leading with confidence, clarity, compassion, healthy boundaries.
  - b. Coaching rather than managing.
  - c. Making wise decisions with and on behalf of the team.
4. DiSC assessment
  - a. Understanding various communication and decision-making styles.
  - b. People-reading to improve Relational Realities.
  - c. Learning to adapt leadership approach based on needs of others.

### ***Unit Four: Missional Realities***

Unit Four will contain teaching and learning activities on the following:

1. Organizational mission/purpose/goals (*Collins, Morse, Senek*).
  - a. Gaining clarity on the mission/purpose/goals of your organization (Organizational Storyline).



- b. Understanding your role in leading toward that mission from second chair.
  - c. Reflecting further on God's past work in the organizational mission and culture.
  - d. Reflect on how your own strengths and weaknesses as an SCL play a part in furthering this organizational culture.
2. Organizational culture – Institutional Intelligence (*Gordon Smith*).
- a. Explore the stated values of the ministry. Questions to consider: How well do I embody and live these values out? Are there ways as an SCL that I can better live these out? Are there any that I believe to be unhelpful or even unbiblical – and if so, what can I as an SCL do about it?
  - b. Explore the unstated values of the organization. Questions to consider: What other values may exist that are not stated? Are these values healthy? Why/why not? In what ways do I embody these unstated values? Are there ways in which I can help bring these unspoken values into the light? What values do I believe need to be embraced by the organization? Why? How can I help these gain exposure and buy in? How do the spoken and unspoken values of the organization contribute to healthy or unhealthy ministry?
  - c. Spiritual practices for leading Missional Realities.
    - 1) Practicing the Presence of God. Paying attention to God's movement in the day-to-day work of ministry.
    - 2) Continue practicing the Awareness Examen both personally and with your team.
    - 3) Develop questions to help each person reflect on organizational culture.
    - 4) Regularly take time to share noticings together as a team and offer possible ways God may be leading individuals or the team/ organization to move toward greater freedom and health as they pursue the mission.
    - 5) Open-handed Prayer of Indifference. Explore together where as an organization you may be fully submitting to God's leading in the mission and purpose, and where you may be grasping it too tightly and

trying to manipulate your own outcomes. Take time for confession and surrender.

6) Weighted Pros and Cons.

### ***Unit Five: Putting it All Together***

Unit Five will contain teaching and learning activities on the following:

1. Spiritual Direction and Retreat Preparation.
  - a. Triad meetings to reflect and share learning from the year.
  - b. One-on-one time for spiritual direction with facilitator to review the year and prepare for the closing retreat.
2. Reflections and Next Steps
  - a. Closing retreat: Create Personal Compass and Next Steps Map, to help visualize the year's learning and create a plan to move forward for continued learning and discernment.
  - b. Closing group Zoom for wrap up after retreat and closing prayers for one another.

# APPENDIX

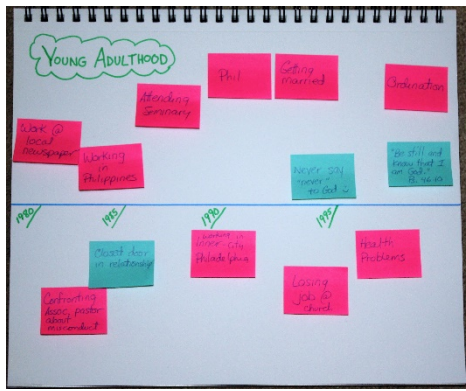
## Storyline Project Samples



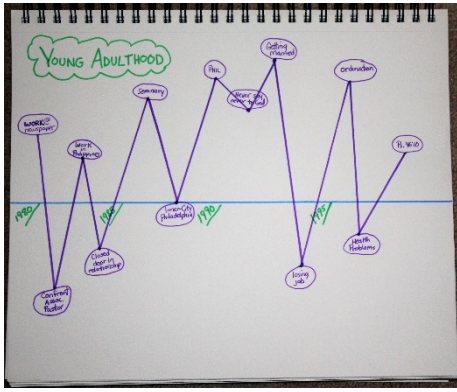
STEP 1: Important People & Events



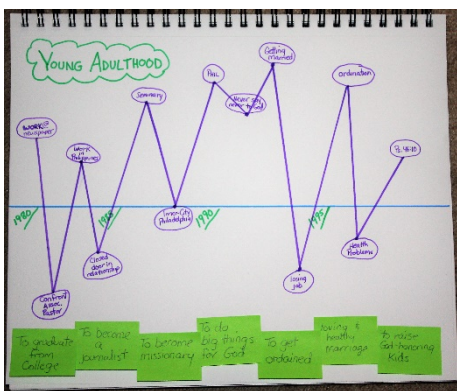
STEP 2: Significant Scriptures & Moments with God



STEPS 3-5: Sequencing, Themes, Highs & Lows



STEP 6: Graphing Your Storyline



STEP 7: Dreams & Aspirations

**LEADERSHIP LESSONS**

- God loves me unconditionally, regardless of what I accomplish or produce.
- God doesn't need me to "save the world." That's God's job.
- "To lead well, I must deal with my "garbage."
- Being in authentic community is key for me to be a healthy leader over time.
- God often uses health issues to get my attention of things I need to change.
- God desires that I live with passion, purpose, and joy.
- Some of the most important leadership I will ever do arises out of deep suffering or failure.

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**YOUNG ADULTHOOD**

**Aspirations:**

- Graduate from college
- become a missionary
- become a pastor
- do B16 + healthy living
- Get married
- Get ordained
- Raise God honoring kids

STEP 8: Leadership Lessons

## Workbook


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# **SQUEEZED** **IN THE** **MIDDLE**

Second Chair Leadership Practices  
for Thiving in Ministry

## **Facilitator's Guide**

Linda Sommerville

*Squeezed in the Middle: Second Chair Leadership Practices for Thriving in Ministry. Facilitator's Guide*

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# Contents

WELCOME.....	4
YOUR ROLE AS THE FACILITATOR.....	5
THE NUTS & BOLTS.....	7
PROGRAM SCHEDULE.....	10
PREPARATION.....	11
UNIT ONE: ORIENTATION AND GETTING STARTED.....	12
Week 1.....	13
Weeks 2 & 3.....	17
Week 4.....	20
UNIT TWO: ENTRY POINTS TO PERSONAL DISCERNMENT.....	22
Week 1: Retreat.....	23
SUMMARY OF THE REMAINDER OF FACILITATOR'S GUIDE.....	34
APPENDIX A: <i>Lectio Divina</i> .....	35
APPENDIX B: <i>Prayer of Examen</i> .....	37
APPENDIX C: <i>Consolation and Desolation</i> .....	40
APPENDIX D: <i>Open-handed Prayer of Indifference</i> .....	42
APPENDIX E: <i>Storyline Project Samples</i> .....	43
APPENDIX F: <i>How-tos</i> .....	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	47

# WELCOME

## to the Squeezed in the Middle Facilitator's Guide

Leading from the second chair is filled with challenges. Second chair leaders face Personal Realities, Relational Realities, and Missional Realities that are unique to those who find themselves squeezed in the middle as they lead without being the leader at the top. As a result, research indicates that those who lead from the middle of an organization are at greater risk of experiencing depression and burn out than those at the top.<sup>1</sup>

This one-year leadership program is designed to equip second chair leaders (SCLs) to gain wisdom and practical tools for discerning the movement of God in their personal and professional lives so that they can thrive in ministry for the long haul. Over twelve months, they will learn how to apply discernment practices that will help them:

- Clarify their personal calling and core values.
- Build stronger working relationships with their first chair leader, peers, and those they lead.
- Make wise and courageous decisions in their personal and professional life.
- Lead well from the second chair.

Throughout this cohort-based process, you will help SCLs experience a safe community of peers with whom to process the challenges of ministry leadership, gain courage to lead well, gain new tools for hearing the voice of God in order to make wise decisions and discern next steps both personally and professionally.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric M. Anicich and Jacob B. Hirsch, "Why Being a Middle Manager is so Exhausting," *Harvard Business Review* (March 2017): 4, <https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=122087637&scope=site>.

# Your Role as the Facilitator

As the facilitator, your primary role will not be to instruct the cohort, but to help them uncover their own learning and make connections between what they are learning and what they already know, because research shows that “new knowledge ‘sticks’ better when it has prior knowledge to stick to.”<sup>2</sup> The goal is to help the participants integrate their learning and then apply it in personal and specific ways within their own context.

In many ways, being a facilitator is more demanding than simply delivering a lecture, since it requires you to continually listen for what the participants already know and what questions they bring, and then adapt your approach when needed to meet their specific needs. In this process, you will need to take care that you do not “step on” their learning by doing too much talking or instructing. Instead, this “learning-centered approach to education...puts *learning* at the center, not teaching, not the teacher, and not even the learner.”<sup>3</sup>

The weekly assignments and group times are laid out in a way to help you facilitate learning. However, you will need to remain flexible enough to adapt each session based on the needs of the group. In this learning-centered process, where everything is focused on facilitating learning, we will use the definition of learning as “a *process* that leads to *change*, which occurs as a result of *experience* and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning.”<sup>4</sup> The italicized words are key. Learning is an ongoing *process*, and when it occurs it will lead to some type of *change*. Also, the learning arises out of *experience*, rather than out of a lecture. In other words, the learner needs to get their hands dirty and actively participate in the learning process.

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<sup>2</sup> Susan A. Ambrose, Michael W. Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marcha C. Lovett, and Marie K. Norman, *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Vella, *Taking Learning To Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), xvi.

<sup>4</sup> Ambrose et. al, 3.

The curriculum is laid out in a way that encourages active engagement on the part of the SCLs, with a variety of approaches being used. “Some learning tasks take place in the mind (cognitive), some in the heart (affective), and some in the muscles (psychomotor).”<sup>5</sup> You will see the idea of HEAD, HEART, and HANDS used throughout the curriculum, supporting a variety of learning modalities. However, if there is a specific lesson plan or activity that does not support the learner’s need to make their own discovery and apply what they are learning, then that lesson plan or question should be scrapped and replaced with something more appropriate.

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<sup>5</sup> Vella, 8.



# THE NUTS & BOLTS

## Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this 1-year program, participants will be able to:

- Engage in discernment practices that will enable them to lead with more wisdom, confidence, and Spirit-led decision-making, both personally and professionally.
- Compare and contrast a variety of discernment approaches and assess which ones may be helpful to them in this particular season of life and ministry leadership.
- Covenant together with a group of peers to provide a safe community for one another in which to practice and grow in discernment.
- Discern next steps personally and professionally.

## Program Materials for Participants

- Program Workbook
- Bible – any translation
- Large spiral-bound art paper book (at least 11” x 14” in size)
- Small 1” sticky notes (at least 3 different colors)
- Journal

## Defining Terms

Note: For details about defining terms, see Participant Workbook, page 12.

## It All Starts with a Cohort

Communities of learning have been shown to be one of the most effective strategies for helping someone learn something new. These types of communities, or cohorts, provide space for learners to do active reflection on the learning and make connections to their

own context. It also provides the support and accountability needed to persist with the learning and application process. As the facilitator, your role of shepherding the cohort will make a big impact on their ability to navigate the learning process, while providing encouragement and perspective when the going gets rough.

The ideal cohort size is between nine and fifteen people, allowing for enough diversity to bring various ministry experiences and backgrounds to the group while also providing enough people for ongoing triads for small group support, discussion, learning tasks, and prayer. This size of group also prevents the group from becoming too large for meaningful sharing.

In addition, it is best to avoid having multiple people from the same organization in a cohort. If more than one SCL from the same organization is in the same cohort, it could restrict the SCLs from sharing freely. However, if there is a ministry organization that wants a group of SCLs from that organization to go through this program together, you should be able to adapt some of the activities for that specific purpose.

### *Welcoming & Orienting SCLs to the Cohort*

As participants join the program, you will want to have a phone conversation to provide initial orientation and directions for the layout of the program and how they need to begin. This conversation will form the basis for beginning your relationship with each participant, so it's important to not only share information, but to spend some relational time getting to know one another.

It is also helpful to learn more about your SCLs' motivations for joining the program, which will provide clues to their hopes and pain points as an SCL, their preferred ways of learning, and how you can help support that process. Be sure to review with participants the items to complete before the first online Zoom meeting as well as reviewing the schedule for the weekly meetings and retreats.

### *Creating a Community*

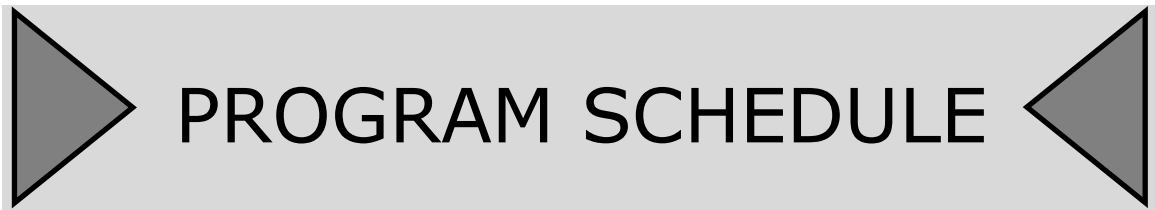
Since communities of learning are a key component of this program, it will be important to help the cohort stay connected with one another. To accomplish this, the cohort will meet one hour per week via Zoom, a web-based conferencing platform. You will find instructions on how to form a Zoom group in the Appendix. These online face-to-face sessions will provide time to unpack and apply what each participant is practicing and learning throughout the week.



In addition, participants will gather in person toward the beginning of the program for an opening two-day retreat, and again for a closing two-day retreat. Between meetings, the cohort will stay connected with one another through a closed Facebook group page as well as through email. Instructions for establishing a Facebook group are also found in the Appendix. As the facilitator, you will also put the participants into triads, who will connect more frequently and keep one another in prayer.

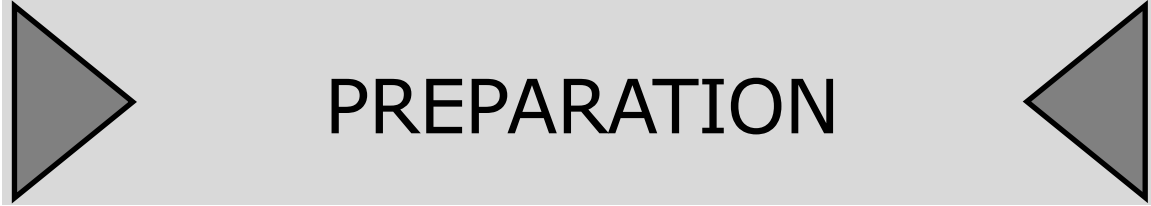
## Learning Strategy

Note: The Learning Strategy goes here, but for the sake of word count you can find it in the Participant Workbook, pages 9-11.



# PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Note: The Program Schedule goes here, but for the sake of word count you can find it in the Participant Workbook, page 13.



# PREPARATION

## Two Months Before Program Begins

To prepare to facilitate this course:

- Read through the Facilitator's Guide to thoroughly familiarize yourself with the program and your role as a facilitator.
- Read Welcome Material and scan through the rest of the Participant Workbook to familiarize yourself with what the Participants will be reading and doing.
- Recruit your cohort (See Appendix for tips).
- Have initial introductory conversation with each member individually (see *Welcoming and Orienting SCLs* on page 8).
- Locate and book a location for the first 2-day Retreat. Ideally, this will begin Sunday afternoon and end on Tuesday afternoon, which may be easier for SCLs working in churches to attend. However, if your group is weighted more toward those in nonprofits or other types of ministries, you may want to hold the retreat on a Friday through Sunday.
- Set-up Zoom Group (see Appendix).
- Set-up Facebook Group (see Appendix) and post Week One question.
- Distribute Workbooks to participants and make sure they have materials they need (see page 7).



## **ORIENTATION & GETTING STARTED**

## UNIT ONE

# Orientation and Getting Started

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## Week 1

### **PREPARATION BEFORE 1<sup>ST</sup> ZOOM MEETING**

**Step 1:** Make sure you have posted the following Facebook Question at least one week prior to first Zoom Meeting.

*On page 24 of your Workbook you will find a Leadership Metaphor assignment. Read through the assignment and post your metaphor here along with an explanation of why you chose this metaphor.*

**Step 2:** Review lesson plan for this week and prepare for first Zoom session (see below). Also, keep a list of all participants somewhere visible to remember to pray for each one throughout the week.

**Step 3:** Send a welcome email to the group, reminding them of the date/time of first Zoom meeting (including the Zoom link and directions for getting onto Zoom). Also, remind them to select and post their leadership metaphor to the closed Facebook group page.

**Step 4:** Check Facebook page periodically to see if anyone has posted an SCL metaphor. Be sure to add your own comments/questions. Also, add your own metaphor and explain, to help group begin to get to know you.

**Step 5:** For this first meeting, it may be helpful to send a second email the day before the first meeting. Encourage them to find a quiet spot where they will not be interrupted during the Zoom meeting. Also suggest they may want to use a headset or ear buds.

## **LEADING 1<sup>ST</sup> ZOOM MEETING**

### **15 minutes BEFORE meeting**

**LOG-IN** early to help anyone struggling with Zoom and to welcome participants to the group.

### **Welcome & Opening Prayer: 5 min.**

**EXPLAIN** that we will begin each meeting in silent prayer to center ourselves in God, seek God's guidance, and prepare to connect with one another.

### **Group Introductions: 15 min.**

**INTRODUCE** yourself and have participants introduce themselves.

- Name & where they are from.
- What SCL role they are currently serving in & what they enjoy about it.
- One thing they discovered about themselves or the role of an SCL in doing the metaphor activity.

### **Devotional: 15 min.** – Begin with the End in Mind

**READ:** Matthew 7:24-29

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

### **COMMENT:**

- Jesus's authority amazed the crowds because it did not come from an earthly position or role, but from God. Many times as SCLs, we

have great responsibility without necessarily all the needed authority. To follow in Jesus's footsteps, we need to remember that our authority does not come from our position in the second chair. It comes from God.

- This passage helps us begin with the end in mind, as we seek to open ourselves to how God may want to stretch and grow us as leaders and as followers. Our ultimate goal in this program is to become wiser, more courageous, more godly leaders, whether or not we remain in the second chair.

**REREAD:** Ask SCLs to listen to the passage again, and this time pay attention to what Jesus says about wisdom and how it might apply in their life today.

**REFLECT:** Invite SCLs to pause and reflect on what they noticed.

**JOURNAL:** Take a couple of minutes for everyone to write their observations in their journals, which they will use regularly to write learning, questions, observations, prayers, etc.

**DISCUSS:** *As you look ahead to what God may want to do in and through your life this coming year, what is one way this passage speaks into your life/leadership as an SCL?*

**Program Introduction: 10 min.**

**EXPLAIN** the purpose and value of this program for SCLs (why they should care) using Participant Workbook Introduction.

- **REVIEW** the topics to be covered using program learning outcomes in participant workbook, and discuss format of program. Answer questions.
- **SHARE:** Let them know that they will only get out of this what they put into it. There's no grade for this, but there is great reward for the time they invest in listening for God's voice and opening themselves up to what God may want to do in and through them in this program.
- **SHARE:** Remind them of the Values exercise they began working on this past week and that we will be discussing this further at the retreat. Encourage them to continue working on it so that they will

have time to revise it before the retreat.

**DISCUSS GROUP COVENANT:** Explain that the group will create this at the retreat, but for now, all will agree together to keep one another's confidence and not share group discussions or sharing outside of the group.

**DISCUSS FACEBOOK GROUP:** Remind them that this page is just for group members to stay connected with one another. Each week a question will be posted for them to discuss.

**Personal Storylines: 15 min.**

**EXPLAIN** Storyline Project they will begin working on this week.

**SHOW** sample Storylines (answer any questions)

**ASK:** *What do you imagine is the value of an activity like this?*

**PRACTICAL TIPS FOR DOING STORYLINE**

- Encourage them to follow the Workbook guidelines for suggested amount of time to spend on this project so they don't get overwhelmed trying to cover everything. The Storyline is not intended to be a complete picture of their life – more of a snapshot and a place to start. We will be working with these for a few weeks and they will have time to edit and adjust as we go.
- Also, encourage them to block out uninterrupted time to prayerfully work on this. They will be better able to move through this if they don't keep getting interrupted and having to come back and pick up again. They should give themselves the gift of time to walk back through their life with God and see what surprises and gifts they discover as they go.



## UNIT ONE

### Orientation and Getting Started

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#### Weeks 2 & 3

##### **PREPARATION BEFORE 1-ON-1 MEETINGS**

Weeks two and three will not be regular group meetings. Instead, you will have participants schedule one-on-one meetings with you for spiritual direction via Zoom. This will continue to build your relationship with each individual, and it will give you some insight into which SCLs to place in triads together. It will also give each SCL more clarity as they create and reflect on their Storyline in preparation for the retreat.

**Step 1:** Post a sign-up page on the group Facebook page with dates and times for spiritual direction meetings. Send reminders to the group to select a time and put their name on it. (*Note: Google Sheets works well for this purpose as it is a shared document that everyone can access and add to in real time*).

**Step 2:** Post the following Facebook Questions right after the first meeting to give a full week for your cohort to participate.

- *When was a time in ministry when you felt most free and able to be yourself and use your gifts?*
- *If you could summarize this experience in one word, what would that be?*
- *What might this suggest to you about what helps you feel most authentic and alive in leadership?*

**Step 3:** Send reminders to SCLs of the time of their appointment. Encourage them to find a private, quiet location for this meeting where they will not be interrupted. Also, ask them to bring their Storyline Project to the meeting. They are not expected to have it completed, but you will begin to talk about it with them in this meeting.

**Step 4:** Spend time in prayer before each meeting, preparing yourself to be fully present to each person and to the movement of God. *(Note: Be sure to schedule at least 15 minutes space between each meeting, to give yourself a break and allow yourself to be fully present to the next person. This will also prevent the next SCL from interrupting the previous SCL by entering the Zoom site too soon).*

## **LEADING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION ZOOM MEETING**

### **Welcome & Opening Prayer: 5 min.**

- **INVITE:** Open by referring to the Storyline Project they have been working on, and our need to remember who God is and who we are. Remembering our past with God allows us to be “re-membered.” In other words, the members of our body, mind and spirit are made whole within our identity in Christ. And remembering the presence, power, and provision of God in our lives helps ground us in that identity.
- **PRAY:** Spend a few moments in silent prayer to center ourselves in God, seek God’s guidance, and prepare to connect with one another.

### **Spiritual Direction: 55 min.**

**EXPLAIN:** SCLs will have read the section about spiritual direction. However, for those who are unfamiliar with it, you may want to briefly explain the purpose and process of spiritual direction. Be sure to address any questions they may have, but don’t spend too much time explaining the process. Instead, simply lead them through it.

**PAUSE FOR SILENCE:** Also, you may find it helpful to pause periodically in the midst of a session for silent reflection and listening for God’s voice. Sometimes, directees can get too much into their heads and need a moment to still their thoughts and reconnect with their hearts and imagination. Each individual session will vary depending on the needs of the SCL and the movement of God. However, you will want to include some or all of the following:

1. **ASK** them how their Storyline Project is going and ask them to reflect on and share anything they may have been noticing about themselves or sensing from God in this process.

2. **ASK** them to reflect on what question(s) they may be facing in their lives right now that they may want to address in discernment through this program. It could be something directly related to their leadership role, or it could be more personal. It could be a big or small question, and the question(s) may change throughout the program. Let them know we will be exploring how to frame discernment questions in more depth in a few months. This may help give them more focus as they begin the program.
3. **INVITE** them to share what is currently one of their biggest pain points as a Second Chair Leader. Spend some time with this as the Spirit leads.

## UNIT ONE

# Orientation and Getting Started

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## Week 4

### **PREPARATION BEFORE MEETING**

**Step 1:** Post the discussion questions below to Facebook right after Week 3 and encourage everyone to respond at least 2 times during the week.

- *How accurate did you feel the results were from the “Self-Assessment of Stress (found in the Workbook)?*
- *What might this suggest to you about the need for discernment or change in your ministry leadership?*

**Step 2:** Send participants an email several days before the Week 4 meeting, reminding them of the upcoming date/time of the Zoom meeting, including the Zoom link.

### **LEADING WEEK 4 ZOOM MEETING**

**Welcome & Opening Prayer: 5 min.**

**PRAY:** Spend a few moments in silent prayer to center in God, seek God’s guidance, and prepare to connect with one another.

**Storyline Project Check-in: 30 min.**

**FORM TRIADS:** Put participants into groups of 3 (for a first attempt at forming triads) using Zoom breakout rooms. Ask them to share with their triad what they are noticing and experiencing as they work on their Storyline Project.

Explain that each person can share for about 5 minutes and then the others can respond with comments or questions for about 5 minutes. Encourage them to keep track of time so that everyone has adequate time to share.

Let them know we will be discussing this again in more depth at the retreat, but this first pass will help us reflect on what we are learning so far, and also help spark additional ideas to add to their Storylines.

**Challenges of Being an SCL: 20 min.**

**BRING** the group back together. You may want to pause for a moment of silence for the group to silently reflect on what they sense God may have been revealing or saying during their triad time. After the silence, encourage them, as soon as the Zoom session is over, to jot their thoughts down in their journals for further reflection and prayer.

**TRANSITION** into a discussion of the challenges of being an SCL. They will have read the Deeper Learning and done the Engaging the Process sections in their Workbook, which is an overview of these challenges. Use any or all of the following questions, as needed, to elicit participation in the discussion. Share that this will set the stage for everything we will be unpacking and applying throughout the program.

**REVIEW** “Self-Assessment of Stress as an SCL.”

**ASK:**

- *Which part of the chapter most caught your attention?*
- *Were there any ideas that surprised you? How?*
- *What ideas did you resonate with?*

**Retreat Prep: 5 min.**

**SHARE:** Spend the last few minutes reminding everyone of the location of the retreat, what to bring, and how to prepare (head, heart, and body) for the time together. Let them know you will post directions to the retreat location on Facebook. You may also want to give them your cell phone number to call in case they have questions or problems getting to the retreat.

- **REMIND THEM TO BRING:**
- Their Storyline Project (in their spiral art book).
- Their completed Values exercise (from Week One).
- Something festive to wear to our Monday night dinner.



UNIT TWO

**ENTRY POINTS TO *PERSONAL*  
DISCERNMENT**

## UNIT TWO

### Entry Points to **PERSONAL Discernment**

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#### Week 1: Retreat

#### RETREAT THEME: Open Doors

##### ***PREPARATION FOR THE RETREAT***

The cohort will be finishing their Storyline Projects and reading the chapter about discernment before the retreat. Your role in the retreat will be to help the group move toward trust and cohesion, although this will take time. Your role is to also help them slow down enough to be able to listen for God's still, small voice. You will accomplish some of this through the directions you will give, but they will pick up even more from what you model. Take care to prepare yourself before the retreat. You may want to arrive at the retreat center a day early to settle into the space, rest, and be more prepared to greet the group when they arrive.

- Place directions and other important information about the retreat on the group Facebook page.

##### ***LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE RETREAT***

By the end of this retreat, participants should be able to:

- Explain the purpose and goal of biblical discernment.
- Engage in biblical models of discernment.
- Analyze and begin to discern the patterns and processes of God's work in their past history.
- Describe their personal core values with value statements.
- Operationalize their core values with behavioral action steps.
- Covenant with fellow SCLs for community, support, and learning.
- Practice reflective listening skills with others and with self.

## ***RETREAT SCHEDULE***

**SUNDAY** TOPICS: Entering into God's Presence; Consolation/Desolation

- 3-5 pm Arrive/unpack (this time is for settling in and preparing to open ourselves to God)
- 6:00 pm Dinner
- 7:00 pm Opening Session
- 8:30 pm End for the evening

**MONDAY** AM TOPICS: Exploring Storylines; Sabbath

- 8-9 am Breakfast – as God wakes you
  - 9:15 am Morning Session
  - 10:00 am Listening triads – Review Storylines together
  - 11:15 am Personal prayer/reflection time
  - 11:30 am Gather for brief sharing with triads
  - 11:45 am Explain silence for lunch and afternoon, pray
  - Noon Lunch – in silence (begin mini-Sabbath rest)
  - 1:00 pm Free afternoon (in silence) – time for exercise, naps, journaling, labyrinth, nature, art, etc.
  - 6:00 pm Dinner (breaking the silence – share Shabbat celebration meal)
- PM TOPIC: Core Values and supporting behaviors
- 7:00 pm Evening Session: learning & debrief of day
  - 8:30 pm End for the evening

**TUESDAY** TOPICS: Reviewing Lessons Learned; Next Steps

- 8:30 am Breakfast
- 9:15 am Morning session – Listening triads
- 10:15 am Awareness Examen
- 10:30 am Preparing for next steps after retreat / Closing blessings/prayers
- 12:30 pm Lunch & farewells



## **RETREAT PROGRAM**

**7:00 pm, Sunday**

### **SESSION 1: *Beginning the Journey***

TOPICS: Entering into God's Presence. Consolation/Desolation, Reviewing Expectations

1. **WELCOME**
2. **SILENCE:** Open every session with moment of silence.
3. **PRAY:** Opening "Trust" prayer: Have everyone list the things weighing on their heart/mind as they arrive today, then place list in envelope and write "Trust" on the outside. Seal it and silently lay it on an altar to entrust those things to God during the retreat. Offer a prayer entrusting all the people and projects represented by these envelopes to God, remembering that God will care for all these things while we are away. We don't have to be "on" during the retreat, we just need to be present.
4. **LIGHT A CANDLE** to signify shifting from home/work life to retreat life and openness to God. Lead opening song. (*Choose an appropriate Taize song or another type of song that people can pick up easily*).
5. **INTRODUCE OURSELVES:** You can use any/all of the following.
  - a. *Round #1: Share about family, what you do for fun, something unique or unusual about you.*
  - b. *Round #2: Share what led you to consider this journey of discernment.*
  - c. *Round #3: What challenges did you encounter in just getting here to the retreat? What potential challenges do you anticipate in the year ahead that may make it difficult to stay focused on this leadership journey?*
6. **SHARE:** Opening Devotional
  - a. **READ:** Luke 24:13-35, The Road to Emmaus – having our eyes opened to discern the presence of God. "Were not our hearts burning within us...?" Consolation/Desolation as ways of discerning movement and leading of God. (*See Appendix C for explanation of Consolation/Desolation*).

- b. **PLAY:** “Burn the Ships” (by For King and Country).
  - c. **SHARE:** *When we embark on a journey with Jesus in the company of others, we will be changed, just as the disciples on the road to Emmaus. This marks our commitment and intention to allow God to transform us into the followers/leaders that we were designed us to be. We’re being invited to enter through an open door this weekend and in the months ahead. Open and closed doors are often the way we speak about God moving us toward or away from a particular direction. We are on a journey toward clearer understanding of how God is speaking in each of our lives and where God may be leading us next. This journey is about discerning how to be the most thriving, authentic, courageous, wise, and godly leaders we can be in whatever context God calls us to.*
  - d. **REFLECT:** Invite SCLs to take a moment to reflect on the devotional and words of the song. Ask: *What speaks into your life today? (Note: This will continue to model and help the group experience the important learning that comes from reflection and getting in touch with not only our heads but also our hearts).*
  - e. **SHARE:** Invite each person to briefly share a word, phrase, or thought that caught their attention.
7. **SET EXPECTATIONS:** Invite everyone to fully engage in the process during the retreat by doing the following:
- a. Slowing down and showing up (encouraging/modeling authentic sharing).
  - b. Taking a break from technology while on retreat.
  - c. Keeping interactions confidential.
8. **REMIND AND PRAY:** Before closing in prayer, remind them to bring their Storyline Project to the morning session.

### **9:15 am, Monday**

#### **SESSION 2: Entering In**

TOPICS: Exploring Storylines; Sabbath

- 1. **SILENCE:** Open every session with moment of silence.

2. **SING:** Lead opening song. (*Choose an appropriate Taize song or another type of song that people can pick up easily*).
3. **SHARE:** Opening Devotional: Barnabas as a wise and humble SCL.
  - a. Barnabas was a primary leader before Paul.
  - b. He saw God's call on Paul's life and mentored/defended Paul.
  - c. He surrendered his own first chair leadership role for the sake of Paul and willingly became a second chair leader. We have much of the New Testament because of Paul writing it, which may not have happened if Barnabas had not been the strong, wise, humble SCL to support and mentor Paul and then step back to allow Paul to become an FCL.
  - d. Being an SCL can be a challenging and thankless role. But it is a high and holy calling when it comes from God.

4. **DISCUSS GROUP COVENANT:** Ask the group to consider what each person may need in order to feel safe and supported on this journey. Let them know the covenant doesn't need to be lengthy, but it needs to include the things that are most important to the group so that all can sign it.

Some things to include: keeping the group sharing confidential, and practicing good listening skills. Many people do not have other safe places to process the kinds of things the group will be talking about, so all need to agree together to honor one another in this way.

Ask the group to add other elements they feel are important. As facilitator, you will want to help guide the group process to be sure everyone feels heard and is able to speak into the covenant. Pay attention to signs of "group think" so you can avoid surface buy-in.

As participants share ideas, you will begin to draft a covenant that includes elements from the group. Let them know you will share this with everyone and allow for feedback before everyone signs it. During the afternoon break, print up copies of the Covenant for groups to discuss this evening.

5. **EXPLAIN:** Give directions for how triads will work:
  - One person is timekeeper.
  - Another person talks for 12 minutes while the other two listen without interruption.

- Listeners give 3 minutes of feedback.
  - Next person shares, and so on.
6. **FORM TRIADS:** Beginning work with Storylines
- a. Open in silent reflection – each person prayerfully looking at their Storyline again with God (prayerful attention to big picture, consolation/desolation, *Visio Divina*).
  - b. Each person shares the following with triad:
    - i. Any big picture noticings, “aha’s” and/or surprises as they created their Storyline.
    - ii. Highs and lows in ministry. How did they notice the hand of God at work in the midst of these highs/lows?
    - iii. A few key times in their life when they heard from God.
      - How did they discern it was God speaking to them?
      - What does the group notice about these experiences? (e.g. themes/modes of communication, times/places of hearing God, etc.).
    - iv. Noticings about any similarities/differences between each member of the triad’s experiences of hearing from God.
7. **PRAY:** Walking Prayer. Everyone takes 15 minutes to walk around the retreat grounds and reflect on what they heard in their triad. Ask them to consider whether there any new thoughts or any questions arising. Then, come back together for 10-15 minutes of follow up sharing with triad.
8. **SHARE:** Facilitator gives directions about silent lunch and afternoon (which will be a mini-Sabbath rest).

“From now until dinner, we will respect one another’s silence with God. Spend this time in whatever way is meaningful to you: exercising, napping, walking the labyrinth (if there is one), journaling, being in nature, working with art (supplies will be provided in meeting room), etc. Listen to your heart, mind and body nudging you in whichever direction would be most life giving. Practice ‘monks’ eyes’ (not looking directly into each other’s eyes) as a way of protecting one another’s time alone with God).

“We will reengage with others over dinner for a special Shabbat Banquet to celebrate God’s presence and goodness in our lives and in our

ministries. Wear the festive clothing you brought with you. Also, bring an object or image from your afternoon to share and offer as thanks to God. Perhaps you experience the beauty of God's creation on a walk. You can bring that image or a found object to share by describing it or even giving one to each of us. Perhaps you have an object you brought from home that reminds you of God's goodness, like a special piece of jewelry that was given to you by someone special. Whatever helps you celebrate God's love and goodness in your life today, bring that as a thank offering to share at our dinner.

“This evening's dinner will contain echoes of a traditional Shabbat dinner celebrated for millennia in Jewish homes to help open their hearts to the presence of God during Sabbath. Unlike Jewish celebrations, we will be partaking in this meal at the end of our ‘mini Sabbath,’ rather than the beginning. However, the intent of this time is to slow down, remember, share, and celebrate.

“Celebrating Sabbath is an important regular practice for us as SCLs because we are busy leaders who may struggle with being versus doing. We never come to a point where a significant ministry we are involved with will not need our attention. This can tempt us to keep working, even on our days off. What's more, some of us may work with first chair leaders who are workaholics, which can put pressure on us to do the same.

“However, just as God instituted rhythms of day and night as well as winter, spring, summer and fall, God also invites us to participate in the weekly rhythm of Sabbath as a way of resting, being restored, and delighting in God. It also reminds us that only God is God – we are not. This regular reminder can help prevent us from taking on burdens and tasks that are not ours to carry, and to trust God more deeply.”

### **Noon Monday**

**SILENT LUNCH:** *Entering Sabbath Rest & Reflection*

### **SILENT AFTERNOON WITH GOD**

### **6:00 Monday evening**

**DINNER - Shabbat Banquet:** *REENGAGE WITH OTHERS*

1. **PREPARE:** As the facilitator, a book that can provide you with excellent ideas for crafting this time uniquely for each cohort is called: *A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home – A Step-by-Step Guidebook with Blessings and Songs, Rituals and Reflections*.<sup>6</sup> You will want to be sure the meal and all the elements needed are ready before the cohort arrives back from their mini-Sabbath. Also, you will want to change into your festive clothing for the dinner, and have some music playing in the background.

As the participants arrive, you can greet them with a hug and a blessing from Numbers 6:26 which says, “May God’s face smile upon you.” Then, have each person light one of the tea lights on the table to signify a preparing of their heart to celebrate one another in God’s presence.

During the meal, have times for sharing about their afternoon. You may wish to have some Scriptures and/or prayers for various people to read, or songs to sing together. Over dessert, you may want to allow participants to offer toasts for the group or various individuals as a way of celebrating God’s presence and goodness as all begin this one-year journey together.

2. **SHARE:** Sometime during the meal:
 

“Shabbat is a time for holy remembering. As a community on a journey together this year, God is inviting us to remember and remind one another of God’s love, grace, and call. We have begun doing this by taking time to reflect back on what God has been doing in each of our lives through the creation of our individual Storylines. This remembering is not only part of our leadership learning as we identify the ways God has spoken and worked in our lives, but it is also an act of worship. This coming year, our Storylines will intersect and each of us will add one another to the story God is writing in each of our lives.”
3. **REMIND** them to bring their Values Clarification exercise to Session 3.

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<sup>6</sup> Noam Zion and Shawn Fields-Meyer, *A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home – A Step-by-Step Guidebook with Blessings and Songs, Rituals and Reflections* (Jerusalem, Israel: Shalom Hartman Institute, 2004).

**7:00 pm, Monday****SESSION 3: Farther In**

TOPIC: Core Values

1. **SILENCE:** Open every session with 5-10 minutes of silence.
2. **SING:** Lead opening song. (*Choose an appropriate Taize song or another type of song that people can pick up easily*).
3. **LEAD:** *Lectio Divina* Matthew 11:28-30 (*The Message*)  
*Note: See Appendix A for directions on leading a Lectio Divina. This is another practice to help us learn to listen more deeply and closely for God's voice in our lives and in Scripture.*
4. **DISCUSS:** Give everyone a copy of the Community Covenant and ask them to take a moment to prayerfully review it. Then ask if anyone wants to revise anything or add to anything on the list. This evening, revise the covenant as needed and make copies for everyone for tomorrow morning.
5. **DISCUSS:**
  - a. *How would you define what a value is?* (Here is one way of defining it: "A value is a way of being that we hold most important").
  - b. *What is the value of knowing your core values?*
  - c. *How does clearly knowing & living out of your values relate to knowing and pursuing your "Big Why"?*
  - d. *How can it provide a filter for decision-making?*
  - e. *Share examples.*
6. **ENGAGE:** Direct everyone to the Values to Action Exercise on page 53 of their Workbook which they will individually complete before discussing in triads. Review the exercise giving basic instructions and then have everyone work on it on their own.
7. **TRIAD SHARING:** Each person shares observations about their values and responses to the "behavior" questions above.
  - **EXPLAIN:** Invite everyone to pay attention to consolation/desolation in themselves as they share their own values.

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<sup>7</sup> Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead: Daring Greatly and Rising Strong at Work* (New York: Random House, 2018), 186.

*(See Appendix C for information about consolation/desolation.)* This will help them gain more clarity about whether any of the values they have selected are still not quite right and may need further tweaking.

- **EXPLAIN:** Encourage them to pay attention to consolation/desolation in themselves as they listen to others sharing their values. It will also be helpful to closely observe the person sharing to see what their body language is like and the words they choose to explain their values. All of this can help them give meaningful feedback to one another, ask helpful questions and allow deeper reflection.

8. **PRAY:** Close with Awareness Examen. *(See Appendix B for directions).*

**9:15 am, Tuesday**

#### **SESSION 4**

TOPIC: Reviewing Lessons Learned; Next Steps

1. **SILENCE:** Open every session with moment of silence.
2. **SING:** Lead opening song. *(Choose an appropriate Taize song or another type of song that people can pick up easily).*
3. **SHARE DEVOTIONAL:** Open-handed prayer of “Indifference” *(See Appendix D for direction).*
  - a. **READ** Matthew 26:36-46 – Jesus praying at Gethsemane, “Not my will but yours.”
  - b. **ASK:**
    - *How does this passage speak into your life?*
    - *In what ways do you and/or others in your organization reflect the disciples in this story?*
    - *How could practicing this prayer change the way you live and lead from the second chair?*
  - c. **PRACTICE** praying open-handed together:
    - Have everyone trace their hand on a piece of paper and then silently ask God for clarity about anything they may need to surrender. It could be they need to surrender their plans for the future, or their timing for the future. It could be a good thing



they are simply holding too tightly, or some way they're trying to manipulate their own miracle. As they think of things, have them write these down inside the palm of their tracing.

- Then, encourage everyone to place their hands face-up on their lap and silently surrender to God the things on their written list. If they find it difficult to surrender something, encourage them to begin by simply asking God for the *desire* to surrender it.
- Invite group to share briefly what this experience was like for them.

#### 4. EXPLAIN TRIAD SHARING

- a. Have groups look at their Storylines and Value Statements and take a moment silently to individually review them and see if they notice anything new, or any new connections between events and what's important to them.

- **DISCUSS:** *Do you see any new principles, processes, or priorities from your Storyline and Values? Is God highlighting anything more clearly? Do you have any additional insights? Similar to the values exercise yesterday, pay attention to consolation/ desolation as you share to help you gain more clarity about whether your Storyline or values need further tweaking.*
- **INVITE** them to pay attention to any consolation/desolation within themselves as they listen to others. This will help them give meaningful feedback, ask helpful questions and allow deeper reflection.
- **SIGN** the community covenant in one another's presence as a way of supporting one another and holding one another accountable to live into our shared covenant. Have them keep their signed copy to take home as a reminder.

- b. **PRAY:** Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

#### 5. SHARE in large group:

- a. *What have the past two days been like for "you"?*
- b. *What questions have been raised?*
- c. *What surprised you?*
- d. *Where/how have you experienced the presence of God?*

- e. What beginning hunches do you have about how God may want to use the coming 11 months to shape you and/or lead you?*
6. **REVIEW** next steps before next group Zoom meeting.
7. **PRAY & BLESS:** Time of celebrating the Lord's Supper and praying blessings over one another as we end our retreat.

**12:30 pm, Tuesday: LUNCH & GOOD BYES**

# Summary

## of the Remainder of Facilitator's Guide

The lessons included in the first five weeks of the Facilitator's Guide and Participant Workbook provide samples of each of the various types of learning activities and experiences that will be provided throughout the remainder of the program when it is completed. The remainder of this Facilitator's Guide will be completed with week-by-week directions and suggestions for leading a cohort through this one-year program. The weekly flow of the program will follow the outline as given in the Participant Workbook on pages 13-17 and the formatting will follow the example given for the first five weeks of this Guide.

# APPENDIX A

## Lectio Divina – *Praying the Word*

*Lectio Divina* (“Divine Reading” in Latin) is a centuries-old practice of meditating on and praying through a scripture passage. Any brief passage of scripture can be used for this practice. This form of prayer involves listening for the voice of God through a biblical passage as it is read slowly several times through. Below are the basic steps for this type of prayer, which you as the facilitator can briefly explain before beginning. Don’t spend too much time explaining; simply guide the group through the steps. (*Note: You may choose to have different people read the passage each time it’s repeated.*)

### **SILENCIO - Remember<sup>8</sup>**

Begin with a time of preparation. Sit comfortably. Relax your body. Acknowledge and release distractions. Invite God’s presence. Take a few deep breaths, and with each in-breath become aware of God’s love for you. With each exhale, let go of whatever might distract you from listening.

### **LECTIO – Read**

Slowly and meditatively read the verses through as a whole. Notice any word or phrase that catches your attention. Pay attention to whether it beckons or stirs you, or unnerves you. Don’t analyze or judge at this point. Just be open to the words and to the One who speaks through the Word. After reading, pause for a moment and sit silently with the word or phrase that drew your attention. (*Note: after a few moments of silence, you may invite the group to share, without comment, the word or phrase that attracted them.*)

### **MEDITATIO – Reflect**

Read the passage again. This time, listen for God’s invitation to you. How does this reading touch your life today? Do not try to force a meaning. Stay open. This is a time of reflection involving thinking, feeling, and/or intuition. Be aware of any inner resistance. Open your heart and will to the action you may be called to. After the reading, pause again to reflect on how the reading speaks into your life today.

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<sup>8</sup> Portions of this version of *Lectio Divina* used by permission from author Helen Cepero and adapted in Phil and Linda Sommerville’s book, *The Seven I Ams of Jesus: How Jesus Meets Your Deepest Needs* (Rocklin, CA: Faith Alive 365, 2012), 125.

**ORATIO – Respond**

Read one more time. Continue to chew on the word and let its flavor penetrate your heart. How does God want you to respond? After the reading, spend a few moments telling God how you feel about what you have heard, understood or felt. Be as honest as you are able; don't try to protect God (as if that were even possible). Listen for a response. Then continue in the dialogue with God. Pray yourself empty. You may choose to write this prayer out.

**CONTEMPLATIO – Resting**

Simply be with God, letting God make a home in you. Drop into God's presence, beneath all your thoughts and feelings. Rest completely in God, grateful for what has been given and what you were able to receive.

After the last step, invite the participants to share what the experience was like and what they noticed or heard during this time. After everyone who wants to share has had the chance, you may want to have another moment for silence to reflect on what was shared and see if/how it enriches what each person received during their personal time with God.

# APPENDIX B

## Prayer of Examen - *Praying Backwards*

One way we can become more aware of Jesus’s light in our life is through the prayer of Examen. This is an ancient spiritual practice that involves discerning the movements of God in our daily life. The Examen is often done in the evening for ten to fifteen minutes, and can become an excellent way to connect with God at the end of the day. Take time to pray backward through the events of the past 24 hours (or whatever time frame you choose), using the following guide.

### **BE STILL and ASK FOR DISCERNMENT**

*“Be still and know that I am God.”* (Psalm 46:10)

*“Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me...”* (Psalm 43:3)

Take a few minutes to relax, let go, and focus your attention on the presence of God.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern God’s movement in and around you today.

### **REMEMBER & GIVE THANKS<sup>9</sup>**

*“Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits...”* (Psalm 103:2)

Take time to replay your day, like a watching a movie. Spend some time remembering with gratitude a few of the specific gifts of this day: gifts of existence, work, relationships, and place; gifts of challenge, growth and conflict; a meeting with a friend, a moment of insight, a glimpse of natural beauty, a considerate driver. Savor the memory and offer thanks for every gift encountered.

### **REFLECT & LISTEN**

*“You have searched me, LORD, and you know my heart...”* (Psalm 139:1)

Reflect on what has been happening to you and in you today, trusting that the Spirit will reveal what needs to come to light. What particular moments do you “see” in your mind’s eye as you replay this time? And what feelings – positive and negative – did these experiences evoke in you? Listen to these feelings without judgment or even interpretation. If you feel bewildered or puzzled, ask yourself if there might be something

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<sup>9</sup> Portions of this version of “Praying Backward” used by permission from author Helen Cepero and adapted in Phil and Linda Sommerville’s book, *The Seven I Ams of Jesus: How Jesus Meets Your Deepest Needs* (Rocklin, CA: Faith Alive 365, 2012), 97.

new unfolding in your experience, and pray once more for illumination and clarity, trusting God to reveal this to you. You may want to focus on one or two specific moments in the day to focus on in prayer.

### **RESPOND TO GOD**

*“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love...”* (Psalm 51:1)

Having reviewed your past day, look upon yourself with compassion and see your need for God. Try to realize and receive God’s love for you. Express sorrow for sin and especially ask forgiveness for the times that you resisted God today. Give thanks for grace, the presence of God, and especially praise God for the times you responded in ways that allowed you to draw closer to God and see God more clearly.

### **LOOK FORWARD WITH HOPE**

*“...when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.”* (Psalm 17:15b)

Look forward in hope to tomorrow. Pray for the sensitivity to recognize God in whatever way God may choose to come to you tomorrow.

If you are doing the Examen with a group, you may choose to end by praying the Lord’s Prayer together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the power, the glory, and the kingdom forever. Amen.

*Note: You may find it helpful to read the following story before the first time engaging in the Examen. It is a real life parable of what can happen in us when we are assured every day of God’s provision in our lives, allowing us to live in gratitude and sleep in peace. The book Sleeping With Bread is also an excellent source of additional material about the Examen (sometimes referred to as the “Awareness Examen.”*

During the bombing raids of World War II, thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and placed in refugee camps where they received food and good care. But many of these children who had lost so much could not sleep at night. They feared waking up to find themselves once

again homeless and without food. Nothing seemed to reassure them. Finally, someone hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread, these children could finally sleep in peace. All through the night the bread reminded them, “Today I ate and I will eat again tomorrow.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, and Matthew Linn, *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 1.



# APPENDIX C

## Consolation and Desolation

The terms “consolation” and “desolation” come from the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, and carry a specific meaning which differ from how some may interpret them in their current English usage. “Consolation is not pleasure, and desolation is not pain....Consolation releases calm energy, whereas desolation may temporarily energize, but not sustainably.”<sup>11</sup>

Consolation involves noticing the places where God is at work in our lives. Desolation involves noticing the ways in which we may be working at cross-purposes to God’s work. Both consolation and desolation can play an important part in helping us draw near to God, become more aware of what God is doing in our lives, and participate in that work more fully.

In paying attention to consolation and desolation, a person can become more aware of disordered desires that could pull them away from God. “A disordered desire may be equally as engaging, exciting or interesting to us, but leaves a different aftertaste, of desolation, emptiness, or a lack of deep, peaceful, sustainable energy.”<sup>12</sup>

As author, spiritual director, and psychologist David Benner explains, “Tracking moments of consolation and desolation helps us discern both the deepest desires of our heart and the sources of our deepest dis-ease. Consolation points us toward God’s action in our lives. Desolation points us toward the action of the kingdom of self.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Theresa J. Rothousen, “Integrating Leadership Development with Ignatian Spirituality: A Model for Designing a Spiritual Leader Development Practice,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 145, no. 4 (June 2017), 819, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3241-4>.

<sup>12</sup> Rothousen, 819.

<sup>13</sup> David Benner, *Desiring God’s Will: Aligning Our Hearts with the Heart of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 117.

Author Ruth Haley Barton provides some helpful questions for individuals to consider when paying attention to consolation and desolation in the process of discernment:

Which alternative brings us the deepest sense of life (Jn. 10:10), inner peace (Phil. 4:7), freedom in the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17)? Which brings us a sense of wholeness, authenticity, congruence with who we are in God? Which fosters a deeper level of surrender to God and to love? Which would draw us away from God? Pay attention to distress, confusion and desolation. Even the more difficult emotions need to be acknowledged and attended to.<sup>14</sup>

Learning to notice consolation and desolation can take practice for some people, who may be more disconnected from their internal emotions. It will be helpful to gently remind participants throughout the program of what it means to experience consolation and desolation, and also to provide opportunities for them to practice noticing. This will become an important part of learning to discern how God is leading them as second chair leaders.

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<sup>14</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 209.

# APPENDIX D

## Open-handed Prayer of Indifference

The prayer of indifference comes from Saint Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises and is a way of prayerfully letting go of any inordinate attachment to anything or anyone. Once again, the word "indifference" has a specific meaning which is different than how we normally use it in modern English. Indifference does not mean that I am apathetic or indifferent to something. It means I am choosing to allow God to reorder the things I love. It means allowing God to give and take away anything God sees fit. This prayer is important when seeking discernment about a decision, because it can help prevent a person from pursuing their own desires rather than God's desires.

Praying for indifference may be the most counterintuitive move in the leadership discernment process. Many define leadership as having a compelling vision, a clear rationale and the ability to influence others. While these are important aspects of leadership...spiritual leadership is not fundamentally about *our* leadership. It is about putting ourselves...into a position to be *led by Christ*, who is the true head of the church.<sup>15</sup>

One way of practicing this type of prayer is by resting your open hands in your lap or on a table, as a sign of openness and surrender to God. Open-handed prayer means that I am not clinging too tightly to anything; and since my hands are not closed and clinging, they are therefore open to receive whatever good gifts God may want to give. I am free to receive and enjoy these good gifts, but I also hold them lightly and loosely, allowing God to take them as God sees fit.

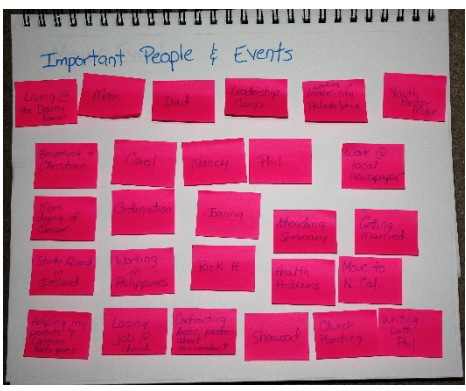
This Open-handed Prayer of Indifference can become an important regular practice for SCLs seeking to grow in wisdom and discernment. As a facilitator, you may want to incorporate this regularly into your meetings and/or encourage participants to engage in this prayer on their own.

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<sup>15</sup> Barton, 189.

# APPENDIX E

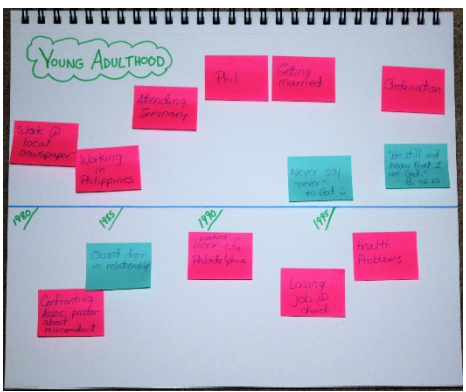
## Storyline Project Samples



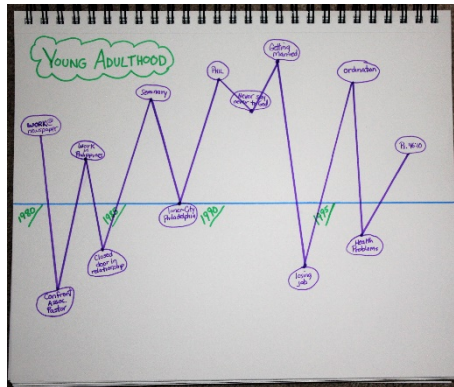
STEP 1: Important People & Events



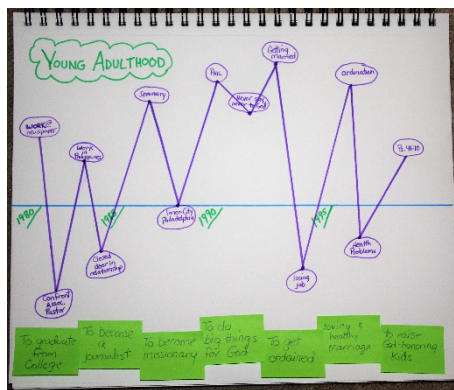
STEP 2: Significant Scriptures & Moments with God



STEPS 3-5: Sequencing, Themes, Highs & Lows



STEP 6: Graphing Your Storyline



STEP 7: Dreams & Aspirations

**LEADERSHIP LESSONS**

- God loves me unconditionally, regardless of what I accomplish or produce.
- God doesn't need me to "save the world." That's God's job.
- To lead well, I must deal with my "garbage."
- Being in authentic community is key for me to be a healthy leader over time.
- God often uses health issues to get my attention of things I need to change.
- God desires that I live with passion, purpose, and joy.
- Some of the most important leadership I will ever do arises out of deep suffering or failure.

**YOUNG ADULTHOOD**

**Aspirations:**

- graduate from college
- become a missionary
- become a pastor
- do Bible study
- healthy living
- Get married
- Get ordained
- Raise God-loving kids

STEP 8: Leadership Lessons

# APPENDIX F

How to Create a Zoom Group

How to Set-up a Private Facebook Group

How to Recruit a Cohort

These instructions will be written at a later time

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