

ABSTRACT

CHRISTIAN CHANGE AGENTS: ANALYZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AMONG STUDENTS IN A CENTRAL KENTUCKY RESTORATION CHURCH

by

James W. Bush

This dissertation examines the effectiveness of a Christian leadership program in producing Christian change agents. It evaluates the effectiveness of the Christian leadership program based on its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the dissertation considers improvements for future adaptations of the Christian leadership program.

Participants in the project were all from the central Kentucky Restoration Church, primarily white and middle class. The participants consisted of five change agents (program participants) and four program mentors.

The research explored the biblical and theological framework with respect to discipleship and mentoring. It also investigated adolescence and emerging adulthood as well as practices that contributed to the formation of Christian change agents. The research further reviewed mentoring and experiential learning

The project was a post-intervention that utilized the qualitative instruments of interviews and a focus group to gather data for analysis. The findings revealed that time management was a weakness, and that field trips and personality inventories were effective in producing Christian change agents.

CHRISTIAN CHANGE-AGENTS: ANALYZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A
CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AMONG STUDENTS IN A CENTRAL
KENTUCKY RESTORATION CHURCH

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by

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The Lord has blessed me with incredible mentors along the way. I have named a few below. But there are far too many to list. I am thankful for the many voices who have spoken truth into my life.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

For this project, I chose to evaluate a leadership program that worked with high school and college students who attended a central Kentucky Restoration Church. Included in the overview of the research project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how the results are collected and analyzed.

Personal Introduction

On April 6, 1994, my father, David Bush, a pastor, was killed in a car accident while returning from a hospital visit. I was seven years old. His death created an immediate problem in my life. I had lost not just a father, but the person I most wanted to emulate in life. I wanted to be a pastor just like my father from as far back as I can remember. In 1994, suddenly, his towering example was silenced in an instant.

Growing up without a father presented a unique set of challenges for me. My mother took on the role of both parents and raised my siblings and me admirably. She instructed us, required us to study and memorize scripture, prayed with us, read to us, mentored us, and loved us. However, I yearned for other mentors to invest in my life. Steve Crosby was the first person to invest in my life in the capacity of a mentor. Steve was my youth pastor. He encouraged, motivated, and provided me with the space and opportunities to flourish as a developing young preacher. I preached my first sermon under his guidance. I was given opportunities to lead within our youth group. I was exposed to international ministry settings (where I had opportunities to serve the underprivileged, preach, and develop ministry goals). The most significant investment

Steve made into my life was to serve as my dialectical partner as I explored what it meant to be a leader within my local church. He took time to have lunch with me monthly.

Those conversations helped form me spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally.

Once I entered college, John Morelock became another mentor for me. John grew up on the same street as my father. When my father died, John provided resources for my family as we struggled through years of lean financial stability. John began to invest in my life spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally in college. Whether it was a phone conversation or a meeting in person, John provided timely wisdom and insight into my life. Moreover, while John is a businessman, he is also a dedicated layperson within his local church. He, as much as Steve, helped form me as a pastor. He achieved this through personal interaction, opportunities to travel and serve, and constant encouragement and feedback.

Three other mentors contributed to my growth as I was engaged in graduate studies. J. Ellsworth Kalas, Jim Hampton, and Robert Stamps made a significant impact on my life. Kalas was my preaching professor. He became a mentor after I graduated, and we continued to meet frequently. I treasure the conversations I shared with him. He provided decades of wisdom and insight, and it was an honor to have had his guidance.

Jim Hampton helped shape my understanding of how to minister to adolescents. His availability and timely advice have been important for the development of my philosophy of mentoring.

Robert Stamps was our Dean of Worship when he and I met. I was in the middle of my seminary career at the time. I had not enjoyed the first few years of my studies.

Stamps ensured that my graduate studies' last half was excellent because he invested in my life. He helped shape my views on many theological and ministry-related issues.

When I entered the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary, I was blessed by an additional mentor, Ellen Marmon. During my time as a student, I suddenly lost my niece, Rosalind. My brother-in-law, Robbie, died from complications following a grand mal seizure a few months later. Marmon helped me think through how to conduct those funerals. Her wisdom was essential to what became the most challenging year of my life.

It is sufficient to say that I am very much who I am today because of my mother's investment, Steve Crosby, John Morelock, J. Ellsworth Kalas, Jim Hampton, Robert Stamps, and Ellen Marmon. Truthfully, many more mentors played smaller (but still significant) roles in my life. As a result of how I have been mentored, I have a passion for mentoring young people. This passion is what drives this research project.

As a pastor, I desire to see people fully become who God created them to be. While this is true of all students I serve, I am particularly interested in helping highly motivated students become leaders, disciple-makers, and peer mentors in the adolescent and emerging adult stages of life.

Thus, my personal experience birthed my project. Mentors invested heavily in my life. I want to do the same thing for students. I want to provide relational space where students can enter into a safe mentoring process. Additionally, I want to give students the opportunities to lead, meet leaders, experience cross-cultural leadership, and create the space to reflect upon all they have learned.

Statement of the Problem

A central Kentucky Restoration Church faces a problem with keeping young adults active in the church once they reach college age. A study by Barna Group entitled, *Five Myths about Young Adult Church Dropouts* concluded that roughly 70% of young people (ages 18-29) stop being involved with their local church. This demographic was broken down into three categories: prodigals (those who rebel against their faith; 1 out of 10 young people), nomads (those who remain Christian but do not actively participate in church; 4 out of 10 young people), and exiles (those who identify a breach between the local church and culture; 2 out of 10 young people). The study stated, "...most young people with a Christian background are dropping out of conventional church involvement, not losing their faith" (Barna). Finding ways to keep students engaged in the church past their teenage years is paramount to future generations of the church.

One such way could be inviting young Christian leaders into mentoring and discipling opportunities with older Christian leaders in the form of a leadership program. In addition to mentoring and discipling, this program would provide experiential learning opportunities in field trips with Christian leaders across a variety of vocations (secular and religious) and non-field trips where identity and purpose would be primarily explored.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership program for developing Christian change agents among high school and college students in a central Kentucky Independent Restoration Christian Church.

Research Questions

Many ways and methods can be used to keep young people engaged in the local church. Discovering the efficacy of the leadership program involves identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the leadership program according to the participants the change agents (program participants) and the program leaders (mentors). Additionally, evaluating the leadership program involved both the program participants and program leaders identifying best practices for improving future iterations of the leadership program.

Research Question #1

What did the program participants identify as its strengths and weaknesses? Program participants were interviewed and asked to determine which elements of the program impacted the participants the most and which elements of the program did the participants find the least beneficial. The expected result is that through the interview instrument, the leadership project would be evaluated for effectiveness and refined for the future development of the program.

Research Question #2

What did the program leaders identify as its strengths and weaknesses? The focus group instrument was selected to facilitate discussion regarding Research Question #2. The focus group asked program leaders who mentored the participants throughout the leadership program to evaluate the program for its strengths and weaknesses. The program leaders were asked to judge which program elements had the most significant impact and which elements of the program were the least beneficial.

Research Question #3

What best practices would improve the program for its next iteration? Research Question #3 was implemented through the instrumentation of interviews of program participants and a focus group for program leaders. Specifically, this question addressed what program participants and program leaders thought would best improve this program for future development. Additionally, answering this question involved both program participants and program leaders discussing what is essential to keep in future iterations of the program and what should be abandoned in future iterations.

Rationale for the Project

Following His resurrection, Jesus gave specific instructions to His followers regarding what they should do in response to Jesus' teaching, death, and resurrection:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:16-20, *English Standard Version*)

This passage lays out a clear mandate for the followers of Jesus to make disciples through the action of going, teaching, and baptizing. The early church obeyed this mandate. The book of Acts reports that on numerous occasions, people believed (Acts 8:37), were baptized (Acts 2:41), and obeyed (Acts 6:7). It is clear from both Jesus' instruction and the obedience to Jesus' teaching by the early church that the imperative to go and make disciples should be the forefront mission of the church. This project sought to help students become better disciples and equip them to become disciple-makers.

There is also a rich biblical thread regarding generational ministry. In Psalm 145:4, the Psalmist wrote, “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.” In Psalm 78:4, the Psalmist confesses, “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” The current project attempted to follow this biblical exhortation by pairing students with mentors who would declare God’s works to them. It also tried to prepare and empower students to tell future generations about the “glorious deeds of the Lord” (Ps 78:4).

This project also trained the students to excel in peer leadership and experiential learning. In Luke 10, Jesus sent out seventy-two disciples (10:1), prepared them with instructions on how to lead (10:2-16), and debriefed them (10:17-20). Jesus valued giving His followers opportunities to engage in peer leadership and discipleship *while* He was still with them.

Finally, this project asked both mentors and students to engage in serious and sober self-reflection. Spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth are important aspects of becoming a mature Christian. The Apostle Paul urged the Christians in Corinth to be self-aware, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (2 Cor. 13:5). In his letter to the Roman church, Paul wrote:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Rom 12:1-3).

The passage is an exhortation for intensive self-reflection and examination. This project attempted to fulfill this by consistently providing opportunities for both mentors and students to self-reflect.

Definition of Key Terms

This dissertation uses two key terms that are listed and defined below.

Change Agent

A change agent is an adolescent or emerging adult participant of this project who has been trained, equipped, and sent out to change the world around her or him as the result of intensive discipleship training (both becoming a better disciple and disciple-maker), declaring God's works to other generations, undergoing experiential learning, practicing peer leadership, and engaging in self-examination.

Independent Christian Restoration Church

An Independent Christian Restoration Church is a church that traces its roots back to the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801. It is autonomous from a larger church polity. Instead, it is governed internally, usually by a board of elders. While Independent Restoration Christian churches differ theologically from parish to parish, they have a general agreement about a high view of scripture, baptism by immersion, and a desire for unity for the global Church.

Delimitations

Five program participants were selected for the Christian leadership program being evaluated in this study. When the Christian leadership program launched, three of the five students were in high school. Of those three, two were female, and one was male.

The other two students selected to participate in this program were freshmen in college when this leadership program began. One was a male and the other was a female.

In addition to the program participants, five program mentors were selected to be paired with the five program participants. Each mentor was the same gender as the program participant to whom they were paired. Three of the five mentors (two male, one female) were on staff at the Independent Christian Restoration Church where this study took place. One mentor (female) was a layperson at the Independent Christian Restoration Church. The final member (female) was on staff at a parachurch organization. There were three female program mentors and two male program mentors at the program launch. However, one of the female program mentors dropped out of the program shortly after it launched due to scheduling conflicts.

The Christian leadership program and the evaluation took place at an Independent Christian Restoration church in central Kentucky. Due to the nature of the leadership program, there were times when the program participants traveled on field trips to meet leaders in various fields (both secular and religious).

Program participants were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Sensed a call from God to ministry (whether vocational or otherwise)
2. Demonstrated a commitment to pursue that call to ministry
 - a. Through consistent rhythm and practice of the disciplines of prayer and study of scripture
 - b. Through active involvement in the participant's local church
 - i. Leadership opportunities
 - ii. Self-motivated

iii. Creative

3. Academically motivated

4. Possessed a strong desire to sharpen and deepen the vocational call to ministry.

Likewise, the nature of the Christian leadership program and the pairing of students with mentors necessitated a small number of student participants. This leadership program also only selected participants from the Independent Christian Restoration Church. Students from other churches in the area were not considered.

Review of Relevant Literature

The literature review (chapter two) examines relevant literature related to the areas of adolescence, emerging adults, spiritual formation of adolescents and emerging adults, servant leadership, Experiential Learning Theory, Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), personality inventories and self-awareness, mentoring, and time management.

The leadership program included both adolescents between the ages of thirteen and seventeen and emerging adults between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five. The literature review looked at the emergence of adolescence as a term that G. Stanley Hall defined more than 100 years ago. Additionally, the literature review explored Erik Erikson's "identity versus role confusion," (*Childhood* 261) and the various ways adolescents within the church have faced challenges based on race and gender (Myers; Tittley; Cole). Likewise, the literature defines the term, "emerging adults" (Smith and Snell). The review further explores Erikson's stage of "intimacy versus isolation" in regard to the importance of an emerging adult being paired with a mentor (*Childhood* 263).

The literature review then examines the role of spiritual formation in adolescents and emerging adults by looking carefully at Christian Smith and Patricia Denton's work on "moralistic therapeutic deism" in the American church and its effect on younger generations. A review of what makes an adolescent a highly devoted member of a local church follows this (Smith and Denton; Dean). This section concludes with an examination of Kenda Creasy Dean's missional practices.

Servant leadership was the primary leadership taught during the Christian leadership program being evaluated. The servant leadership section of the literature review defines servant leadership and its attributes (Greenleaf; Russell and Stone) and demonstrates the effectiveness of servant leadership (Jennings and McCormick).

Experiential learning formed a significant part of the evaluation of the teaching and learning approach to the Christian leadership program. The literature reviewed in this section helps define Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb) and appropriate ways to teach and learn using the "Experiential Learning Model" and the "Teaching Around the Circle Model" (Merriam and Baumgartner).

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) encourages program mentors to interact and relate with program participants. The literature assesses TBRI (Purvis et al.) for its effectiveness to help build trusting relationships between program leaders and program participants. Specifically, it explores the principles of empowerment, connecting, and correcting.

Personality inventories and self-awareness were part of many of the non-field trip meetings of the Christian leadership program. The literature review examines and

discusses *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective* (Rohr and Ebert), the DiSC (“What is the Disc?”), and the Clifton StrengthFinders (Asplund et al).

The next section of the literature review briefly considers mentoring. Specifically, it explores the benefits of mentoring and the role of mentoring.

Finally, the literature review considers time management. The Christian leadership program being assessed took considerable time for both program mentors and program participants. Relevant literature reviewed surveys the work of Jean Vanier, Peter Scazzero, and Gordon MacDonald.

Research Methodology

This project used a qualitative approach to gather data to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the Christian leadership project under scrutiny. Using a qualitative approach allowed program mentors and program participants to describe the experience of the Christian leadership program in details that were unique to each individual.

Likewise, as a part of the research, using a qualitative approach, I asked program mentors and program participants to consider best practices for future program development using a qualitative approach. I used a semi-structured format for all questions. This allowed the respondents to answer the questions freely.

The instrumentation used for the project consisted of interviews of program participants and a focus group that was utilized with the program mentors. Both the interview and the focus group were semi-structured, which allowed me to follow up on questions.

Type of Research

This project involved post-intervention research that evaluated the effectiveness of a Christian leadership program in creating Christian change agents. The Christian leadership program being considered began in the summer of 2018 and concluded during the early months of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which started in late 2019. This research aimed to examine how effective the program was in helping the program participants grow in and share their faith and become change agents.

Participants

Participants were selected from an Independent Christian Restoration Church and included five program participants between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three and four program mentors between the ages of thirty-six and sixty-five. All program participants and program mentors were Caucasian. Three of the program participants were female, and two were male. The program mentors were two female and two male.

Instrumentation

The research used two types of instrumentation: interviews and focus groups. The data gathered was qualitative. However, a few Likert scales were implemented in the interviews to determine how the program participants rated their overall experience in the program, the field trips, the non-field trip meetings, and the mentoring experience.

Data Collection

I conducted the interviews via the Zoom platform and recorded them so I could later transcribe the data. Likewise, I utilized the Zoom platform for the focus group, recorded the session, and later transcribed the data.

Data collection took place over about two weeks. The interviews lasted an hour

each, and the focus group took an hour and a half. The interview questions that asked the program participants to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the various aspects of the Christian leadership program which included field trips, non-field trips, the mentoring process addressed RQ1. Other questions about how future iterations of the program, might be improved sought data to answer RQ3. The focus group contained similar questions and asked the program mentors to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program to obtain answers for RQ2. The focus group also contained questions that asked the program leaders to consider improvements for future adaptations of the Christian leadership program (RQ3).

Tim Sensing wrote that “researchers are not neutral or unbiased” (42). A researcher possesses her or his own biases, thoughts about ministry and God, and beliefs to research (Sensing 42). The researcher had to guard against injecting preconceived biases, thoughts, and beliefs into the research.

Data Analysis

A spreadsheet was helpful when transcribing and coding the recorded data collected via the Zoom platform. Tim Sensing wrote, “Coding assigns units of meaning to descriptions, quotes, texts, etc. Always keep in mind that you are preparing the data in such a way as to facilitate its use in addressing your project’s problem and purpose” (203). The data were carefully coded and reviewed for recurring themes and patterns. I created a system to organize data by themes in columns and rows within the spreadsheet.

Generalizability

The research to determine the effectiveness of a Christian leadership program is generalizable because the Church will always have young Christians who need to be

disciplined and equipped. If the Christian leadership program proved to be effective in creating Christian change agents, similar programs would be helpful in other churches and settings. The qualitative answers and Likert scale results could help create better adaptations of this program.

Project Overview

Chapter 2 explores the relevant and available literature related to this study. The review of this literature begins with an examination of scriptural and theological underpinnings that support this study and moves to a review of literature in the areas of adolescence, emerging adults, the spiritual formation of adolescents and emerging adults, servant leadership, ELT, TBRI, personality inventories and self-awareness, mentoring, and time management.

Chapter 3 explains the nature and purpose of research conducted in evaluating the effectiveness of a Christian leadership program in creating change agents. The chapter enumerates the research questions and instrumentation used to collect data. The chapter also describes the participants, examines the data collection process, and explains the procedures used to analyze data. Finally, it explores and addresses the reliability and validity of the post-intervention.

Chapter 4 gives a detailed account of the data collected and includes a list of the major findings.

Chapter 5 explores the major findings in-depth. It also examines implications as the result of the leadership program and post-intervention. Finally, chapter 5 provides suggestions for further study and best practices for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter reviews the relevant literature to the study. The chapter explores how the Bible presents a framework for discipleship, servant leadership, spiritual formation, how disciples accompanied those discipling them, self-awareness, and time management. The first section examines these aspects through the lens of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The second section explores a theological framework of the Trinity, the incarnation, the *imago dei*, and the *missio dei*. The final section examines the literature available in the study of adolescence, emerging adults, the spiritual formation of adolescents and emerging adults, servant leadership, experiential learning theory (ELT), trust-based relational intervention (TBRI), personality inventories and self-awareness, mentoring, and time management.

Biblical Foundations

The scriptures present a mandate for and place high importance on discipling others into an ever-deepening relationship with the Triune God. Matthew 28:16-20 shows that Jesus indicated that His followers were to make other disciples through going, teaching, and baptizing. In the book of Acts, there is a recurrence of this mandate being fulfilled (Acts 2:41; 6:7; 8:37).

Additionally, the Scriptures indicate that it is the responsibility of one generation to declare God's good works to the subsequent generations (Ps. 145:4). Likewise, Psalm 78:4 affirms the need for the "glorious deeds of God" to be disclosed, as opposed to hidden, to children and future generations.

A survey of both the Old and New Testaments reveals how a disciple is trained and formed. Specifically, (1) God calls and prepares servant leaders, (2) God desires God's followers to be disciplined, and (3) God desires God's followers to cultivate an ever-deepening relationship with the Triune God. These three categories form a scripture-wide foundation for understanding the development of a disciple and how one generation can declare God's good works to subsequent generations (Ps. 145:4).

Servant Leaders in the Old Testament

Derek Tidball argued that the Old Testament reveals that civilization requires leadership to maintain its vitality (33). Tidball went on to write that "The absence of leadership tends to weakness and chaos, as the book of Judges demonstrates (Jdg. 21:25)" (33). God called servant leaders in the Old Testament. A common theme of unlikely candidates being called by God emerges when one looks at the breadth of the Old Testament. Abraham was old but obedient (Gen. 12:1-4). Moses was both a murderer (Exod. 2:12) and a former member of the royal family of Egypt, the oppressor of the enslaved Israelites. Yet, Moses responded, albeit reluctantly, to God's call (Exod. 3-4). In 2 Chron. 34:14-33, the Book of the Law was rediscovered. Huldah, the Prophetess, "a noted theologian" ("Prophet, Prophetess" 670), was the servant leader to whom Hilkiyah the high priest turned to inquire of the Lord regarding the Book of the Law. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to a foreign king (Neh. 1:11). Nevertheless, he sought to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a servant leader in that he stood alongside those who were also rebuilding the wall and protecting Jerusalem (Neh. 4:22-23).

In each of these cases, obedience and sacrificial suffering are observable traits in these servant leaders. None of these characters were infallible. At times they were

disobedient or selfish. However, these characters demonstrated that they were willing to honor God by being obedient and sacrificial. Abraham was obedient to God's demand to sacrifice his son, Isaac (Gen 22). Moses stood before Pharaoh, who wielded considerable power and thought himself a god (Exod. 5-14). Huldah gave guidance concerning the Book of the Law (2 Chron. 34:14-33). Nehemiah left everything to go from cupbearer to leading an extensive rebuilding project (Neh. 2:4-8). In each of these examples, these characters were willing to sacrifice their well-being to bring God glory and better the lives of those who followed them.

Servant Leaders in the New Testament

In the New Testament, there are numerous examples of servant leaders. Derek Tidball wrote that "Christian leadership is meant to be different from other forms of leadership because Christian leaders are called to be servants" (31). The ultimate expression of a servant leader is Jesus himself. Jesus instructed his followers that whoever wanted to be first or great would be last or least and that he, Jesus, came to serve (Matt. 20:25-28). Regarding Matthew 20:25-28, Donald A. Hagner wrote, "Greatness, honor, and prestige in the kingdom of God are reckoned by a completely different standard in the community of Jesus' disciples" (581). Likewise, in Mark 10:45, Jesus indicated that "...even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Craig Keener wrote about this passage, "It was radical for Jesus to define greatness in terms of servanthood; despite Jewish rules requiring that slaves be well treated, Jewish free persons, like their Gentile counterparts, considered slaves socially inferior" (163). In John 13:12-16, Jesus washed his disciples' feet, performing a task reserved for the *doulos* meaning a servant or slave. This was an act of

service that foreshadowed the pinnacle of servant leadership. Even though the word *diakonia* (serve) is not used in John 13, Tidball noted that this is a “transparent demonstration of the principle [of servant leadership]” (36). In John 19:16-34, Jesus was crucified. The apostle Paul later wrote, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:14–15). Jesus’ death is not only the supreme example of servant leadership, but it also forms the supreme framework for Jesus’ followers to embody as they pursue becoming servant leaders. Death to self becomes a prominent marker of growth for the serious follower of Jesus (Luke 9:23; Gal 2:20).

Elsewhere in the New Testament, John the Baptist is a strong example of a servant leader. Efrain Agosto wrote, “John prepared the way by acknowledging his role and pointing the people in another direction” (31). Even though Mark reported that many people had come to see and follow John the Baptist (Mark 1:5), he did not lose sight of his mission and purpose. He prepared the way for Jesus (Mark 1:4-8), reported that he was not worthy to untie the sandals of Jesus (John 1:27), pointed others to Jesus (John 1:35-37), and was executed before witnessing Jesus’ death and resurrection (Mark 6:14-29).

Likewise, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, was a servant leader. She prioritized learning from Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). Keener noted, “Mary’s role as a disciple of Jesus is more important than anything else she could do” (218). Additionally, Mary believed Jesus could raise her brother from the dead (John 11:32) and anointed and washed Jesus’ feet (12:1-8).

The portrait of a servant leader emerges from a careful examination of the Old and New Testaments. Jesus' supreme example of placing serving ahead of leading provides a blueprint for followers of Jesus.

Discipleship in the Old Testament

Discipleship in the Old Testament was important for passing on leadership and responsibility. In Joshua 1, Joshua took the mantle of leading Israel from Moses. This moment was long in the making. Joshua was handpicked to lead Israel's first pitched battle (Exod. 17:8-16), although his brief introduction might be explained as John Durham noted: "that Joshua's early training as Moses' assistant was too well known to make details necessary" (235). He became Moses' assistant and would not leave the tabernacle, observing the example of Moses (Exod. 33:11). He learned directly from Moses (Num. 11:24-30) and was finally commissioned to lead Israel (Num. 27:18-23). Likewise, Elijah discipled Elisha. Elisha was called to replace Elijah and his prophetic ministry (1 Kings 19:19-20), lived and assisted Elijah (1 Kings 19:21), clung to both Elijah and his teachings (2 Kings 2:1-11), and received a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9-10, 15). Walton et al. wrote that "Elisha is requesting that he receive the status as the principal successor to Elijah" (386). Like Joshua and Moses, Elisha and Elijah were together in ministry.

A third example is Jehoiada, who discipled and mentored Joash. This began when Joash's life was threatened, and Jehoshabeath (Jehoiada's wife) and Jehoiada rescued Joash from regicide (2 Chron. 22:10-12), although where exactly Joash was hidden has been debated (Walton et al. 443). Seven years later, Jehoiada courageously installed Joash as king of Judah (2 Chron 23:1-11). The Temple was restored under Jehoiada's

guidance (2 Chron. 24:12-14). However, when Jehoiada died, Joash turned from the ways of his mentor, listened to poor counsel, and did wicked things in the eyes of God (including having Jehoiada's son executed) (2 Chron. 24:17-22).

Discipleship in the New Testament

In the New Testament, discipleship played a vital role in the spread and growth of the church. Jesus called and disciplined numerous people, including the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:1-4, Luke 6:12-16), the seventy-two (Luke 10:1-23), and several women (Luke 8:2-3). Apostles were defined as “‘sent ones,’ or ‘commissioned representatives’” (Keener 72). Jesus was interested then in sending out those whom he called. Jesus intentionally spent considerable time discipling Peter, James, and John (Mark 9:2-9). Significantly, Jesus' disciples were almost always with him wherever he went. They experienced his teachings and witnessed his actions as they traveled throughout Galilee and Judea.

Following Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, the church began to grow (Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 9:31). One of those God called to be a leader in the early church was the Apostle Paul. However, when Paul was called, he was not ready to proclaim the gospel and suffer for the gospel. Moreover, the early church did not initially trust Paul, who had recently been on a Christian-executing mission. Barnabas, a respected member of the Christian community, defended Paul's conversion before the apostles (Acts 9:26-27). Later, Barnabas was called to go to Antioch (Acts 11:22). Upon learning that the church was growing in Antioch, Barnabas made the journey to Tarsus to find Paul (Acts 11:25-26), brought him back to Antioch, trained him (Acts 11:26), was ordained for mission work with Paul (Acts 13:2-3), and accompanied and conducted

ministry with Paul (Acts 13-15). Barnabas and Paul were together until they disagreed about taking John Mark with them on Paul's second journey and separated (Acts 15:36-38).

Later in Acts, Paul began to disciple Timothy (16:1), saw potential in him (16:2), and had him circumcised to appeal to the Jews to whom he would minister (16:3) (Keener 366). Timothy accompanied Paul into Europe. He was left with Silas in Thessalonica to help build the persecuted church there (17:14). Paul finally sent Timothy out to conduct ministry (Acts 19:22).

Both the Old Testament and New Testament attest to robust examples of discipleship. In some cases, the disciples such as Joshua and Elisha did even greater things than their mentors. At the center of the Old Testament, discipleship mentors called, engaged in the education of, provided leadership experiences for, and ultimately provided autonomy to those whom they disciplined. In the New Testament, this idea was refined and exemplified by Jesus. He called his disciples, taught them His Father's commands, and provided them opportunities and experience in leading. He did this before and after He sent them out to make disciples, teach, baptize, and obey. This model continued to flourish in the early church. Examples such as Barnabas and Paul and Paul and Timothy support the aforementioned discipleship model.

Spiritual Formation in the Old Testament

J. Steven Harper indicated that the term "Old Testament Spirituality" should be "Old Testament Spiritualities" (64). The Old Testament was composed over a long period. This makes drawing conclusions about spiritual formation in the Old Testament more challenging because it is a series of testaments to the history of God and Israel over

centuries. However, it is possible to think broadly about how God drew the Israelites toward God's self, which led to the spiritual formation of the Israelites. Harper presents four categories of Old Testament spiritual formation: creation, covenant, community, and challenge (65).

1. Creation: The beginning of the Old Testament focuses on the creation of the world. In the accounts found in the first two chapters of Genesis, God viewed God's creative work as good. This goodness of creation also shows God's abundant love for creation itself. "Spiritual formation maintains that if we look at the world through the perspective of the Old Testament, we will conclude that God is Love" (Harper, 66). At the heart of creation is the formation of humanity in the *imago dei* (Gen 1:26-27). Thus, God's creating work reveals that God is love and that God considers life sacred.
2. Covenant: The Creator was not done. "The personal God who creates persons who share in the *imago dei* cannot be satisfied with a generalized relationship" (Harper, 69). The Torah, specifically Exodus, shows that God invited people, specifically Israel, into a relationship with God. God set a sacred or profane boundary that exists first in the Tabernacle and later, in the Temple. The people could worship God safely. At the same time, God invited Israel into a unique relationship that made Israel the light to the world (Isa. 49:6). This relationship also included blessing and cursing. The Israelites were blessed if they honored the covenant

relationship with God. They were cursed when they chose to disregard the covenant relationship with God.

3. Community: As a result of the covenant relationship with God, Israel formed a tightly woven community. Harper contends that “As Jews, they were grounded in the revelation of God as Yahweh (one God), the law (one standard), and the nation (one people). There might be any number of threads, but only one fabric—many colors, but one coat” (73). This led to the Israelites’ realization that their identity was initiated in the family and moved out to the entire people of Israel. It also led to the interdependence of the Israelite community, particularly “between the king, the priests, prophets and people” (Harper, 73).
4. Challenge: The culmination of creation, covenant, and community was Israel’s challenge to lead the next generation in drawing close to God (Ps. 145:4). Israel concurrently faced maintaining the current generation’s relationship with God (Exod. 20:1-17). Finally, the Israelites were challenged to expect the coming of a Messiah, who would bring about significant change and hope to Israel (Isa. 61:1-2) (Harper 74-75).

In addition to Harper’s categories, self-awareness and time are indispensable factors for spiritual formation in the Old Testament.

The need for self-awareness frequently appears in the Old Testament. “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out” (Prov. 20:5). The Old Testament repeatedly called the faithful to examine their ways and

return to God (Lam. 3:37-40; Prov. 14:8; Ps. 51:3). Finally, understanding one's origin as a creation of God helped with one's self-awareness (Ps. 139:13-14).

Time and how followers of God use time are meaningful to spiritual formation. Psalm 90:12 asks God to "teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." In addition to gaining wisdom, how time is spent matters. Proverbs 6:6-11 warns against laziness and encourages diligent work.

Spiritual Formation in the New Testament

In the New Testament, spiritual formation is focused on the life and example of Jesus. The New Testament presents a vigorous imperative for spiritual formation. Specifically, Jesus modeled a Spirit-led life of prayer and reflection, a robust knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, and submission to God the Father. The New Testament further expounds on this Jesus-based spiritual formation by revealing the disciples' activities before and after Jesus' ascension and in the writings that follow the gospel accounts. Spiritual formation is a necessary part of following the Triune God. Paul wrote that "...we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ..." (Eph. 4:15).

1. Holy Spirit-Filled: At his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16). Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:1). The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). The church was born out of the coming of the Holy Spirit and "Only through such a relationship with the Holy Spirit are we enabled and empowered to participate in the ongoing ministry of Jesus and to discern what the Father wants us to do." (Seamands, Loc. 243-244). The Holy Spirit is vital to the spiritual formation of both the individual and the community of God. The

Holy Spirit fills believers (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 6:3,5; 7:55, 9:17, 10:38, 11:24, 13:9). The Holy Spirit is responsible for believers' adoption as daughters or sons of God (Rom. 8:14-15). Additionally, believers are baptized into the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), led or counseled by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Eph. 3:14-19), are to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25), and transformed by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

2. Prayer and Reflection: Karl Barth wrote, "To be a Christian and to pray are one and the same thing; it is a matter that cannot be left to our caprice. It is a need, a kind of breathing necessary to life" (15). Jesus provided the paradigm for prayer when He gave the "Lord's Prayer" also referred to as the "Our Father" (Matt. 6:9-13, Luke 11:1-4). The pattern of this prayer first aligns the speaker with God's cause, including the hallowing of God's name, the coming of God's Kingdom, and the will of God to be done *before* requesting the sustenance to accomplish God's cause that include daily bread, forgiveness, and being led away from temptation. Jesus also indicated that prayer begins in private (6:6). Jesus practiced what He taught, and often withdrew to pray and reflect in private (Mark 1:12, 16, 35, 45; 3:13; 6:31-32, 46; 14:32, Matt. 14:13, 15:29). Praying in private flows into the Church's communal prayer (Acts 1:14; 4:24-31; 6:6; 12:5; 13:3). The Apostle Paul admonished the believers in Thessalonica to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) and, in Philippi, with thanksgiving (Phil. 4:3-4).

3. **Robust Knowledge of Scripture:** Jesus possessed a robust knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament or Hebrew scriptures. At the age of twelve, Jesus was able to interact with the teachers at the Temple to the point where Jesus “amazed” them (Luke 2:46-47). Jesus frequently quoted or alluded to the Hebrew scriptures (Matt. 5:38, Mark 12:36, Luke 4:16-19, John 15:25). In Acts, Peter (Acts 2:17-21), Stephen (7:2-53), Philip (8:35), and Paul (17:2) all demonstrated that they possessed a robust knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures and interpreted them in light of the work of Jesus. Paul further showed his knowledge of scripture in his letters (Rom. 8:36, 1 Cor. 1:19, Gal. 3:13), as did the other New Testament writers such as the author of Hebrews (Heb. 6:14 alluding to Gen. 22:16-17).
4. **Self-Awareness:** A consistent theme of examining oneself for the purposes of remaining and growing in the faith emerges from the New Testament (1 Tim. 4:16; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 13:5). Paul was self-aware enough to report that “when I am weak, I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). However, there is also the sober reminder that it is impossible to fully know God until the return of Christ even though one is fully known by God (1 Cor. 13:12).
5. **The Role of Time:** The practices mentioned above are guided by an investment of time. The New Testament contains several words for time: *chronos*, *kairōs*, and *hora*. However, in the New Testament, when the synoptic gospel writers wanted to emphasize the importance of a specific time, they used the word, *kairōs*. Kathleen Nash wrote that “The most

important word related to “time” in the NT is *kairōs*, “opportune” or “appointed time” (1311). Specifically, the synoptic gospel writers applied *kairōs* to Jesus in relationship to important moments in his ministry (Mark 1:15; Matt. 26:18). Paul also applied this word to Jesus’ mission (Rom. 5:6) and Jesus’ eventual return (1 Tim. 6:15). The New Testament also focused on time in terms of how Jesus and his followers were to use it. Jesus often spent time alone with the Father (Mark 1:35, 6:46; Matt. 14:23; Luke 11:1). Jesus’ example demonstrates Christians’ need to spend their time in prayer and other spiritual disciplines like reading scripture. The third component of time related to the New Testament is time management. Importantly, Paul commanded in Ephesians 5:15-16, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.” In this passage, the word for time is *kairōs*. Christians must be mindful that their time, and how they use their time matters (Col. 4:5; Rom. 13:11). Gordan MacDonald used the term “budgeting time” to help Christian change agents and mentors accomplish healthy time management (80). It requires an adequate understanding of one’s personal mission, personal limits, and one’s training of others in the faith (MacDonald 82-85). Using Jesus as an example, MacDonald noted that Jesus “...had an overwhelming task to perform, and he measured his use of time against that sense of mission” (82). Jesus’ time was always budgeted for his mission. But Jesus was also aware of his personal limits. Jesus knew when he needed to spend time

with the Father and when it was time to move on from a place. Jesus “shared our limitations but coped with them effectively—just as we must” (83). Finally, Jesus ensured there was adequate time for him to invest in the twelve disciples. He spent time explaining the meanings behind parables or miracles. Jesus sent many of his disciples on missions. He then spent time with the disciples debriefing those missions. Jesus celebrated their ministry accomplishments, and he corrected their ministry mistakes (MacDonald 84).

6. Community: The *ekklesia* was a central part of spiritual formation in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews wrote that it was imperative to continue to meet together (10:25). 1 Timothy 3:14-16 indicates that the *ekklesia* is the “pillar and buttress of the truth.” Ephesians reveals that the church is a place for both Jew and Gentile (2:14-15), and the church is headed by Christ (4:15). James Dunn, in considering the role of the church, wrote that “At the heart of God’s universal purpose from eternity has been the retrieval of humanity from its state of death, the abolition of the divided state of humanity, and the bringing of all things to unity in Christ...” (1167). For Dunn, this purpose is continued to be fulfilled by the church:

The fact that the church is so much the medium now for the outworking of this purpose of God makes its unity and its proper working as facilitated by the ministry gifts given it all the more important. Only as it functions as the body of Christ and grows up into Christ can it fulfill the universal and cosmic role earlier ascribed to it (4:1-16) (1167).

Clearly, spiritual formation played an important role in the Old and New Testaments. Creation, covenant, community, challenge, self-awareness, and time management were critical to spiritual formation in the Old Testament while the New Testament emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit, prayer and reflection, the knowledge and study of scripture, self-awareness, time management, and community.

Understanding the role of spiritual formation, servant leadership, and discipleship is necessary for any Christian leadership program in developing Christian change agents. Having explored a biblical framework, theological foundations will now be considered.

Theological Foundations

Creating disciples is a practice that Jesus mandated (Matt. 28:16-20). This process of helping others fully become who God created them to be requires an understanding of several theological categories. This section briefly examines the Trinity, the incarnation, the *imago dei*, and the *missio dei*.

The Trinity

The Trinity anchors Christian theology. Thomas C. Oden wrote, “It is expected of all who are baptized that they will understand what it means to believe in God the Father Almighty, in God the Son, and in God the Spirit” (*The Living* 11). Stephen Seamands argued that the Trinity is essential to understanding ministry. He offered that “The ministry into which we have entered is the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son, to the Father, through the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world” (Seamands Loc. 98-102). Seamands’ definition of the Trinity is a helpful beginning point in thinking about discipleship and spiritual formation for at least three reasons. First, as Seamands rightly points out, the ministry is Jesus’. He is the Over-Shepherd. This liberates believers

from the burden of trying to “save” others and of trying to effect the change in others that only the sacrifice of the Son can accomplish.

Second, the ministry is to the Father. Discipleship is an act of glorifying the Father. It is not something that magnifies the one discipling. This prevents the mentor from falling into the pitfalls of ego since she or he is not on a human-made pedestal of achievement. Instead, she or he has willingly engaged in the work Jesus called her or him to glorify the Father.

Third, the process of discipleship is conducted through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. This is crucial because it means that the mentor should be filled with the Holy Spirit, which enables the mentor to be sensitive to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in both the mentor and the mentee’s life. Such sensitivity comes from a robust private discipline of worship, prayer, and study of the Bible.

Incarnation

The Incarnation of Jesus has significant implications for discipleship. First, Jesus, fully human and fully God, came to be with humanity. Thomas C. Oden wrote, “The time *between* the incarnation and the ascension focuses intensely but not restrictively upon the redemptive work of the one God through the *Son*” (*Life in the Spirit* 26). Immanuel, whose name means God with us, broke what had previously been an unbreakable barrier by transcending the holiness of God to be with humanity. God could not be seen in the Old Testament (Exod. 33:20; 1 Sam. 6:20), and God could not be touched. When Uzzah went to stabilize the Ark of the Covenant, he immediately was struck dead by God (2 Sam. 6:7). In Jesus, God’s holiness could be seen and touched (Luke 8:43-48). Matthew’s gospel presents a clear *inclusio* by telling the reader that Jesus came to be “with us”

(Matt. 1:23b). At the end of Matthew, when Jesus had already died and resurrected, Jesus indicated that not only did all authority belong to him (28:18) but that he would be with his followers (28:20).

Second, the incarnation helps those who follow Christ understand their identity. Because Jesus came to be “with us” (Matt. 1:23b) and because Jesus invites all to “come unto me” (Matt. 11:28), the Christian’s identity is not in worldly sources but in Jesus. But this concept goes deeper still. Oden wrote, “Humanity is incomparably honored in the incarnation, for God made flesh divine, without providing the occasion for worship of the creature” (*The Word* 129). A Christian’s identity is secure in Jesus because, as Paul wrote, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Third, because the incarnation allows Christians to identify with Jesus, they have an embodied example in Jesus’ life. This more accessible example demonstrates how a Christian should speak, act, and live.

Imago Dei

As a theological concept, *imago dei* “the image of God” finds its roots in Genesis 1:26-27, where God created humans in God’s image after God’s likeness. “‘Likeness’ qualifies ‘image’ in two ways: 1. limitation—man is not identical to God; and 2. amplification—man is actually a reflection of God himself, and is to live as his created analogy” (“Ferguson,” 328). The *imago dei* is further enumerated in the person of Jesus (Phil. 2:5-11). Jesus is the “exact imprint of [God’s] nature” (Heb. 1:3), “the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15), and “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4).

Those in Christ are being conformed to the image of Jesus, the Son, (Rom. 8:29), who is God (Phil. 2:6).

This has major implications for discipleship. First, the *imago dei* means that women and men are treated equally as heirs and children of God's grace in Christ (Rom. 8:15). For the apostle Paul, equality was a theme he frequently discussed (Eph. 2:11-22; 4:4-6; Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). This has led Craig Keener to observe that "For all the social conservatism in Paul's words, there is yet a subversiveness he dares not play down. All believers were equal before God in Christ, regardless of race, social status, or gender" (157).

However, equality has not always been practiced in the church's history. Women have found barriers in terms of ministry opportunities. In the fourth century, Gregory the Theologian or Gregory Nazianzen opined how the 'majority of men are ill-disposed' to treating women equally" ("Oration 37").

Second, humans who are in Christ are being reformed or recreated into the Image of God. Discipleship is a necessary means in this process. Jesus' final words in Matthew, spoken in the imperative mood, command that his followers make disciples of all the people groups in the world. That process involves baptism and "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 20:20a). For Paul, this meant teaching wisdom to form complete or mature Christians (Col. 1:28-29).

Gaining the understanding that one is made in the image of God begins with the knowledge of one's identity and purpose. Christian identity comes from a God who loved the world so much as to give the one and only Son (John 3:16) so that those who believe might live and live abundantly (John 10:10). Identity is also rooted in a firm

understanding of human origins. The Psalmist extols the reality that God creates and knows humans in their mothers' wombs. "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well" (Ps. 139:13–14). The apostle Paul wrote, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). The Greek word for "workmanship" is *ποίημα*, and it forms the root of the English word "poem." The Bible indicates that God intentionally forms humans during birth and through the transformation of following Christ. Therefore, understanding one's identity is crucial for transforming toward the *Imago Dei*.

Missio Dei

Missio dei, which means mission of God, was a phrase that became popular at the 1952 International Missionary Conference in Willingen, Germany. The conference announced that "The Missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself" (Eddie et al.). Stephen Seamands reflected that "Mission, then, was first an attribute of God before it was an activity of individual Christians or the church. It derived from God's triune nature, from the *sending* God, and should be grounded primarily in the doctrine of God, not the doctrine of salvation or the church" (160). The Church should always be missional. Alan Hirsch wrote, "we frequently say 'the church has a mission,' according to missional theology a more correct statement would be '[God's] mission has a church'" ("Defining Missional"). The *missio dei* challenges the Church to find its purpose in the mission of God. J.A. Kirk wrote, "Because of the wide scope of missiology it [the church] has an important role to play in the integration of

other areas of theology” (435). Kirk went on to enumerate five distinct tasks of the church as it relates to mission:

1. Stewardship of Creation: The stewardship of creation involves the practice of working toward making the planet a better place.
2. Compassionate Care of All: Kirk wrote that the church “...has a particular responsibility to minister to the needs of the handicapped, old people, the bereaved, children at risk, and families in tension, and to rehabilitate offenders against the law, alcoholics, drug-addicts and chronic gamblers” (435).
3. Bear Witness: “It must bear witness to ‘the truth as it is in Jesus’ (Eph. 4:21)” (Kirk, 435): The church has a responsibility to show Jesus to the world through the practices of apologetics and evangelism.
4. Stand and Fight for Justice: The church must find ways to protect the family and the rights of the marginalized.
5. Demonstrate God’s Grace Actively to a Destitute Humanity: The church “is sent to demonstrate the reality of God’s unmerited grace by practising forgiveness, the sharing of goods and resources, by eliminating prejudice and suspicion, and by exercising power as servanthood, not as domination and control” (Kirk 435-436).

The leadership program that was evaluated emphasized these five general tasks.

However, the third task of bearing witness was especially emphasized. In the Old Testament, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah and commanded Israel to reach the nations, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa. 49:6).

In the New Testament, this mission to bear witness was only heightened by Jesus.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:16-20)

This final passage of Matthew serves as a succinct summary of the mission to which every Christian is called. N.T. Wright commented that the mission is not complete for Christians today. He wrote, “If Christians around the world gave as much energy to it as they do to learning so many other things, worthy in themselves but none so important as this, we would make more headway with the gospel than we usually do” (209). Dietrich Bonhoeffer described how the mission comes in the form of a call. Just as the disciples received a call and commission, so does the believer. Bonhoeffer wrote:

People do not fulfill the responsibility laid on them by faithfully performing their earthly vocational obligations as citizens, workers, and parents, but by hearing the call of Jesus Christ that, although it leads them into earthly obligations, is never synonymous with these, but instead always transcends them as a reality standing before and behind them (109).

This call is the “call to belong to Christ completely...” (Bonhoeffer, 109).

This mission to go and make disciples is further emphasized in John 20:21 and Acts 1:8.

Mission, according to Karl Barth, was the key metric for discerning “whether the Christian is really a Christian and the Christian community the Christian community” (xi-xii).

The community that Barth refers to must be an alternative community in the world. Robert Webber indicated that:

The church is the primary presence of God’s activity in the world. As we pay attention to what it means to be the church we create an alternative community to

the society of the world. This new community, the embodied experience of God's kingdom, will draw people into itself and nurture them in the faith. In this sense the church and its life in the world will become the new apologetic (72).

The *missio dei* is an invitation and call on a believer to fully become the person God created her or him to be. If the church is to help people fully become, it must see ways to teach, equip, and train believers in the *missio dei*.

Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood

The following section explores the two age categories of adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Adolescence

The category of adolescence is a recent ascription relative to human history. Previously, a person was identified in only two ways--a dependent child or an independent adult. William R. Myers wrote that "children moved from brief periods of dependency within the home into relatively early semi-independent situations, often accompanied by a jarring mixture of leaving home (being relatively "free" on one's own) and being totally subordinated to one's employer" (5). However, in 1904, G. Stanley Hall's work, *Adolescence*, set out to differentiate the years between being a child and becoming an adult by firmly establishing the category of adolescence. While modern scholars have criticized G. Stanley Hall's work for his views on sexuality and gender in adolescence, many of his thoughts on the subject were validated by future studies (Arnett, "G. Stanley" 196). During the early part of the twentieth century, organizations targeted explicitly at youth began to appear. The YMCA, YWCA, 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts were founded for youth and supervised by adults (Myers, 6). By 1949, A. B. Hollingshead wrote critically of these changes:

By segregating young people into special institutions, such as the school, Sunday school, and later into youth organizations such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts for a few hours each week, adults apparently hope that the adolescent will be spared the shock of learning the contradictions in the culture. At the same time, they believe that these institutions are building a mysterious something variously called “citizenship,” “leadership,” or “character” which will keep the boy or girl from being “tempted” by the “pleasures of adult life. Thus the youth-training institutions provided by the culture are essentially negative in their objectives, for they segregate adolescents from the real world that adults know and function in (149).

Despite critical voices like Hollingshead’s, adolescence only grew as a category.

Adolescence has developed unequally within the United States of America. In the early twentieth century, the emerging category of adolescence in the U.S. looked very different depending on the color of one’s skin. White American adolescents had a very different experience from African American adolescents. Slavery, the post-civil war reconstruction, Jim Crow laws, the rise of white nationalist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, and others meant that African American youth experienced a much different and less just world than their white counterparts (Myers 11-14). In August of 1963, the disparity between white Americans and African Americans was such that Martin Luther King Jr. commented, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” (King Jr.). This unequal development of adolescents has not been limited to the U.S. In South Africa, *apartheid* meant that black adolescents were at a disadvantage. And while much has been done to level the gap between black and white since the transition from *apartheid* (separateness) to *saamheid* (togetherness), there is still much to be done. Mark Tittley wrote that South Africans are still dealing with the long-term effects of *apartheid*. Specifically, there is what he called a “segregation legacy” (77). Adolescents in South Africa still struggle with “identity distortion” meaning that black

and other minority adolescents deal with a sense of inferiority while white adolescents wrestle with a sense of superiority (Tittley 77-78).

Yet another area with disparity for adolescents, particularly within the Church, is the gap between female and male adolescents. Kadi Cole calls this gap within the Church between females and males “the invisible barrier” (2). Complicating matters, the Church has a spectrum of viewpoints about the role of women within the Church. The views range from what Cole describes as extreme feminism which claims “women are superior to men” to egalitarian which says “women and men are equal” to complementarian” which asserts “men and women are equal in value but have different primary roles” to patriarchal that declares “men are superior to women and should lead in all areas of life” (29-33). Developing Christian change agents requires those working with adolescents to be mindful of the background of each adolescent. This further necessitates both wisdom and courage (Tittley 80).

Since G Stanley Hall, the study of adolescence has received widespread and cross-discipline attention. Erik Erikson’s eight stages of development, described in his book, *Childhood and Society*, help further the picture of adolescent development. Erikson’s eight stages are trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair (*Childhood* 247-269). Of particular interest to this study are the stages of identity versus role confusion experienced during adolescence and issues of intimacy versus isolation faced during emerging adulthood as discussed below.

For Erikson, adolescents use the period of adolescence to discover their identity. He warned that the danger in not finding one's identity is role confusion (261). This development period is crucial for and directly impacts the rest of the adolescent's life. Erikson thought that the adolescent mind was confronting the challenges of synthesizing the morality learned as a child and the ethics of becoming an adult (*Childhood* 263). "It is an ideological mind—and, indeed, it is the ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to the adolescent who is eager to be affirmed by his peers, and is ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds, and programs which at the same time define what is evil, uncanny, and inimical" (*Childhood* 263). Erikson's view, then, was that the adolescent is highly impressionable and malleable.

Adolescence, a term attributed to G. Stanley Hall, is a recent development in human history. Adolescents face several challenging changes during this transition period, most notably determining their identity (Erikson). Adolescent minorities and female adolescents have faced and continue to face significant challenges during adolescence in the U.S. due to a wide range of harmful practices.

Emerging Adulthood

Over the past four or five decades, a new category labeled "emerging adulthood" has developed (Smith and Snell 280). Emerging adulthood occurs between the years of eighteen and twenty-five (Arnett, "Emerging" 469). These years are often highly volatile. Arnett wrote, "cultural influences structure and sometimes limit the extent to which adult commitments and responsibilities are delayed while the role experimentation that began in adolescence continues and in fact intensifies" ("Emerging" 469-470). Smith and Snell concurred that emerging adulthood is full of change. They wrote, "For many, this age is

also marked not only by a lot of fun and growth but also by a great deal of transience, confusion, anxiety, self-obsession, melodrama, conflict, stress, disappointment, and sometimes emotional damage and bodily harm” (Smith and Snell, 280).

Erik Erikson’s stages of development do not necessarily fit with the new category of “emerging adulthood” (Mitchell et al. 546). An emerging adult is in transience between Erikson’s stages of identity versus role confusion as discussed above and intimacy versus isolation. The emerging adult becomes “ready for intimacy, that is, the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises” (Erikson, *Childhood* 263). Conversely, an emerging adult can also push away or isolate from people or forces who threaten the emerging adult (*Childhood* 264).

Not every emerging adult has achieved a high sense of identity. However, if an emerging adult can achieve a high sense of identity, she or he can move to the stage of intimacy versus isolation. One recent study has demonstrated that emerging adults who do possess a high sense of identity will tend to have a lasting, positive impact on an emerging adult’s future relationships or intimacy, ability to help future generations or generativity, and contentment with the way one has lived one’s life or integrity (Mitchell et al., 553). In contrast, emerging adults with a low sense of identity experienced lower intimacy, generativity, and integrity (Mitchell et al. 553). However, emerging adults with a lower sense of identity tended to grow faster. By their mid-sixties, this group had similar scores as those emerging adults who possessed a high sense of identity (Mitchell et al., 553).

Other studies have pointed to the connectivity of Erikson's stages of life and the way that one stage influences another. One study found that exploration of the characteristics of emerging adults, "instability, low clarity of values, and identity exploration can be important for satisfaction with life and meaning in life" (Kohútová et al. 318). Conversely, "rejection sensitivity" has a negative impact on emerging adults, causing a "higher fear of intimacy through increasing interpersonal anxiety, especially in females" (Giovazolias and Paschalidi 1). Another study found a correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) and increased drug use, but not alcohol use, in emerging adulthood (Villanueva and Gomis-Pomares 426).

Emerging adults have a higher sense of purpose when paired with a mentor. Lund et al. found that the quantity of mentors did not play a significant role in emerging adults' commitment to purpose but that the quality of the mentoring relationship did play a considerable part (1472). For emerging adults without mentors, there was a lower commitment to purpose. Conversely, the researchers found that "The relational aspects of high-quality mentoring relationships—authenticity, engagement, empowerment/zest—may be especially important in purpose formation as youth seek to understand their place in the world and how they can leverage their skills and gifts to contribute to the world beyond the self" (Lund et al., 1478). Likewise, Phil Davignon and Robert A. Thomson Jr. found that Christian colleges that offered spiritual mentors positively "influenced individual religious devotions such as Bible reading and prayer" (547).

Emerging adults also face the same kinds of barriers as adolescents. Race and gender play a role across ages, and sensitivity and discernment are requirements for anyone working to serve this population.

Like adolescents, emerging adults face obstacles in relationship to identity, but they also face challenges as they begin to explore intimacy. A mentor can positively impact helping an emerging adult find purpose.

Spiritual Formation of Adolescents and Emerging Adults

Christian spiritual formation is the “life-long transformational self-analytic and relational process where individuals become more like Christ through the Holy Spirit and Biblical guidance resulting in a relationship with God” (Horan 56).

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

The spiritual formation of adolescents was one of the main focal points of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NYSR). Christian Smith and Melinda Denton spearheaded a research team that conducted face-to-face interviews with 267 adolescents aged thirteen to seventeen. “These interviews were sampled to capture a broad range of difference among U.S. teens in religion, age, race, sex, socioeconomic status, rural-suburban-urban residence, region of the country, and language spoken (English or Spanish)” (Smith and Denton 7). The findings of the NYSR have helped to paint the picture of spiritual formation and understanding among adolescents in the U.S.

One of the most significant findings from the NYSR is that many adolescents in the U.S. believed in what the researchers labeled “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.” The belief system contained within Moralistic Therapeutic Deism can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a God who created and structures the earth in addition to overseeing the lives of humans.

2. Christianity and the Bible, as well as other religions in the world, teach that God desires humans to be “good,” “nice,” and “fair” to one another.
3. The most crucial aim of living is to “be happy and feel good about oneself” (Smith and Denton, 163).
4. Humans only need God when there is something wrong in their lives. Otherwise, God is not involved.
5. “Good people go to heaven when they die” (Smith and Denton 163).

A practitioner of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism seeks to live a moral life of kindness and respect for others. “It is not a religion of repentance from sin, keeping the Sabbath, of living as a servant of a sovereign divine, of steadfastly saying one’s prayers, of faithfully observing high holy days, of building character through suffering, of basking in God’s love and grace, of spending oneself in gratitude and love for the cause of social justice...” (Smith and Denton 163-164). Instead, the practitioner of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism views God as a sort of genie in a bottle to help humans out of challenging situations whenever humans care to summon God. Adding to this belief of God as a wish-granter is the deistic belief of practitioners that God created the world but is not very involved in the day-to-day affairs of humans (unless called upon or summoned) (Smith and Denton 164).

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is not a belief system created by adolescents. Instead, the researchers found that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a belief system passed on from older generations, and the continuity of this finding was strong. Smith and Denton concluded that “Few teenagers today are rejecting or reacting against the adult religion into which they are being socialized” (170). This is a pervasive problem

within every denomination of Christianity. The researchers viewed Moralistic Therapeutic Deism as “colonizing” orthodox views “...Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself or, more significantly, Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith” (171). This directly influences spiritual formation among adolescents because instead of focusing on, learning about, and practicing orthodoxy by taking of Eucharist, believing in the Trinity, and following other rituals of Christianity, adolescents are taught to be nice, respectful, and to work toward earning a reward in heaven (Smith and Denton 171).

Highly Devoted Adolescents

Smith and Denton noted that another important finding in the NYSR was that only eight percent of those who responded could be considered highly devoted in their faith (220). A highly devoted adolescent is an adolescent who is actively engaged in her or his religious setting. Additionally, Kenda Creasy Dean, one of the members of the NYSR research team, reported that these adolescents actively and frequently pray and read the Bible and report that they “feel very close to God and that faith is extremely important in their lives” (Dean 46). Faith and owning one’s faith are essential to a highly devoted adolescent (Dean 47). Dean wrote that highly devoted adolescents “are much more compassionate, significantly more likely to say they care about things like racial equality and justice, far less likely to be moral relativists, to lie, cheat, or do things ‘they hoped their parents would never find out about’” (47). Interestingly, researchers conducted a study in Scotland and found that participants between the ages of sixteen and twenty-eight reported “a desire to develop an authentic faith that is both internally and externally recognized and admired—literally, a Christian body that exudes “something

special” to anyone who might encounter it, and that is not constrained to the space of the church” (Olson et al. 1427). Smith and Denton noted several factors that played a role in shaping a highly devoted adolescent:

- How religious parents were: Adolescents with parents who frequently attended worship services and whose parents possessed a high faith were more likely to be highly devoted themselves than those whose parents did not participate in worship services frequently or express a high degree of faith.
- How adolescents interacted with their parents: Adolescents whose parents demonstrated love and attention to them frequently were more likely to be highly devoted than adolescents with parents who did not demonstrate love and attention.
- Whether or not parents were divorced: Divorced parents were less likely to have a highly devoted adolescent than married parents.
- Level of education of the parent: The researchers found that it was more likely to find a highly devoted adolescent in a family where the parents possessed a higher education than in a family where the parents possessed a lower education.
- Involvement of the Adolescent: Adolescents involved in many activities like clubs, sports, and other activities, were more likely to be highly devoted than adolescents who were not very involved in extracurricular activities.
- Faith tradition of Adolescent: Adolescents who were part of an Evangelical or Mormon tradition were more likely to be highly devoted than adolescents from mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics.
- Deep Friendships: Adolescents who cultivated deep friendships with peers *and* were involved in the same religious setting were more likely to be highly devoted

than adolescents who did not cultivate deep friendships with peers in the same religious setting.

- Other adolescents' impact: An adolescent with parents who reported that the adolescent's peers positively impacted the adolescent was more likely to be highly devoted than an adolescent whose parents said that the adolescent's peers negatively impacted the adolescent.
- Demographics: The NYSR found that females were more likely than males to be highly devoted. White adolescents were more likely to be highly devoted than African Americans and Hispanics (Smith and Denton, 111).

Highly devoted adolescents face the same challenges as adolescents who are not highly devoted when it comes to belief in or practice of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (Dean 193).

Missional Practices

Kenda Creasy Dean has provided three missional principles for helping adolescents and, to some extent, emerging adults grow in their faith. The three principles are the indigenizing principle, the pilgrim principle, and the liminal principle.

The indigenizing principle reflects the theology of the incarnation discussed above. Jesus dwelled with humans, became a human (John 1:14), accepted humans for who they were, and completely partook in human culture (Dean, 99). The divine action that is to be enacted in this principle is that Jesus accepts adolescents and emerging adults where they are and invites these individuals into participative learning. Within the church, this is accomplished by what Dean called "behind the wall" conversations referring to adults teaching younger generations about faith in a safe environment and

“on the wall conversations” involving adults teaching more youthful generations to be culturally literate. The ultimate discipleship goal of the indigenizing principle is translation. Translation refers to entrusting the gospel and its power to adolescents and emerging adults. Humility is required in this step because younger generations “do not view culture the way we view culture, who do not hear God the way we hear God, who will not worship the way we worship, who will not “do church” the way we want them to simply because they will be listening to Jesus and not to us” (Dean 130). However, if the indigenizing principle were the only principle applied, then the principle “would fall into uncritical enculturation...” (Dean 99). This is where the other two principles play an important role.

The pilgrim principle invites Christians to abandon the security of what has made them comfortable and follow Jesus totally. This principle further invites Christians to examine Jesus from other faith traditions and perspectives (Dean 100-101). The divine action enacted is understanding Jesus’ call on his followers. The church engages with adolescents and emerging adults through situated learning. Specifically, situated learning theory utilizes “*legitimate peripheral participation,*” which refers to “the way newcomers become integrated into communities—namely by participating in them” (Dean 144-145). There are two primary ways for engaging adolescents and emerging adults in legitimate peripheral participation in the church: spiritual apprenticeships and faith immersions. Spiritual apprenticeships utilize adult mentors who invest in younger generations. Faith immersions are hands-on forms of situated learning and involve going on retreats and the like. The ultimate discipleship goal of the Pilgrim principle is testimony. Testimony refers to the ability of an adolescent or an emerging adult to tell the

story of the Triune God (Dean 146). If the pilgrim principle becomes the dominant principle practiced to the neglect of the other principles, Christians risk being self-righteous and overbearing.

The liminal principle refers to the idea of divine waiting for God to transform Christians. The divine action is the transformation that believers undergo as they follow and wait on the Triune God. This principle incorporates the spiritual practices of spiritual formation. Transformative learning theory plays a role in this principle, particularly the “importance of clash, conflict, and creative disequilibrium” (Dean 170). This transformative learning is achieved through the practices of things like hospitality, prayer, the study of Scripture, pilgrimage, and others. The church helps adolescents and emerging adults through these practices, recognizing “As Christ waits, we wait, hoping they [younger generations] will recognize and rejoice at Christ’s presence” (Dean 103). The ultimate discipleship goal is detachment, a term developed by medieval theologians which means “disentangling ourselves from whatever distracts us from Jesus Christ, so all of our attention—and all of our lives—may be fixed upon him” (Dean, 159). The danger of practicing the liminal principle at the neglect of the other principles is that one can become isolated from sharing her or his faith.

All three principles are necessary components of helping adolescents and emerging adults grow in their faith. See Table 2.1 for a helpful summary.

Table 2.1 Missional Practices for Youth Ministry according to Kenda Creasy Dean (100)

<i>Missional principle</i>	<i>Indigenizing principle</i>	<i>Pilgrim principle</i>	<i>Liminal principle</i>
Divine action enacted	Christ’s acceptance	Christ’s call	Christ’s transformation
Discipleship goal	Translation	Testimony	Detachment
Educational strategy	Participative learning	Situated learning	Transformative learning
Congregational practices	“Behind the wall” conversations <i>e.g.</i> , <i>teaching for catechesis</i>	Spiritual apprenticeships <i>e.g.</i> , <i>mentoring</i>	Creating space for human encounter <i>e.g.</i> , <i>hospitality, outreach</i>
	“On the wall” conversations <i>e.g.</i> , <i>teaching for cultural literacy</i>	Faith immersions <i>e.g.</i> <i>camps, retreats</i>	Creating space for Divine Encounter <i>e.g.</i> , <i>prayer, pilgrimage</i>

Servant Leadership

In *Servant Leadership*, Robert K. Greenleaf, considered the original author of servant leadership theory, provided a working definition for “servant leadership.” Greenleaf wrote, “the great leader is seen as servant first” (21). It is essential to contrast a servant leader with someone who tries to be a leader foremost.

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such, it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature (Greenleaf et al. 27).

However, others have posited that there is no complete agreement when it comes to defining servant leadership (Parris and Peachey 377), that servant leadership has been chiefly written about philosophically (Russell and Stone 145), and that servant leadership is still a widely underdeveloped, empirically researched discipline (Parris and Peachey 378).

Servant leadership demonstrates a shift to leadership focused on behaving ethically, enhancing the growth of people, and facilitating teamwork for greater success. (Lumpkin and Achen 6).

Greenleaf believed that servant leadership was a philosophical state of being more than an empirically researchable leadership model. He wrote that servant leadership “is meant to be neither a scholarly treatise nor a how-to-do-it manual” (62).

Others have sought to demonstrate that servant leadership is a viable and empirically researchable leadership model. James Alan Laub developed an assessment tool called the *Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment* (SOLA). From the results of implementing that assessment, Laub defined servant leadership as

an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization (81).

In 2002, Russell and Stone identified nine “functional attributes” that formed the core of a servant leader: “vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment” (146). The authors also identified eleven “accompanying characteristics,” which add to and boost the functional attributes. These include: “communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, and delegation” (Russell and Stone 146-147).

Servant leadership in its simplest form means leading by serving and meeting the needs of others. Greenleaf’s approach to leadership is unique because it inverts the typical leadership pyramid and commences with the leader on the bottom supporting

individuals served (Russell and Stone 145). Thus, at the root of servant leadership is humility. Paul David Tripp wrote, “Humility means you love serving more than you crave leading” (24). This humility leads to a leader producing the kind of ego-check necessary to instill self-reliance and self-respect in others. It also creates a team that operates in harmony (Jennings and Stahlwert 28). Ken Jennings and Mike McCormick summed up a servant leader when they wrote, “A servant leader works to build seamless, syncretistic and effective teams from individuals with complementary knowledge, skills and abilities” (72).

Experiential Learning

D.A. Kolb defines experiential learning theory as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (41). Experiential learning is based on six propositions:

1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes. To improve learning... the primary focus should be on engaging students in a process that best enhances their learning—a process that includes feedback on the effectiveness of their learning efforts...
2. All learning is relearning. Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the students’ beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested and integrated with new, more refined ideas.
3. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world. Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. In the process of learning one is called upon to move back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking.
4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world. It is not just the result of cognition but involves the integrated functioning of the total person—thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving.
5. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment...
6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge. ELT proposes a constructivist theory of learning whereby social knowledge is created and recreated in the personal knowledge of the learner. This stands in contrast to the “transmission”

model on which much current educational practice is based where pre-existing fixed ideas are transmitted to the learner... (Kolb, *Learning Styles* 47).

Kolb's model, called the experiential learning model (ELT), effectively shows the four component styles of the experiential learning theory. (See figure 2.1.)

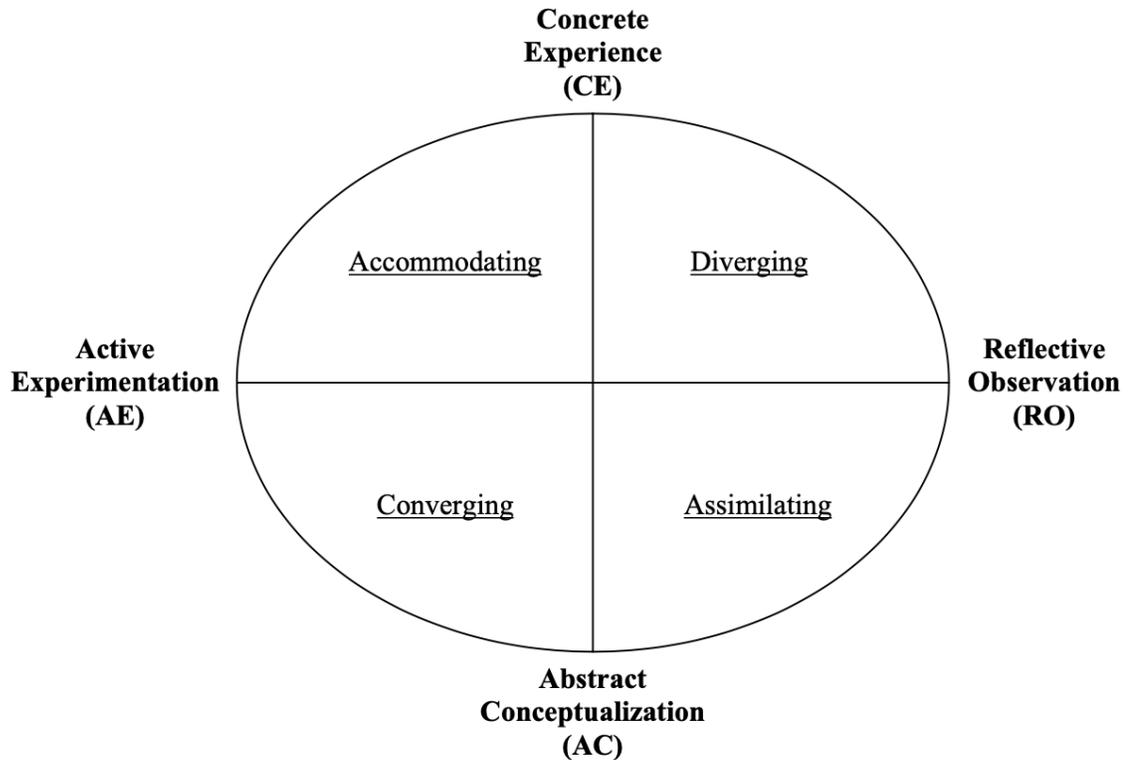


Fig. 2.1 The experiential learning cycle and basic learning styles (Kolb, 1984).

Information is acquired and processed through Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) while there are “two dialectically related modes of transforming experience—Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation” (Kolb et al. 3). Kolb goes on to describe these four component styles:

In grasping experience some of us perceive new information through experiencing the concrete, tangible, felt qualities of the world, relying on our senses and immersing ourselves in concrete reality. Others tend to perceive, grasp, or take hold of new information through symbolic representation or abstract

conceptualization – thinking about, analyzing, or systematically planning, rather than using sensation as a guide. Similarly, in transforming or processing experience some of us tend to carefully watch others who are involved in the experience and reflect on what happens, while others choose to jump right in and start doing things. The watchers favor reflective observation, while the doers favor active experimentation (Kolb et al. 3-4).

Within the model are learning styles. A person tends toward one of the following four dominant learning styles: accommodating, diverging, converging, or assimilating.

Diverging Style

Reflective observation (RO) and concrete experience (CE) make up the diverging style. This style is characterized by the ability of the learner to generate ideas. These kinds of learners are typically “interested in people, tend to be imaginative and emotional, have broad cultural interests, and tend to specialize in the arts” (Kolb et al. 5).

Converging Style

A converging style learner possesses high abstract conceptualization (AC) and active experimentation (AE). A characteristic of this style of learning is the ability to problem-solve by seeking answers to the questions inherent to the problem. Converging style learners “prefer to experiment with new ideas, simulations, laboratory assignments, and practical applications” (Kolb et al. 6).

Accommodating Style

This learning style is characterized by high aptitude in concrete experience (CE) and active experimentation (AE). Accommodating learners learn best through hands-on or direct experiences. This style of learner tends to act on instinctual or “gut” feelings. Accommodating style learners “prefer to work with others to get assignments done, to set goals, to do field work, and to test out different approaches to completing a project” (Kolb et al. 6-7).

Assimilating Style

An assimilating style learner scores high in abstract conceptualization (AC) and reflective observation (RO). The assimilating style learners “are best at understanding a wide range of information and putting [it] into concise, logical form” (Kolb et al. 5). Assimilating style learners appreciate taking their time to problem-solve and exploring available literature, teachings, and models related to a problem. (Kolb et al. 5).

One can determine one’s dominant learning style through an assessment tool designed by Kolb called the “Learning Style Inventory.” While a learner will tend toward a dominant style, “Effective learners are able to engage each aspect of the model” (Merriam and Baumgartner 108). Additionally, an effective teaching method seeks to utilize all areas of the experiential learning theory.

Experiential learning theory is not without its critics. Some have claimed that there is “confused typology” between what makes up abstract and concrete learning (Bergsteiner et al. 32).

Despite the pushback from some scholars, experiential learning theory continues to be utilized in all kinds of learning settings. Merriam and Baumgartner provide a helpful model for considering how to reach learners in every quadrant of the ELT. Their model, “Teaching Around the Circle,” see Figure 2.2, provides examples of how to have a more holistic teaching approach:

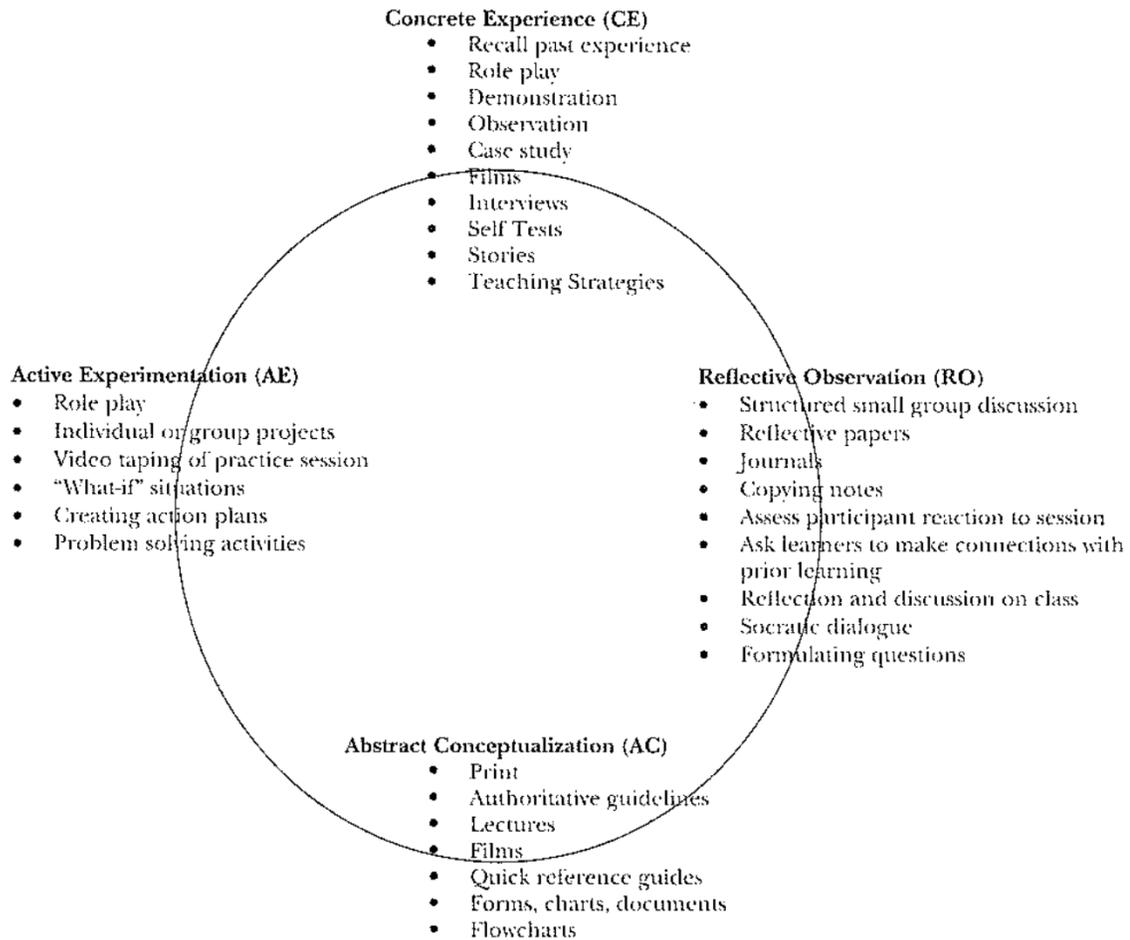


Figure 2.2 Teaching around the circle (Merriam and Baumgartner, 125).

The leadership program evaluated in this study utilized various elements of this learning circle. For example, structured small groups (RO) featured heavily in the non-field trip gatherings while problem-solving (AE) was a major part of the sermon series the students created.

Trust-Based Relational Intervention

If experiential learning was the main way of learning for the leadership program being evaluated, then the principles of trust-based relational intervention (TBRI) served as the bridge between learning and relationship. Karyn Purvis and David Cross pioneered

TBRI. While TBRI is specifically designed to meet the needs of those with complex trauma, its principles are useful in any setting where mentors and mentees are involved. TBRI helps mentors and caregivers meet mentees or those receiving care where they are and with whatever kinds of trauma they possess, and it helps them navigate building healthy, trust-based relationships. TBRI helps connect by enabling the mentor to meet the attachment needs of a mentee. It facilitates the mentor's ability to meet the physical needs of the mentee by serving food, having games to play, and meeting other basic needs. It corrects by empowering the mentor to meet the behavioral needs of the mentee and helping the mentee understand appropriate behavior that serves as accountability or guidance (Purvis et al, 362).

Empowering

The empowering principles foster an environment where a mentee will not just *be safe* but will also *feel safe* (Purvis et al. 363). The empowering principle requires that mentors consider the mentee's need for a structured and safe environment, transitions, and sensory needs. By doing this accounting, mentors can reduce the stress that comes from such transitions. For example, if a mentee has stress from either a simple or major transition, the mentor is able to reduce that stress by announcing the transition many times in advance of the actual transition as well as explaining the transition in detail. A created and detailed schedule that lets mentees know what is ahead is useful in reducing stress as well as providing physical subsistence such as food at all gatherings. Mentors could further exercise empowerment with mentees by allowing them to voice choices in the one-on-one meetings regarding scheduling, location, and content.

Connecting

The connecting principles of TBRI help “provide the foundation for attachment and self-regulation and include awareness (of others and self), playful engagement, and attunement” (Purvis, et al, 368). A mentor should be aware of both the mentee’s *and* the mentor’s needs. This is foundational to the mentor/mentee relationship and developing intimacy. Jude Cassidy argues that to develop attachment and intimacy, one must engage in the following four key abilities: the ability to seek care, the ability to give care, the ability to feel comfortable with the autonomous self, and the ability to negotiate (122-134). Nancy L. Collins and Brooke C. Feeney reported that “...individuals who enter their relationships with insecure working models may have difficulty with effective intimacy processes because they lack one or more of the essential abilities” (173).

Seeking care involves a mentee actively seeking out the care of others for the purpose of personal growth and development. Cassidy wrote, “these experiences foster their capacity for intimacy by making them comfortable and confident in seeking care, and by contributing to positive mental representations of others as caring and of themselves as worthy of care” (124)

Giving care refers to the practice of the mentor primarily being available to the mentee. “Being a secure attachment figure for another, being a source of comfort, allows another person to turn to one in times of trouble, to share needs and longings” (Cassidy, 130). Both seeking care and giving care foster a deeper sense of trust between the mentor and mentee.

The ability to feel comfortable with the autonomous self means that both the mentor and mentee have a healthy respect for their own autonomy and the autonomy of

the other. Erikson wrote, “To develop autonomy a firmly developed and convincingly continued state of early trust is necessary” (*Childhood* 84-85). It is important that a mentor/mentee relationship never becomes about control. Instead, the boundaries of autonomy are carefully drawn in the relationship. Additionally, throughout the relationship, it is important for those boundaries to be communicated often. Autonomy is also something that the mentor should provide for the mentee. J. Oswald Sanders wrote, “Younger people should feel the weight of heavy burdens, opportunity for initiative, and power of final decision. The younger leader should receive generous credit for achievements. Foremost they must be trusted. Blunders are the inevitable price of training leaders” (149).

The ability to negotiate impacts intimacy and trust. If the mentor and mentee are unable to negotiate within the relationship, intimacy and trust are negatively impacted. Thus, for Cassidy, “intimacy negotiation is a crucial skill. Failure to negotiate keeps a partner at a distance; it is not intimate because it means not sharing one’s wishes and feelings” (134).

In addition to attachment, playful engagement is important to developing relationships using the connecting principles. Purvis and her colleagues discovered that “even adolescents who seem resistant and challenging actually love the opportunities for joyful, silly laughter and games” (370). Mentors and mentees need space and time to play and build trust through play.

Attunement refers to being in harmony with the other. This can be accomplished through “matching behaviors, eye contact, voice and inflection, body position, and safe touch” (Purvis, et al, 370). According to Julia Pryce, a highly attuned mentor

“consistently seeks to attend flexibly and creatively to verbal or nonverbal signs from youth as to preferences, concerns, and feelings” (293). Mentors must pay careful attention to their mentees to determine the degree to which the relationship is attuned.

Correcting

Successfully utilizing the correcting principles comes after successfully employing the empowering and connecting principles (Purvis et al. 372). The correcting principles focus on proactive strategies and responsive strategies. A mentor who has built trust and intimacy with the mentee is further able to help the mentee shape behavior.

Proactive strategies involve the mentor helping the mentee consider how to appropriately self-regulate. Late adolescents and emerging adults face a myriad of potentially stressful decisions and scenarios such as going to college, choosing a mate, determining a career, learning to drive and others. Mentors can help prepare a younger mentee for those decisions and scenarios by helping them learn how to self-regulate. This proactive activity on the part of the mentor is further important for continuing to establish trust with the mentee.

Responsive strategies are utilized by the mentor when the mentee has already faced a situation in which a challenging behavior or response took place.

Building trust-based relationships are essential to TBRI. This is achieved through utilizing the aforementioned principles of empowerment, connecting, and correction.

Personality Inventories and Self-Awareness

The leadership program being evaluated utilized personality inventories during the program. The following inventories were administered during the leadership program: the Enneagram, the DiSC, and the Clifton StrengthsFinder. According to the American

Psychological Association “Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving” (“Personality”). As mentioned above, adolescents and emerging adults search for their identity during these stages. Personality inventories offer a way for adolescents and emerging adults to become more self-aware.

Enneagram

The Enneagram is an ancient personality inventory. Andrew Bland has argued that the Enneagram’s origins can be traced back to the mystical Sufism of Islam (17). Conversely, Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert wrote that “the Enneagram does not derive from medieval Islamic (Sufi) sources, but can be traced back, at least in part, to the Christian desert monk Evagrius Ponticus (d. 399) and the Franciscan Blessed Ramón Lull (1236–1315)” (10).

The Enneagram is made up of nine types. An individual will be dominant in one of the nine types. The dominant type of each individual is reflected in both the way one views and interacts with the world (Bland 16). The nine types of the Enneagram are:

- One: Reformer
- Two: Helper
- Three: Achiever
- Four: Individualist
- Five: Investigator
- Six: Loyalist
- Seven: Enthusiast
- Eight: Challenger
- Nine: Peacemaker

Each type of the Enneagram belongs to one of the three triads: types two, three, and four belong to the heart, types five, six, and seven belong to the head, and types eight, nine and one belong to the gut. The triad is the primary place from where an individual reacts and makes decisions.

The Enneagram can be a very useful tool for Christians. For example, regarding repentance and sin, Frank Stalfa wrote: “As an instrument of *metanoia* the Enneagram is very confrontational and spiritually rigorous. It also creatively balances exposure with encouragement and strives to identify the hidden intentionality of our sin in a way that permits us to come to a responsible awareness of this most difficult dimension of humanity” (73-74).

Another way in which the Enneagram benefits Christians is the way in which it helps an individual become more self-aware. For Rohr and Ebert, “The Enneagram is not mathematics. It is the art of reading and transforming the soul into godly truth” (23).

The Enneagram is further helpful for developing leaders in the workplace. Specifically, it helps leaders develop cognizance of self, the ability to show empathy, and the ability to regulate oneself by providing the leader a means to communicate effectively (Raitamäki 44-48). Jon Singletary has provided a helpful table for understanding how the Enneagram relates to leadership development. This table helps explain how leaders respond to and attempt to lead through situations. In addition to the triads of head, heart, and gut, the Enneagram has stances identified as aggressive, withdrawn, and independent. Singletary reported that types three, seven, and eight respond and lead from an aggressive stance. These types are future-oriented and lead by placing their plan ahead of others and

usually require followers to adhere to their ideas. These types often appear bossy as they lead (Singelatory 9).

Table 2.2 Enneagram Leadership Focus (Singletary 9)

Dominant Center	Enneagram Type	Leadership Focus
Heart	Two	Sense what others need and give too much of themselves in response
	Three	Set goals aimed at success and lose sense of their own identity
	Four	Understand fullness of emotional life and yet feel misunderstood when overidentify with feelings
Head	Five	Thoughtful and observant with need for information to feel competent
	Six	Loyal and connected with struggle to trust themselves and others
	Seven	Optimistic problem-solvers afraid of being trapped in pain
Gut	Eight	Confident strength and feeling that vulnerability is weakness
	Nine	Ability to mediate and seek to avoid conflict at all cost
	One	Assess how to improve situations with critical lens and high standards

On the opposite end, types four, five, and nine lead from the withdrawn stance. Often, although not always, these types are introverted. Their energy is often sapped from outside sources, and they withdraw internally to recover. These leaders are past-oriented and concentrate on what has already happened to determine what must be done in leadership decisions (Singletary 9-10).

Finally, types one, two, and six lead from a dependent stance. They lead with others as a result. Thus, these leaders are consultative in their approach to leadership.

Because these types are present-oriented, they seek pleasant outcomes in scenarios where they are leading. Further, because of this leadership approach, these types find it challenging to refuse the requests of others. Setting limits is extremely challenging due to these types' high need for others to speak into their lives. These types are further likely to struggle with making decisions autonomously from the input of others and this can lead to low confidence in these leaders (Singletary 10).

The DiSC

The DiSC personality assessment tool was developed by William Marston between 1920 and 1930 (McSwain and McAnear 56). The DiSC is another way for leaders to become more self-aware, grow in their ability to work with others, and become better equipped for managing divergent encounters (“What is the DiSC Assessment?”).

The DiSC is broken down by its acronym:

- **Dominance** types are those who express high confidence and care about getting tasks and actions done.
- **Influence** types are those who care about being more vulnerable with people and are often good at persuading others.
- **Sensing** types are those who are usually reliable and care about honesty and teamwork.
- **Conscientiousness** types are those who appreciate details, excellence, precision, proficiency, and aptitude in the way they lead (“What is the DiSC Assessment?”).

After one has taken the DiSC inventory, one receives scores in the four aforementioned types of the DiSC. An individual with a high score in the dominance type would naturally default to the dominance type in leadership situations. However, an

individual will also have a secondary type that scored a little lower than the primary type (McSwain and McAnear 56). For example, one might score highest in the dominance type and second highest in the influence type. This would make that person an DI (dominance/ influence) and would predict that the person would emphasize outcomes, accomplishing tasks, and passion. Figure 2.3 is helpful for understanding this concept:

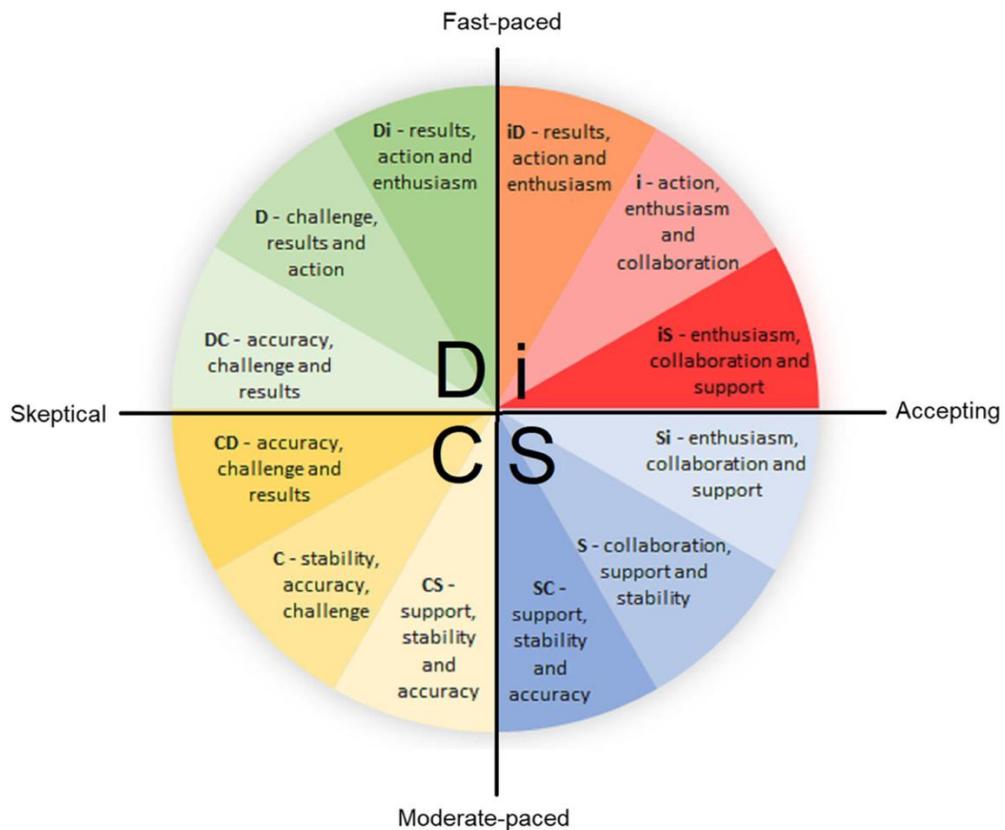


Figure 2.3 DiSC styles and priorities driving behavior with 2-dimensional scales (Milne et al. 4).

These types may be a useful predictor of the career in which one might excel. One study administered the DiSC personality assessment to dental students and found that 56% of respondents expressed the dominance type (O. Wali et al. 1291). Another study found that physiotherapy students with either a high influence type score or a CS

Conscientious/Steadiness score were more likely to fail a clinical placement (Milne et al. 14).

McSwain and McAnear wrote that “there are no good or bad personality profiles. It is how we use our personality that makes it positive or negative (56). In addition to the Enneagram and DiSC one more personality inventory was utilized in the leadership program being evaluated.

The Clifton StrengthsFinder

Although the Gallup organization has created a Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer Assessment (“The Clifton Youth” 184), for the purposes of the leadership program being evaluated, the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment was chosen because the leadership program being evaluated contained both adolescents and emerging adults.

The Clifton StrengthsFinder was developed by a team at the Gallup organization led by Donald O. Clifton (“The Clifton Youth” 184). Paul J. Chara and William J. Eppright have questioned the validity of the Clifton StrengthsFinder (225). However, Asplund et al., reported that the Clifton StrengthsFinder has consistently been shown to be valid (12). Additionally, the assessment “has been used to facilitate the development of individuals across dozens of roles, including executive, student, teacher, manager, customer service representative, salesperson, administrative assistant, nurse, lawyer, pastor, leader, and school administrator” (Asplund et al. 25).

The Clifton StrengthsFinder tests for thirty-four different strengths (See Table 2.3) and reveals a respondent's top five strengths known as “signature themes” at the conclusion of the assessment (Busch and Davis 189). One study found that Pharmacy students consistently showed the same signature themes of Achiever, Harmony, Learner,

Responsibility, and Empathy (Janke, et al. 7). The 34 strengths can be grouped into one of four themes. The themes are executing, influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking.

Table 2.3 Clifton StrengthFinders 34 Strengths (*CliftonStrengths Identifies 1*)

Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking
Achiever	Activator	Adapability	Analytical
Arranger	Command	Connectedness	Context
Belief	Communication	Developer	Futuristic
Consistency	Competition	Empathy	Ideation
Deliberative	Maximizer	Harmony	Input
Discipline	Self-Assurance	Includer	Intellection
Focus	Significance	Individualization	Learner
Responsibility	Woo	Positivity	Strategic
Restorative		Relator	

An individual’s five signature themes may be used to discuss the five signature themes of other individuals for the purpose of building a stronger team, fostering understanding between individuals, and promoting a greater self-awareness (*CliftonStrengths Identifies 2*).

As demonstrated, the personality assessments are useful for helping individuals gain better self-awareness, promote team growth within an organization, and foster a greater appreciation and understanding of others.

Mentoring

Mentoring adolescents and emerging adults constituted one of the main purposes of the leadership program being evaluated in this study. Mentoring is “one-on-one

experience between the mentor and the individual being mentored” (Hartwig 4). David Wardell and Jeff Leever considered mentoring an essential priority to the follower of God’s life (79). Other research has demonstrated that mentees were pleased with mentors who were able to provide “role-modeling,” “reciprocity” which is the concept that both the mentor and the mentee mutually benefit from the relationship, and “vocational support” (Ensher et al. 419). Dana L. Haggard’s research indicated that it is important to have formal training for mentors and clarify the expectations of the organization for whom the mentor mentors (170).

Confidence is an important factor for a mentor. A Christian mentor often falls prey to the myth that the mentor must be able to cultivate an entire program and be creative in making the gospel appealing instead of helping the mentee understand the practices of the particular faith community to which the mentor and mentee belong and practicing those beliefs together with the mentee (Dean 121). Erik Erikson wrote:

If the older young people could find the courage in themselves and encouragement and guidance from their elders to institutionalize their responsibility for the younger young, we might see quite different images of both youth and young adulthood emerge than those we now know. New models of fraternal behavior may come to replace those images of comradeship and courage that have been tied in the past to military service and probably have contributed to a glorification of a kind of warfare doomed to become obsolete in our time; and they may come to continue the extraordinary work, both inspired and concrete, done in the last few decades by pioneering youth groups on a variety of frontiers. This, in turn, would make it possible for adults to contribute true knowledge and genuine experience without assuming an authoritative stance beyond their actual competence and genuine inner authority (“Reflections” 174).

Adolescents and emerging adults acquire knowledge about faith by listening to those who are older (Dean 152). This requires adults to be both confident *and* competent in their own ability to speak about their faith. Dean wrote, “...if adults cannot speak Christian any better than young people can, spiritual apprenticeship fails” (152). Dean

suggested mentors need to utilize the “pilgrim principle:” the ability of adults to step out of their “comfort zone” and find ways to speak about their faith to adolescents (153).

Developing Christian change agents was a primary task of the mentors of the leadership program being evaluated. Beginning and sustaining strong relationships is a necessary requisite for leaders to cultivate “over time and in the context of a loving and supportive community” (Cole 71). These strong relationships are important for developing the spiritual potential of the change agents. “This task requires careful thought, wise planning, endless patience, and genuine Christian love. It cannot be haphazard, hurried, ill-conceived” (Sanders 150).

Time Management

Time management is “the self-controlled attempt to use time in a subjectively efficient way to achieve outcomes” (Koch and Kleinmann 201). For Peter Scazzero, when time is mismanaged, it resulted in negative consequences. He noted that “many of us are overscheduled, tense, addicted to hurry, frantic, preoccupied, fatigued, and starved for time” (154). Gordon MacDonald went further in his warning that “This terrible habit pattern of disorganization must be broken, or our private worlds will fall quickly into total disorder. We must resolve to seize control of our time” (79). Mismanaged time further puts us in a state of hurry. John Ortberg warned that “Busy-ness migrates to hurry when we let it squeeze God out of our lives” (134). Laurie Beth Jones warned that time is a resource that must be used wisely (106).

Learning how to manage one’s time requires discipline. Christopher A. Wolters and Anna C. Brady found that time management in college students “is a significant self-

regulatory process through which students actively manage when and for how long they engage in the activities deemed necessary for reaching their academic goals” (1319).

Gordon MacDonald offers the following ways to practice healthy time management. They are:

1. “I Must Know My Rhythms of Maximum Effectiveness” (MacDonald 94):

Learning one’s rhythms of when one works best, learns best, or achieves the best possible outcomes takes discipline and practice. However, achieving this goal helps an individual maximize her or his effectiveness as it relates to time management (MacDonald 94-96).

2. “I Must Have Thoughtful Criteria for Choosing How to Use My Time”

(MacDonald 96): One must learn how to say, “no” to certain events, invitations, engagements, etcetera. If an individual always accepts new things into her or his schedule, she or he will suffer from fatigue, stress, and disappointment. Instead, one should focus on responding to God’s call on her or his life by choosing wisely how to use one’s time (MacDonald 97).

3. “I Manage Time and Command It Best When I Budget It Far in Advance”

(MacDonald 98). Creating schedules in advance such as two months ahead of time helps an individual prioritize and maximize her or his time. When an individual fails to schedule in advance, it creates the possibility for commitments to family, work, and others to fall through and produces an increase in stress and anxiety (99).

The time management principles mentioned above would be useful for most mentoring and Christian leadership program applications involving adolescents and emerging adults.

Research Design Literature

Post-intervention was the model utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of a Christian leadership program in a central Kentucky Restoration Church in creating change agents.

A qualitative approach involving the instrumentation of interviews and a focus group were used to gather the data. Tim Sensing noted that “Most of the data in qualitative studies will involve words and observations gathered in field notes, transcripts, and questionnaires” (79). The qualitative data gathered for this study focused on evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the Christian leadership program as well as best practices for future iterations.

Evaluation of gathered data was an important step in interpreting themes and structures for determining the effectiveness of the Christian leadership program. Sensing wrote, “evaluation involves choosing a meaningful way to assess the effects of your project compared to the goals you set out to reach” (70).

Summary of Literature

The Old and New Testaments present a clear picture of discipleship, servant leadership, and spiritual formation. Various characters in the Bible took on protégés to disciple. These disciples would learn from their mentors through the means of hands-on experience, listening, and observing. Ultimately, each disciple would take over the ministry of their mentor. Likewise, there is clear evidence that the practice of servant

leadership was employed in both the Old and New Testaments. The characters evaluated were willing to put serving ahead of leading. Spiritual formation was examined in relation to the two testaments. Themes like the impact of community, self-awareness, and time management emerged as part of the formation of characters in the Bible. The life of Jesus was examined as it ultimately represents the supreme example of how to disciple and mentor others.

The theological terms of the Trinity, the incarnation, the *imago dei*, and the *missio dei* were examined in light of how they contribute to discipleship and spiritual formation. These concepts shed further light on the importance of understanding identity, managing one's time, and fully engaging in the mission of God.

Finally, the relevant literature reviewed painted a picture of the needs and obstacles confronting adolescents and emerging adults regarding spiritual formation. Adolescents navigate identity while emerging adults navigate identity and intimacy (Erikson, *Childhood*). Adolescence has developed unequally for females and minorities (Cole; Myers; Tittley). Lund et al. found that emerging adults benefitted from being paired with a mentor.

The literature further demonstrated an experiential way of learning, the impact of servant leadership, helpful ways to become more self-aware through personality inventories, and the best practices for time management. The literature review briefly looked at mentorship and the impact that mentors have in creating Christian change agents.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter encompasses this ministry transformation project's research methodology for determining the effectiveness of a Christian leadership program among late high school and early college students. This chapter further explores the research questions used to determine effectiveness, ministry context, participants, instrumentation used, ethical considerations, reliability and validity, data collection, and data analysis.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Young Christians leave traditional or conventional church settings at a high rate but do not necessarily lose their faith. This kind of exodus from the church negatively impacts these younger Christians in that they are not exposed to a local church body, its resources, especially mentoring and discipling, and the practice of worshipping together. Thus, in their early twenties, a critical time of their lives, when major decisions are being made about family, career, where to live, and other life choices, these younger Christians are not getting the mentoring or discipleship from older generations of Christians at a local church.

Further, this trajectory negatively impacts the Church as it inhibits younger generations' contributions to Church development. Churches in the US are getting older (Earls) and smaller. Since 2000, median worship attendance has diminished from 135 to 65 in 2020 (Thumma, 11). Older Christians need to deeply invest in younger generations of Christians to help reverse these declining trends of the Church.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership program for developing Christian change agents among high school and college students in a central Kentucky Independent Restoration Christian Church. This research could potentially help the church by demonstrating best practices for retaining emerging adults.

Research Questions

This project utilized three research questions to evaluate the ministry project's effectiveness in developing Christian change agents. The program participants (change agents) of the project were interviewed. Additionally, the mentors of the program participated in a focus group. These research methods were developed for the program participants and mentors to assess the project's overall effectiveness of the Christian leadership program in creating Christian change agents.

RQ #1. What did the program participants identify as its strengths and weaknesses?

The purpose of this research question was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the leadership program from the perspective of the students. Students individually participated in a post-program interview. (See Appendix B.)

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12 helped identify the strengths of the program while questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 helped identify where the program was weakest. Questions 3, 5, 8, and 11 utilized a form of the Likert scale to help further evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

RQ #2. What did the program leaders identify as its strengths and weaknesses?

The program leaders, mentors, were invited to participate in a focus group to help determine where the program was most effective and where it was weakest. (See Appendix C.)

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the focus group were used to evaluate the program's effectiveness while questions 3, 4, and 6 were used to answer which parts of the program were weakest.

RQ #3. What best practices would improve the program for its next iteration?

To determine the best practices for any future adaptation of this project, program participants were interviewed while program leaders participated in a focus group. In the interview, questions 15, 16, 17, 18, and synthesis from questions 1-14 (Appendix B) helped identify what best practices would improve the program for its next iteration. The focus group utilized question 7 as well as a synthesis of questions 1-6 (Appendix C) to identify best practices for future iterations.

Ministry Context

The ministry context of the current project was a mid-sized central Kentucky Restoration Christian Church. The church is made up primarily of Caucasian, middle-class members. Roughly 60% of the church is female, while 40% are male. Members range across the educational spectrum with most members holding at least a bachelor's degree. The church also has a spectrum of members ranging from new believers to long-time committed believers.

As a restoration church, the central Kentucky church, where the ministry project was conducted, places high emphasis on the value and authority of scripture. Additionally, the church is governed by a body of elders who are nominated and ordained within the local church. The church is completely autonomous from a larger governing church polity.

Regarding students in the ministry context, 59% of high school students live in a single-parent home, 10% live with someone else, and 31% live with both parents (Clark County Board 2). That means that for every ten high school students who attend the church in the project setting, roughly six will come from a single-parent household, three will be coming from a household with both parents, and one will be coming from another kind of living situation. The study demonstrates that students in the ministry context come from a range of family and relational backgrounds.

Participants

The following section explores the makeup of those who participated in the Christian leadership program.

Criteria for Selection

Program participants came from the Christian leadership program being evaluated. The criteria for the selection of participants for Christian leadership included a consistent demonstration of a call to vocational or non-vocational ministry, an active involvement in the central Kentucky Restoration Church, a robust commitment to academic success, and a desire to grow in spiritual formation. The selection of participants was highly intentional. Likewise, the nature of the leadership program and pairing of students with mentors necessitated a small number of student participants. This leadership program only selected participants from the central Kentucky Restoration Church and did not consider students from other churches in the area. Each participant selected for the program based on the above criteria received an invitation to apply to the program. The application process invited the students to analyze where they were in their relationship with God.

Program mentors who were selected from the central Kentucky Restoration Church consisted of three staff members and one church member. No other churches were considered in the selection of program mentors.

Description of Participants

Participants included the five students and four adult mentors. All students were Caucasian. Three of the students were female and two were male. As late adolescents, each student faced many impending decisions. For the high school students, their pending decisions during the Christian leadership program included where they would attend college, their major, and what they would pursue professionally. For the two college students in the program, their decisions revolved around what they would pursue professionally and if they would need graduate and/or post-graduate degrees.

Program mentors who participated in the focus group consisted of two male and two female mentors. All mentors were Caucasian and held at least a bachelor's degree. Further, two members held at least a graduate degree and one held a post-graduate degree. Each mentor worked a full-time job during the Christian leadership program being evaluated and during the course of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Participants in this post-intervention study agreed to informed consent by digitally signing a consent form. (See Appendix A.) I collected the digitally signed consent forms before the interviews or focus groups took place and stored them on a server that was password protected. No one else had access to the password.

I maintained confidentiality throughout the duration of this study. I coded all participants for anonymity and stored all transcripts, recordings, and notes on a password-protected server. No one else had access to this password.

Instrumentation

For the purposes of answering the research questions, I used two instruments and both instruments were qualitative. I selected qualitative methodology because it produced detailed information that could be gleaned for deep analysis of patterns, processes, and overall effectiveness, and it revealed what worked and what did not in the Christian leadership program.

The first instrument was an interview that was researcher-designed and semi-structured. This tool was the “Christian Leadership Student Interview”. (See Appendix B.) The interview consisted of eighteen questions. This instrument answered the first and third research questions of this study. The interview was used with the student participants. Because it was semi-structured, there was flexibility built into the design of the instrument in the case that the researcher wanted to follow up on an answer. Tim Sensing wrote that “The main purpose of the interview is to obtain a special kind of information” (104). In this study, the special kind of information was the student participants’ thoughts on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Christian leadership program.

The second instrument used in this study was a focus group. This instrument was researcher-designed and semi-structured. Sensing notes the benefit of a focus group is that “Through group interaction, data and insights are generated that are related to a particular theme imposed by a researcher and enriched by the group’s interactive

discussion” (120). The focus group instrument was entitled, “Christian Leadership Program Mentor Focus Group” and consisted of seven questions designed to answer the second and third research questions of this study. (See Appendix C.)

Expert Review

Ellen Marmon served as the expert reviewer of both instruments used in this study. The expert review process helped ensure that the questions in both the interview and focus group served to answer the research questions of this study.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Christian leadership program in creating Christian change agents. The questions in both the interview and focus group instruments were designed to specifically address the three research questions. To accommodate that purpose, the questions had to probe what did and did not work in the program.

Specific steps were taken to maintain validity. As mentioned above, the instruments were expert-reviewed. Participants gave digitally informed consent. All student program participants had the same semi-structured interview. All program mentors participated in the same focus group. Given that the study focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the program, these instruments could be used for future adaptations of such a program.

Data Collection

This study utilized post-intervention research. A post-intervention study examines a project that has already been completed in the past. The research was qualitative, and the instruments were semi-structured and researcher-designed.

Qualitative methodology was selected because, as Sensing notes, “Qualitative research produces culturally specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation, and ongoing health of institutions like churches” (58).

Step one in gathering data was to design the two instruments necessary for the research study. The two instruments were an interview and a focus group, and an expert reviewed both of them.

Step two was to secure digital consent from all the participants. Then, each student participant participated in an interview (Appendix B), which lasted sixty minutes. Each adult participant, the mentors, participated in a focus group (Appendix C) which lasted ninety minutes. According to Krueger and Casey “the purpose of conducting a focus group is to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, idea, product, or service. Focus groups are used to gather opinions” (Sect. 1). That data was recorded and transcribed using the Zoom platform.

Step three was to take the gathered data, recorded and transcribed on the Zoom platform and conduct an analysis of the data. This data was formed into themes on an excel sheet in columns and rows. Those themes provided the answers to the research questions asked in this study and led the researcher to the conclusions of the study regarding major findings and the effectiveness of the Christian leadership project.

Data Analysis

Data was collected via the Zoom platform and digitally transcribed. It was then analyzed using a spreadsheet. The Likert scale questions were averaged for a mean result for each scale (chapter four). The data were analyzed to produce thick descriptions. Sensing noted that thick description involves providing a “detailed interpretation of those

data...” (195). Tim Sensing further wrote that “A thick description goes beyond a simple narration that merely delineates the information (“thin” description), but explores the deeper and often hidden meanings behind the words, gestures, actions, and practices observed during the project” (195).” Data theme analysis developed themes from the data. “Data theme analysis involves a sorting, organizing, and indexing of the material that enables you to locate internally consistent patterns that often fit within existing knowledge” (Sensing 198). I arranged and coded the qualitative answers in the spreadsheet based on themes that emerged through careful data theme analysis.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Churches in the United States of America are witnessing an increasing decline in youth religiosity and participation in their congregations. Because roughly only eight percent of adolescents are considered highly devoted (Smith and Denton 220), congregations need to better prepare, equip, and disciple adolescents.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership program for developing Christian change agents among high school and college students in a central Kentucky Restoration Church.

Participants

Five student program participants took part in the research on the effectiveness of the Christian leadership program in producing change agents. Of the program participants, there were three females and two males. Three of the program participants were enrolled in high school and two were in college at the time of the program. When the research was conducted, one program participant had graduated from college, one had stepped away from college, and three were active students in college. None of the program participants have been or are currently married (Figure 3.1).

Five adult program mentors participated in the leadership program. However, shortly after the leadership program began, one of the program mentors dropped out of the program. Of the remaining four who were considered for this study, two were female and two were male. All four mentors hold college degrees while three of the four hold graduate degrees. Every mentor is currently married (Figure 3.2.).

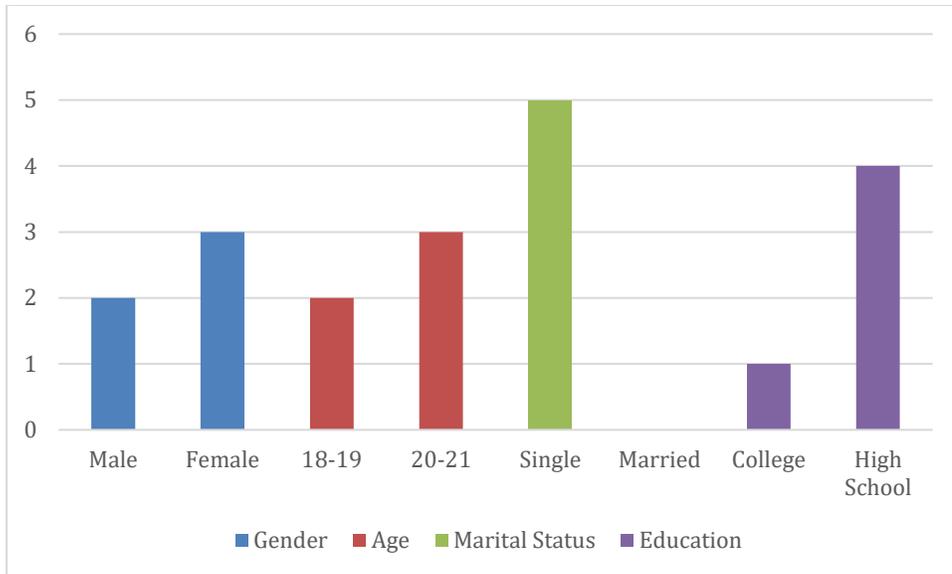


Figure 3.1 Demographics for program participants n=5.

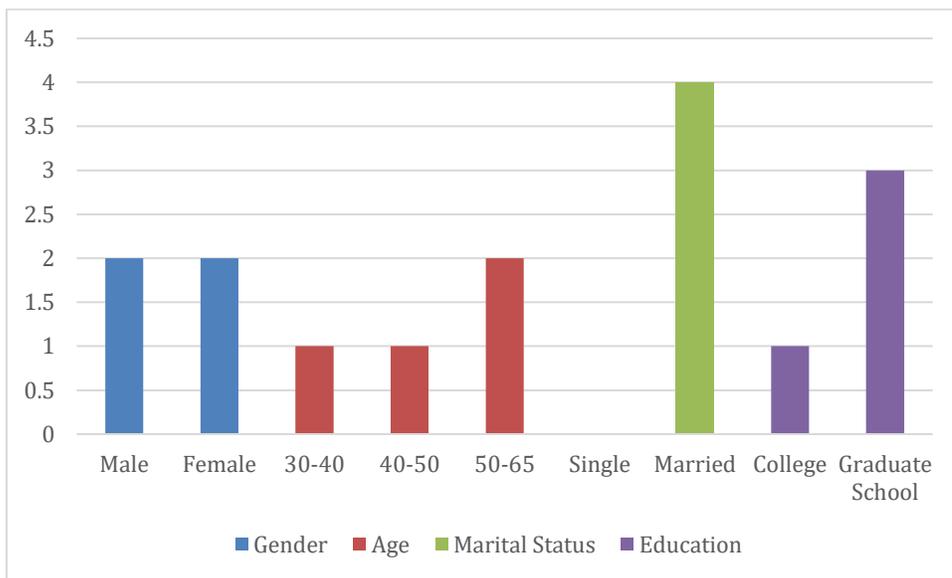


Figure 3.2 Demographics for program mentors n=4.

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

The first research question asked, “What did the program participants identify as its strengths and weaknesses?”

The interview which was conducted with each of the student program participants contained eighteen questions. Fourteen of those questions were designed to help the program participants identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Four of the questions were presented in the form of a Likert Scale. (See Table 3.1.) Overall, the student program participants positively reported that their overall experience with the program was a 3.95 out of 4. Field trips had the largest impact on the program participants scoring a 4 out of 4. Non-field trip gatherings were also effective, scoring a 3.8 out of 4. The weakest reported element of the program was the mentoring aspect. This scored a 3.2 out of 4.

Table 3.1 Likert Scale Results (Interviewees A, B, C, D, and E.)

	A	B	C	D	E	Average
On a scale of 1-4 how was your overall experience with the leadership program? (1 means very negative while 4 means very positive)	4	3.75	4	4	4	3.95
On a scale of 1-4 how impactful were the field trips in the leadership program? (1 means not impactful at all while 4 means highly impactful)	4	4	4	4	4	4
Thinking back to the non-field trip gatherings, on a scale of 1-4 rate those gatherings impact on you? (1 means not impactful at all while 4 means highly impactful)	4	3	4	4	4	3.8
On a scale of 1-4 how helpful was the mentor with whom you were paired in the leadership program? (1 means not helpful at all while 4 means highly helpful)	4	2	4	4	2	3.2

The other ten questions were open-ended. In gathering the student program participants' answers the following themes emerged:

The Growth of Each Student's Relationship with God

Every student program participant reported that the leadership program positively impacted her or his relationship with God. Interviewee A said, "I think it [the leadership program] made me think a lot more deeply about the importance of having a strong relationship with God and about how that can impact other, other people. I think it impacted my relationship with God because it made it a lot clearer that I could spread God's word no matter what I did."

Interviewee B reported:

Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another, that is a direct correlation with this program because each individual that was in this program was assigned a, a higher up leader to directly build and strengthen relationships with God. And I saw a direct correlation in that regard and I felt stronger and closer to God because of this program.

Interviewee D discussed how the leadership program helped Interviewee D take the relationship with God more seriously: "For me, it was very much a process of learning how to involve God in my daily life and in my professional life. And preparing myself, including my relationship with Christ throughout my life. Not letting that be something that I let go of once I start attaching myself to my career image or my work image."

Interviewee E spoke similarly, "[The leadership program] helped me to be able to go into places and still be able to kind of find that peace and being able to connect with people, whether they were Christian or not, and still build relationships that are based on my foundation of Christianity."

The positive impact on the program participants' relationship with God was viewed by the program participants as a strength and positive outcome of the program.

The Intentionality of Relationship-Building

Program participants reported that they were pleased with the way that relationships were formed and developed over the course of the program. Interviewee C reported:

I would say the building of relationships with everybody there. Not just with me and my mentor, but also with me and the other students and their mentors as well. I feel like the whole program really brought us together. [It] really increased our knowledge just in general and our leadership skills. But also, we grew in Christ together, which was pretty awesome.

Likewise, Interviewee E said, "I liked that the church was pouring into groups of people that really wanted to step up in leadership and it helped us pour into people a lot too."

Interviewee A emphasized the way relationships were formed, going as far as to say, "I would talk to other friends and realize they didn't have the same experiences that I had."

This led Interviewee A to a sense of gratitude and to conclude that the leadership program "always made me feel a little proud of the people that poured into our lives because I knew that they were being intentional with us and that we were being poured into in ways that we couldn't even imagine." Interviewee B thought similarly and said:

There's a sense of relational building that takes place with both the five individuals that were within this program as well as the mentors/ leaders. And these relationships, I feel like would not have taken place without this program. And so, I now have lifelong friends because of this program of like-minded people that are of a Christian mindset and both leaders in that regard as well.

The Most Meaningful Part of the Program

Program participants viewed the field trips with high regard, ranking the field trips as a 4 out of 4 on a Likert Scale. Interviewee A indicated that the field trips helped with understanding how to do ministry regardless of the career chosen:

[The field trips were] something that made me realize that I don't have to separate all my interests and I don't have to. I mean, there are things you have to give up in your walk with God, for sure, but I don't have to separate something that I'm good at or something that I enjoy if it could be used to further God's kingdom. I think more interactions with people outside of the church ministry context [would be helpful]. And I only say that because there, as we learned in the few, in the few interactions that we [had on the field trips], there are a lot of ways that you can spread God's love. And I knew that, and I understood that, but I felt like if you were really serious about your relationship with God, if you were really serious about loving theology and loving all this, then you must have to work in the church. I think that's something I was more encouraged by and learned more about through the trips.

Interviewee B discussed the benefit of being exposed to different Christian leaders on the field trips:

The exposure to seeing leadership take place in other organizations was very eye-opening and has directly inspired me in the way that I lead and the way that I interact with other team members whether it be in a church setting or in any extracurricular activity as well. So those trips and meeting those leaders have been extremely beneficial for the way that I interact with teams.

Interviewee C made a similar observation. “The diversity in the trips was very nice. I also really liked getting just a glimpse into how Christlike servant leadership and everything worked in other fields too, because I'm not going into ministry as of right now. So being able to just see examples of that in other places was very nice and inspirational.”

Interviewee E simply stated that “Those [the field trips] are probably the biggest things that I kind of took away from the program.” Interviewee D was particularly impressed by a field trip taken to a local hospital where the leadership program participants met with a high-ranking Christian doctor. Interviewee D said of that particular field trip:

He [the doctor] wasn't just talking about his role as a doctor. He was talking about his role as a father, his role with his family. The way that having a stressful job can affect your relationship with your family. But essentially, he was talking about how important it is that his faith plays a part in his job. And sort of that interconnectedness between his faith, his family, and his job.

The Most Meaningful of the Non-Field Trip Activities

These assessments included Enneagram, the DiSC, and the Clifton

StrengthFinders. Interviewee E reflected: "That's where we learned about ourselves the most. I like to look into other people now and like to make people take it just to see where the compatibility lies." Interviewee D expressed a similar sentiment:

I think the meeting about the DiSC personalities we did some sort of task where we were like, given a description of how someone makes a decision and we were sorting that into what personality traits they would be given based on that. We really got to know each other through the way that people were thinking through things and the way they were handling tasks.

Interviewee A spoke about an increased awareness of the participants' personalities:

It is really cool to get to know how everyone thinks and then talk about how we can incorporate everyone's different skills and everyone's different personalities. And it was kind of empowering because we were affirmed in the ways that we were. Even if some people might view it as negative. Like we were encouraged to see the positive in the ways that our personality is wired.

Interviewee B spoke about the importance of knowing oneself, "Identity is obviously a big thing for people of my generation. Being able to have a concrete, well 'concrete' with quotations, data on what type of person I was...I was able to build on that and continue to strengthen that area." Interviewee C commented on the importance of understanding different types of personalities.

It was really nice being able to see how I was different from everybody else and how, I don't know, being able to know the personality types of everybody else in the group gave me insight on how to interact with them. And it made me want to have personality tests available for everybody I meet because it's a lot easier to talk to people and understand how they work and how they view things just by

diving into a little description on their personality. It might be brief, but it gives a nice overview of who they are. (Interviewee C)

The Pairing of Student Participants with Adult Mentors

The mentor with whom the participant was paired made a significant impact on the effectiveness of the mentoring portion of the program. In many regards, the mentoring aspect of the leadership program was a strength. Interviewee A reported a strong outcome as the result of being paired with a mentor. The strengths of the mentor and mentee relationship revolved around trust that was built over time, intentional investment from the mentor into the mentee, and the familiarity of the relationship. Regarding the latter, Interviewee A already knew the mentor with whom Interviewee A was paired. This made an immediate difference for their relationship:

I think just having someone that is praying for you, someone that's talking to you and encouraging you. I don't think we had a lot of meetings. But the meetings that we had were really deep, and I still think back to them to this day because I think about the things that I said and my mentor not necessarily saying, "I don't know about that," but encouraging me to think more about what I'm saying and if that's what I really mean. I think one day we were talking about people of other religions and people worshiping like, like the Muslim faith or something like that. And I said, "Well, what if it's all the same God?" And my mentor said, "So what do you mean by that?" And so we were just talking about you know, what it means to really hold God to be the one and true God and you know, how to interact with those conversations. And even now I just texted my mentor last week and we're actually going to start back up doing mentoring because that's just something that I want my life right now. And I know that my mentor is someone I can trust and someone that will pray for me. My mentor is someone that I'm still connected with now and someone that I'm even going to [making] be further in connections with because it's something I enjoyed so much from the program.

Interviewee C stressed the intentional investment of the mentor into the mentee even lead to a deepening relationship:

I've known my mentor for a super-duper long time. So being able to be paired with my mentor was like, I don't know, just being able to dive deeper into a relationship I already had with a mentor [was good]. But I definitely think it was nice to have somebody solely invested in me, like at specific designated times,

because I would see my mentor at church and we'd all be invested in everybody around us, but when it was just one-on-one, it was really easy to dive into what we both needed and be able to share that with each other and learn and grow with each other was nice.

Interviewee D indicated that the prior relationship enhanced the mentoring relationship.

“I was already close to my mentor. I think that was really important for me. The fact that I was already comfortable reaching out, my mentor was someone that was already connected to a lot things I was connected with. So, it was very easy to reach my mentor, to reach out, very easy to connect.”

However, in a couple of crucial ways, the mentoring aspect was a weakness of the leadership program. For Interviewee E, the original mentor had to drop out early in the program. This led Interviewee E to report that “With the original mentor, I liked that we had a very similar past and so we could talk about that a lot. And it was nice to just kind of have validation in each other's feelings and to be able to discuss those things together.” However, as the original mentor could not continue in the program, Interviewee E also reported concerning the original mentor, “We had nothing else in common at best. We were just very, it's weird because we are, we had very similar, but also at the same time, very differing personalities. We're both pretty introverted, which I think probably caused part of the issue. But we just never really clicked.”

Interviewee B liked the mentoring relationship, but ran into conflicts around scheduling time to meet:

While the mentor that I was paired up with was very, very insightful. It was difficult at times to communicate with them and set up a common meeting time. What the mentor had to say was very, very helpful. However, it wasn't consistent and I feel there was a loss at that point. My mentor, well, first of all, we've known each other for a little bit. And so we've kind of had a similarity in that regard as well as we had a very similar mindset on unity. And when we met, it was specifically devoted to figuring out how to, as a people make sure that we, as

Christians can work together for the same good, the same cause regardless of what background we may have had. When we did meet, my mentor was very, very intentional with everything that he had to say.

The Weakest Part of the Leadership Program

Participants regarded the inconsistency around scheduling gatherings as the weakest part of the leadership program. Scheduling meeting times for either non-field trip gatherings or field trip gatherings was difficult. The field trips took anywhere from a couple of hours to a whole day. The non-field trip gatherings were a minimum of an hour and half. Managing ten different schedules proved difficult. This was reflected by the student program participants. When asked what the weakest part of the program was, Interviewee B said, "I'd say consistency because there were some times that we were unable to meet due to unforeseen circumstances for both mentors and participants. So, I would say the inconsistency of meeting would probably be, I think the weakest point." Similarly, Interviewee E reported, "It got really complicated for me to be able to come back so much or be able to go to meetings, but then the pandemic hit, and then it also made it even more complicated." Interviewees A and C wished there had been more meetings while Interviewee D thought the meetings could have been better scheduled.

Maybe just the fact that we were all busy. I don't think we met a lot, but I don't know that that's necessarily a bad thing because it wasn't an additional burden on us and the meetings that we did have were so impactful that it didn't really matter if we were meeting all the time. I wouldn't say it was inconsistent. I would just say you know, like meeting more could have been additionally impactful, but it was good for me because I was really busy. (Interviewee A)

I feel like it was spread out a lot. Maybe if we had more consistent meetings, I think that would've been, I don't know a way to better it, I guess, but, yeah, I think that just having more meetings, whether it's like twice a month or once a month, rather than just kind of like sporadically, I don't know. It felt so far view between while you're doing it, but I enjoyed each thing that we did. (Interviewee C)

And this is just a fact of life thing, but, but trying to schedule with everyone, I know oftentimes we would have to change a meeting or sort of be on standby, waiting to decide when we could do something. I think if, if we could manage to make it a little more rhythmic a little more like standardized meeting times and set dates for things that it would've felt more not just structured, but I guess felt like it had a stronger foundation. (Interviewee D)

In summary, all of the student program participants were interviewed for this study and reported that they had an overall positive experience with the program. They viewed the field trips as the biggest strength of the program. Additionally, the program participants found that the personality inventories and assessments were helpful to the program. Two major weaknesses emerged from the interviews. The first was the inconsistency in the mentor and mentee pairings. Three of the five program participants found their mentor relationships to be strong parts of the program. However, two of the program participants had mixed results with their mentors. The second weakness was the inconsistency with scheduling gatherings. All five program participants expressed a desire to see that area improve.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

The second research question asked, “What did the program leaders identify as its strengths and weaknesses?”

The mentors were the program leaders and they were asked to participate in a focus group. The focus group consisted of seven questions. Six of those questions were designed to help answer research question #2. The program leaders considered the leadership program an overall success. Focus Group Member F said, “This is a program that teaches you about you, and gives you an aspect of living your faith in the real world.” Focus Group Member H similarly reflected: “I believe this program is an opportunity to invest into some young leaders that we recognize and see, giving them

some tools, equipping them to be better leaders, to be aware of themselves and others, and how they interact with each one.”

The program leaders especially appreciated the intentionality of the program and the field trips. The program leaders considered the first meeting (a non-field trip meeting) to be overwhelming for the participants.

The Intentionality of the Program and Relationship Outcomes

The program leaders identified a positive connection between the intentionality of the program and stronger relationships between all the participants, both mentors and mentees. Focus Group Member G said, “There was a good intentionality as far as the flow and sequence of events.” Focus Group Member F reported:

I think all aspects of it worked. I thought it fit together really well. You had a mentorship and the kids having a chance to experience learning about themselves. The tests that were given, places to go and accomplish. There was freedom also in everything for the kids and the mentors to be a part of the whole process. I would say the fact of having the time to enjoy all of it together. The kids just didn't go by themselves to see something. We all went together to see something. And I think as experience the same thing gave us a deeper level of conversation. I do think there was a sense of buy-in, which was really strong.

Focus Group Member H also gave positive feedback:

I think the program overall was very effective. There was learning in there. I was thinking back. We went to the breakout game and that was fun to watch them all together and do that together. One of the things that makes a program effective is if there's ongoing ripples from that. I continue to meet with my mentee. So that type of thing, the things that they've shared together. And they will bring that up in conversations about things that they did. I think it was a good balance of learning, mentoring, fellowshipping together, having community together.

Another focus group member spoke favorably of the program's variety:

I liked that there was a variety. So, I think there were multiple points of connection, one-on-one, in groups, in a larger group, which created the different dynamics of experiences that they were able to have. I also think when you look at the particular age group that we were targeting, that transition age, they stayed in touch with the church. They didn't lose contact. They didn't go off the grid. All

the different layers there where they could have checked out, I saw the intentionality. I think the investment of a program like this too, and my mentee's faith, I think is the ultimate goal is that they stay a part of the church, they continue to grow and they continue to see where they fit and belong and how they use their callings and their giftings in the community and in the church. So, I think that was very effective. (Focus Group Member I)

The Strength of the Program's Field Trips

The program leaders emphasized the effectiveness of taking field trips in the leadership program. Focus Group Member F recalled that the program participants received "an insight into different things, different ways. I thought it was a great thing that I won't forget, so I know they won't forget." Focus Group Member H similarly said, "I think we as adults really enjoyed them, and I think the students did as well." One of the field trips was taken to a local hospital where the leadership program participants met with a high-ranking Christian doctor. Focus Group Member G reflected on that trip:

I really enjoyed the trip to the hospital when we got to see [the high-ranking Christian doctor] and go back there. I thought that was a great example of a Christian who's in a secular profession, but the kind of culture that he created and the kind of service that they do. Just to see him in action and then be able to debrief with him, so that I thought was an excellent trip.

Another field trip was taken to a secular business run by a Christian leader. Focus Group Member I, reflecting on that trip, said, "I thought it facilitated or generated good discussion of the students. Even beyond that trip, they continue to think and talk about how it impacted them."

The Value of the Mentoring to the Student Participants

The program leaders consider the mentoring aspect to be valuable to the program participants.

Focus Group Member G noted:

I enjoyed the one-on-one time. Some things that I learned about my mentee, in particular, helped me later on just working through as we would serve in ministry together in different environments. I really understood what was important to him: some of my mentee's values or priorities. Then as I would watch my mentee interact in different situations, it helped me to understand probably what was driving my mentee in those different situations.

Focus Group Member I also reflected on the mentoring experience:

I've enjoyed the mentorship of my mentee, because we continued to meet beyond this program, and continue to meet intermittently. It's not as consistent now, but because we had formed that here I think it's been easier for us to pick up in seasons and revisit one another, and for me to check in on my mentee. I valued that one-on-one, too. (Focus Group Member I)

The Strength of the Leadership Program

The program leaders viewed the assessments as helpful to the program participants as well as to the mentor/mentee relationships that developed. Focus Group Member F considered the assessments "really powerful." Focus Group Member I remarked:

I thought that they took away a lot from those [the assessments] as well. I think for my mentee, the assessments were useful in our application when we were talking about situations that my mentee was going through, especially at that intersection of college and decision making and parental influence and caring about a variety of different opinions on that decision, but then ultimately coming up with my mentee's own path and decision. I feel like the assessment tools were helpful.

Focus Group Member H felt that the assessments were helpful:

Also, some of the assessments that the program participants were able to do, just to find out a little bit more about themselves, allowed us to find out more about them. I think for me, the assessments were very important to my mentee. And then learning from that, my mentee has always been a very strong individual, but most of my mentee's growth came in how to deal with other people. My mentee grew as a result of the assessments and I just became more self-aware of how my mentee comes across.

The Weakness of the Program

When the program leader or mentor and program participant or mentee were able to meet, it was beneficial to both the mentor and mentee. However, scheduling those meetings was viewed as a weakness of the program.

Focus Group Member F reported, "I think the mentorship was good when you could do it; when it was time to work out and there was enough time to do it." Focus Group Member H similarly said, "I think when we were able to get together, it was very effective. But as they transitioned to college, it became a little bit more difficult to have the one-on-one time with them as often as we'd done before. We had good conversations. So, I think time was probably the biggest obstacle to overcome." Another focus group member expressed a similar view. "I agree that the challenge was being intentional about making that time and space. But any time that we did meet together, we had good conversation. We were walking through a study together in our time that we would meet that we both enjoyed. I feel like it was impactful." (Focus Group Member I)

The Training of the Program Leaders

The program leaders viewed the training they received for and during the leadership program as a strength. They received a packet of informational material prior to the program. Additionally, the program leaders met with the program director for training and planning. Focus Group Member F recalled, "I think what was expected was done well, and I think the whole concept and trajectory of the program was always very clear: what was going to happen [in the program], what was the gist of the program, and what the purpose of the program was." Focus Group Member H also affirmed the training, "I think the overall program was explained really well, but I think there was

enough space in there that everyone could mentor at their own desired ability and what they could do with that person. It wasn't so strict and rigid that we had to do the same thing for each person because we allowed for their individual personalities.” Focus Group Member I spoke about their orientation to the program:

I remember initial meetings that were set that oriented us on the process and what it would look like. I think that was helpful just to see what vision was cast there for this program, so we had an idea in mind going into it, the purpose. I felt like I was clear on the purpose of what it was designed for and my role in it. So that's just what stands out to me is remembering being oriented in a meeting with the breakdown of over time what was expected to unfold in the program.

In addition to the training, Focus Group Member G was pleased with the way the pairing of mentors and mentees was executed:

I do remember some discussion about fit and who would be the best fit as far as pairing up. I think there was some intentionality there. There was some wisdom and which mentor would be the best fit for a mentee and how would they benefit the most. Some natural maybe chemistry there, relationships. So I think that was teed up well on the relational side.

The Impact of the Program on the Leaders

The program positively impacted each program leader's relationship with God. Focus Group Member H reported that “I always feel it's a call in my life to pour into young people. Just being able to do that in the aspect that we were doing it through this program, and then the continuing relationship. It always affects my call to see that.”

Focus Group Member I said about the leadership program:

I think I appreciated the opportunity and even just the accountability that it provided with being intentional about mentoring. I can often say I want to do that, and I want to have the one-on-ones, but it can be a stretch to actually make it happen for me. So, I appreciated just having this program that's also accountability for the investment that we are called to make into the generation after us. And while we can't do it for all, we can do it intentionally for a few, and go deep in those one-on-one mentor relationships. I appreciated that this program offered that.

Focus Group Member F reported, “Anytime you invest in someone else you're the one who gets the blessing. I just think that's universal. You think you're going to be the one to do something for them, they do it for you. And so to see that is confirming. To feel that is confirming of what your call is to do this.” Focus Group Member G spoke of the opportunity to pay forward the benefits of mentoring.

I have benefited from so many mentors in my life, so to have a formal structure, to be able to give back in a similar, was helpful. And I felt a sense of gratitude for every person who had poured into me and to be able to pay that forward... I was grateful and thankful to the Lord for just the lessons I've learned along the way, things he's brought me through, experiences that I've had, all that. That he could use that to help somebody in some way, that's a good feeling to have.

The Positive Impact of the Program

The program leaders or mentors observed that the program has a positive impact on each program participant's or mentee's self-confidence. The program leaders viewed the increase in self-confidence of the program participants as a positive outcome. Focus Group Member F said:

Anytime you get invested in, I don't really care who it is, anything positive that you get invested in these students and it's going to help them build confidence. I don't know if you're ever going to see it visually, but there is something about people who believe in you that helps build your confidence in some way or other. I don't know that there's anything measurable that's possible to find out that. It's just students when people invest in them. They may not act like it all the time, but they do.

Focus Group Member I concurred and added:

I felt like I could see just an increase in confidence in my interaction with my mentee just in mentoring my mentee as my mentee grew and developed. But I think too, just over time, the investment. Knowing that we were setting aside this time to invest with them through the trip opportunities and through different things and leadership opportunities, like the sermon series, I think that also increases your confidence as you are able to try new things and experience new things. It just goes into that library of experiences where you've done something you hadn't tried before, or you've learned something you didn't know before. And I think that equips you in a better way to potentially increase your confidence.

The First Meeting of the Leadership Program

The first meeting of the leadership program was overwhelming for everyone, and the program leaders viewed this as a weakness. The first meeting was designed to help program participants think about what they wanted to do with their lives in terms of future careers and goals. The program leaders thought this content should have been introduced later in the leadership program. Focus Group Member H recalled:

I think there was too much information in that first meeting. It was a little overwhelming to even me as an adult and to some of the students. So, I think we could have cut down that material at that point and just tried to maybe walk through that a little slower, because it felt like we were rushing through the information to get to the life plan. It was all good information. It was just a lot to absorb in one sitting, I think, for them. I think, not really knowing where or what they were wanting to do, was a little bit more challenging than what it would normally be if they'd been a little bit older or if we'd done it on the end maybe.

Similarly, Focus Group Member I thought that the initial meeting overwhelmed Focus Group Member I's mentee. He said, "I'm remembering there was a lot packed, yeah, in that one. Yeah. Because I do remember getting to the end of that with my mentee and the life plan. My mentee was blank and didn't really know where to go [with the content]. And I was having a hard time helping navigate. So that does stick out to me."

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

The third research question asked, "What best practices would improve the program for its next iteration?"

Questions asked during both the interview of program participants and the focus group for program leaders addressed Research Question #3. Every interviewee and focus group member described ways in which future iterations of the leadership program might be improved.

Program Participants

The student participants suggested that having more field trips, including a more diverse of participants, and more carefully pairing the mentors and mentees would improve the program.

More Field Trips

For future iterations of the program, participants indicated they would like to have more field trips. Program participants indicated that they thought the field trips were a strength of the leadership program. When asked about improvements for future iterations, program participants thought there should be more field trips. Interviewee A reported, “I think learning about more different ways that you can spread God's love in different jobs or different ways you can lead too, even if it's not in a professional way, like talking about different ways to be involved in the community.” Interviewee C also responded that more field trips would be beneficial for future iterations of the leadership program:

I would say have more field trips. I remember we went to the Escape Games one day and that was really fun and taught us a lot, but I think like the trip to the hospital and the trip to like the business were helpful. I think having more of those trips personalized for each of the people [program participants] there, or like just have more where it's kind of like related to people's interests. I think that would be nice too. Just having more of those.

Interviewee D agreed, and also indicated it would be better to have more field trips closer to where the leadership program took place, saying, “I think more field trips closer to home would be helpful. At least in a town like ours, that is relatively small, people know a lot of the leaders but maybe not in a very intimate work-connected way. So, getting to go places more locally and seeing how nearby leaders are handling that balance of faith and work.”

More Diverse Group of Participants

For future iterations of the program, program participants would like to see a larger and more diverse group of participants. The program participants reported that having five program participants worked for the initial leadership program. However, for future adaptations, it would be better to expand the program. Interviewee E reported that:

I think you could benefit from having a few more students too, rather than like five or six, just because a lot of the youth are really stepping up right now. I think that it could be a group of ten to fifteen. It would help build the program more, but also build the church more. Especially because like they're already being poured into in a way that a lot of other churches aren't pouring into their youth and to be put into a leadership program would help them start pouring into other people more too because although they're being poured into, they're also pouring out into their schools, their small groups, and their extracurriculars. I think it would help them really start to bring in more people and bring in more people to leadership and wanting to take reigns themselves in the church.

Interviewee A similarly reported that a wider variety of age among the participants would be beneficial, “Juniors in high school to seniors age in college. I'd say probably sixteen and a half all the way to twenty-two verging on twenty-three.”

More Careful Pairing of Mentors and Mentees

There should be a more careful process for pairing mentors and mentees in future iterations. Program participants indicated that a weakness of the leadership program was the inconsistency in the mentor pairing process. For future iterations, program participants would like to see an improvement to the way mentors and mentees are paired. Interviewee A suggested “having mentors that are already involved and invested in the lives of the students and are willing to meet regularly and be willing to make it a priority.” Interviewee D responded in a like manner, “I already knew my mentor so well, but I guess for other participants that wouldn't have been the case. So perhaps just having more casual meetings between just a mentor and their mentee before the program

officially starts.” Interviewee C also reported the benefit of knowing one’s mentor in advance and offered the following suggestion for improving the process:

I think preparing the [mentor/mentee] in the aspect of pairing them with people that they might already know and already get along with because I think already acknowledging stronger relationships that are there is just a way to strengthen them even more. And you do get to meet all the mentors, so I kind of had four mentors instead of just one. I still got to meet new people, but I think being able to pair people with [mentors] they already know would be good.

Interviewee E suggested a particular process for pairing mentors and mentees:

Have [the mentors] have a one-on-one situation with their mentees. Have them go on an outing or something just the two of them do. Or let the mentors/ mentees meet as a group and find whom they mesh best with. Let the mentees rate like this mentor on a scale of one to five. “I’d rather have this one. I’d rather have that one that way.” Then you already know with whom you connect before you just get put with them. Maybe have an introductory meeting and you bring in the mentors that you’ve chosen and the students that you want to come into the leadership program. Have a potluck, like just a, “this is what the program is type of day.” And then at the end of it, you email the students and you email the mentors, “With whom did you mesh? Who did you like? Who would you want to meet with more? Who do you think could lead you?”

Program Leaders

Regarding the focus group conducted with the program leaders, five themes emerged for best practices for future iterations of the leadership program.

Time Management

Future iterations of the leadership program must address the problem of time management. Scheduling field trips and non-field trip gatherings consistently were a weakness of the program. Additionally, program leaders or mentors and program participants or mentees found it difficult to meet consistently. Program leaders indicated that future iterations of the leadership program would need to address this weakness.

Focus Group Member I suggested:

I think time was the biggest challenge. Just setting up those one-on-ones. And then I know sometimes coordinating all of our schedules for events or the trips was a challenge when we were able to do it. I know I wasn't able to attend all the trips, and other opportunities that were missed, but I think time was the biggest barrier for me. I think it's hard to control the time factor, everyone has different choices and priorities to make. But I do think maybe intentionally scheduled check-ins throughout the program where you revisit that time component would be helpful. Because I think different seasons, the time might be different. Just being a little bit more mindful of how we check in on that time, and if we can adjust to meet with our mentees more regularly. But just trying to maybe have some intentional checkpoint where that's revisited because I think sometimes if you let too much time lapse and then you're out at that rhythm of meeting, then the time has fallen off as a priority. But maybe all that was needed was a quick check-in and it could have gotten back on track.

Focus Group Member G reflected that having completed one iteration of the leadership program might help solve the time-management problem for future iterations. "I just was thinking about time, but time is a lot about choices we make and priorities. So, I was actually just wondering, now that we've had a pass on it and we see the benefit of it, I wonder if there would, on our end, be a higher motivation to want to make the time for it in general."

A Younger Group

Future iterations of the program should expand to include more students and younger students. Similar to the program participants, program leaders identified future iterations would benefit from expanding the number of students. Focus Group Member F reported, "I do think the fact of having younger participants is better. I think that really resonates a little bit, much more with me. Just a year, I think, maybe. Students now look to what their future is going to be sooner, so I think doing that younger may help that may be a good thing." Similarly, Focus Group Member H said, "Possibly do it with just a slightly younger group of people so that they're not transitioning to college in the middle

of the program. If you started with a sophomore that would be an improvement.” Focus Group Member I said:

I'm not sure if I remember the selection process of who we identified or how that was laid out. I don't know if it would be worth revisiting that opportunity for someone who might want to be in that program but wasn't selected. And I know you can't do it for everyone. It's that balance of was reasonable and feasible. But I do think there may have been missed opportunity by not selecting someone who could have potentially been a really good candidate for it.

Service Opportunities

Future iterations of the leadership program should include service opportunities.

Program leaders suggested adding service opportunities to future iterations. Focus Group Members F, G, and I contributed the following:

I think connecting in with our community partners. A few of our community partners to where we could do something with them. The people that our church in the community helps to financially support. If you did something you did every year, they would know you're going to help in this area somehow. The local partner, if they saw that level of wanting to be involved may give us some really cool things to do. Not just come in and move some groceries around. Something that could be part of the whole time that they're doing this. It's an ongoing thread throughout their whole experience. These are sometimes different people than they're used to being around, and this stretches them and pulls them in ways that writing a sermon doesn't do. I know when we've done things in the past, just like at student life when we would go out, they have a service component to some of the things they do. The students would work with people who were not like that. It just gets them out of their comfort zone. It's good for them. (Focus Group Member F)

Putting students in environments where they're serving and seeing different types of needs, who knows what God would do with that. So right here, going to the Food Pantry who's serving the downtown community. So, you get to see poverty, you get to see cross-cultural communication happening. Or any of the partners we have: the homeless shelter, addiction recovery, and just exposing them to different needs of a community and how the whole community rallies together, I think could be really formative. God could use that for sure. Like a site visit shows what could be as far as a real-world example of a model. This does something similar, but it really gets them out of their comfort zone and gives them some interactions that they may not have. So, what it really is doing is broadening their base of experience so that God can speak to each one as he wants, but it opens them up to a broader perspective that God, I think, can use going forward. And

God pulls on those experiences later in life, I think, like what your situation is. (Focus Group Member G)

I think another layer to this is if there was maybe some type of service-learning response in there where they were able to, and I'm not talking a big major project, because I saw that with the Youth Becoming Leaders program. I think that was a little bit challenging to conquer. But even just something they could have done together as a group to give back in a service type of setting. But I think it would be a good fit. If the pandemic had not been a factor and they had continued with their mission trips and things like that, we would've gotten that. And I can see how that was a punt and find another play to make this still happen for them in light of the circumstances we were in. But I agree, the hands-on component. Whether it's done short-term in our community or in another country, I think just getting them out of their element, their comfort zone, and in touch with another need or community. (Focus Group Member I)

Future Kick-off Retreat

Future iterations of the leadership program should include an initial kick-off retreat. Focus Group Member H suggested that an initial retreat would have a positive impact on the leadership program: "I would suggest starting with an offsite retreat. Taking everybody together, maybe doing overnight where you could have some initial large amount of time invested to get it going. And do some of those things where you're not rushing after church to do it for an hour before somebody has to go to something else." Additionally, a retreat would help solidify the bonds between program leaders and program participants rapidly. Focus Group Member F indicated that "Anytime you can get away, you get closer quicker." Focus Group Member G liked the idea of an initial retreat and added:

If there was a way for new people to hear from the students who had already gone through it about the difference it made for them, maybe they would come into it with an even greater desire to make time for it. So, in addition to finding time, and I do think starting off with a weekend or an overnight would inject a lot of quick connection right away, but even before that, I wonder if just more the anticipation of it could create that. And then probably some just practical scheduling on the back end, just get a rhythm of what does that look like and map it out a little bit. Maybe that's how you would end the weekend retreat or something. Let's talk

about what's going to work well for us going forward. Some type of commitment. Not rules and you have to do this, but more like this is so great we want to do this. How can we make it happen? When can we meet? Well, how's that going to work? I think that would be a win if you were at that space at the beginning of the program.

Shared Leadership

Future iterations of the leadership program should include shared leadership in the planning and execution of the leadership program. Program leaders indicated a willingness to take on more ownership of future iterations of the leadership program.

Focus Group Member G suggested:

I think when we do larger-scale projects, each one of us could own a piece of it. One leader might want to plan the trips, one leader might want to do the assessments, and I might want to serve as a life planner or create the schedule or help with coaching. We could each pick a part of the program that we really are passionate about and lead in that area. So together we could probably put a plan [in place that] would probably have most of the same parts of it, but it would be shared as far as the leadership and implementing, designing, and implementing the program.

Focus Group Member F agreed, “I really like that idea of it being a shared [leadership].

Maybe there are other people who would serve as a mentor. We wouldn't have to do every [part of the program]. I just think there could be a lot of people involved in it. I think this is something that very few churches, I don't know of any really, that offer [a leadership program like this].”

Summary of Major Findings

The qualitative data analysis produced three major findings. The following are enumerated here in a summary form and will be further elaborated in the following chapter:

1. Consistent time management is a critical component for the leadership program to be successful.

2. The field trips were essential in producing long-term reflection and growth among the program participants.
3. The assessments taken were instrumental in helping the program participants understand their identity and how to interact with others.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

A central Kentucky Restoration Church had a problem keeping young adults engaged in the church after they graduated high school. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of a Christian leadership program designed to produce Christian change agents.

This chapter reviews the three findings from this research project and describes how these findings correspond to personal observation, the literature review, and the Biblical and theological framework presented above. Additionally, this chapter reviews the limitations of this study, unexpected findings, and recommendations for further study.

Major Findings

First Finding: Time Management Critical for Success

Time management is a critical component for the leadership program to be successful. Program participants, program mentors, and the researcher all observed that the greatest weakness of the leadership program was time management. Scheduling conflicts were a consistent problem throughout the leadership program. Mentors would miss a gathering due to a scheduling conflict. Trying to get all the program participants to a meeting or field trip required tremendous effort because of the variable schedules of each program participant. As chapter four revealed, one-on-one meetings between a program participant and a program mentor were difficult to schedule and the rhythms of meetings were even more difficult to create. Both program mentors and participants noted how busy their schedules already were and how difficult it was to create more

space for the requirements of the leadership program. The result of mismanaged time meant that frequently, a program mentor missed either a non-field trip meeting or a field trip. Once or twice, a program participant had to leave a meeting early.

The literature review discussed the negative consequences of mismanaged time. John Ortberg warned how being too busy pushed God out of the Christian's life (134). The literature review also discussed strategies for better time management (MacDonald 94-99) that include the following: First, learning one's most effective rhythms requires discipline (MacDonald, 94; Wolters and Brady, 1319). Second, learning how to say, "no" is an important part of maximizing effectiveness as it relates to time management (MacDonald 96), and third, budgeting time months in advance is essential to reducing stress and anxiety (MacDonald 99). Additionally, the Trust-Based Relational Intervention principle of empowerment suggests that adolescents and emerging adults are best supported when a schedule and transitions are announced clearly (Purvis).

The biblical and theological framework revealed that time management is essential for Christians. Psalm 90:12 indicates that time management is essential for gaining wisdom. In the New Testament, Ephesians 5:15-16 warns that it is imperative for Christians to manage their time wisely because "the days are evil." Jesus further modeled time management by the way he was aware of his personal mission, his personal limits, and the need to set aside time to invest in the twelve disciples (MacDonald 82-85). This example of Jesus is further understood in light of the theology of the incarnation and *missio dei*. Jesus came to be with humanity, as a human. He was fully human and fully God. Jesus had to learn how to use his time effectively and he did so by keeping the *missio dei* at the center of his thinking and activity.

Second Finding: Field Trips Essential for Reflection and Growth

The field trips were essential in producing long-term reflection and growth among the program participants. Both program participants and program mentors were unified in their reporting that the field trips taken during the leadership program were very impactful. Visiting Christian leaders in both secular and religious settings helped the student program participants in the areas of reflection and growth. The field trips helped reinforce the idea that Christian leaders can thrive in non-religious settings. In the study, student program participants talked about how they have often reflected on the field trips. This reflection has helped some of them in determining their own calling. Likewise, student program participants reported that the field trips have helped them grow in terms of how they currently relate within teams. The finding reinforces that the Christian leadership program being evaluated was at least partially successful in producing Christian change agents. The student program participants still rely on the experiential learning from the field trips.

The literature review revealed that experiential learning is “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” (Kolb 41). Chapter two presented four learning styles--diverging, converging, accommodating and assimilation. Those who teach must recognize their own learning style and attempt to teach from each style so that the learner might be exposed to all parts of the Experiential Learning Model. Merriam and Baumgartner’s “Teaching Around the Circle” (125) provides a useful way accomplish this. Likewise, Kenda Creasy Dean suggested that utilizing the pilgrim principle is important to gain experience from field trips. Specifically, situated learning theory utilizes “*legitimate peripheral participation,*” which refers to “the way

newcomers become integrated into communities—namely by participating in them” (Dean 144-145).

The biblical and theological framework demonstrated that in many of the discipling relationships, experiential learning took place. Joshua was with Moses wherever God guided the people of Israel. Once Elisha joined Elijah, he engaged in ministry wherever they were led. The same can be said about the twelve disciples who followed Jesus in the New Testament. Likewise, Barnabas and Paul and, later, Paul and Timothy did ministry, experienced learning, and built the kingdom of God together.

Theologically, *missio dei* reminds us that mission is God’s mission. Alan Hirsch wrote that “[God’s] mission has a church” (“Defining Missional”). This mission is not located within a place. The church is the people of God. Christians are to live out their faith in whatever spaces they inhabit. Program mentors and program participants benefitted from seeing the *missio dei* being lived out in all kinds of settings on the field trips that were taken as part of the leadership program.

Third Finding: Assessments Instrumental for Self-Understanding and Interaction

The assessments were instrumental in helping the student program participants understand their identity and how to interact with others. Student program participants and program mentors reported that another important benefit of the leadership program was becoming more self-aware. This was accomplished through the administration of personality inventories throughout the leadership program and the discussion that took place regarding everyone’s results. It was not surprising to learn that the personality inventories were important to those who participated in the leadership program. What was surprising was the degree to which both the student program participants and the

program mentors found the personality inventories helpful. Learning that those personality inventories are currently helping the student program participants navigate relationships and develop friendships points to the positive outcome of having personality inventories be a part of the leadership program. This is further evidence of the Christian leadership program's success in producing Christian change agents.

The literature review supported this finding. Erik Erikson's "identity versus role confusion" stage of development was explored (*Childhood*). Specifically, adolescents and emerging adults use these stages of life to determine their identity. The Enneagram helps develop cognizance of self, the ability to show empathy, and the ability to regulate oneself by providing the leader a means to communicate effectively (Raitamäki 44-48). It also helps individuals confront sin and think through repentance (Stalfa 73-74). The DiSC is another useful personality inventory that can help leaders determine more about themselves and help younger leaders think through potential careers. Finally, the Clifton StrengthsFinder is a useful test for determining one's five signature strengths. All of these personality inventories worked to help both program participants and program mentors become more self-aware. This, in turn, increased their ability to relate to others.

A biblical and theological framework also supports the importance of becoming self-aware. The Old Testament demonstrates the importance of understanding (Prov. 20:5) and the need for constant self-examination (Lam. 3:37-40; Prov. 14:8; Ps. 51:3). The New Testament likewise calls for careful self-examination and self-awareness (1 Tim. 4:16; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 13:5).

The *imago dei* represents the theological framework that supports this finding. S.B. Ferguson discussed how the *imago dei* means that a human is limited in that she or

he is not the mirror image of God. However, at the same time, a human is made to be “a reflection of God” (Ferguson 328). A Christian’s identity is rooted in understanding the love the Triune God has for the world (John 3:16). Learning about oneself helps the Christian continue to form her or his identity in the Triune God.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The implications of the findings could help Christian ministry in the following ways. First, successful time management plays an important role in successfully executing a Christian leadership program like the one being evaluated in this study. Future adaptations of such a program would do well to over-communicate the importance of setting aside the appropriate amount of time for both program leaders and program participants.

Second, adolescents and emerging adults need plenty of opportunities for experiential learning. This application is useful in a Christian leadership program, but the study also points to the usefulness of increasing this practice within the local church. Taking adolescents and emerging adults on impactful field trips, interviewing Christian leaders in both religious and secular fields, and debriefing help adolescents and emerging adults better articulate their faith. This practice could have long-term effects in terms of retaining emerging adults within the church.

Third, self-awareness and learning about oneself are beneficial to adolescents and emerging adults. This study reveals that student program participants saw a marked improvement in their ability to understand themselves and others after taking the personality inventories. Local churches could benefit by providing adolescents and

emerging adults access to personality inventories and helping adolescents and emerging adults debrief their results.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the lack of diversity. Student program participants and program mentors were all white and would be qualified within the same socioeconomic class.

Additionally, one program mentor was unable to complete the leadership program. This created many problems in terms of re-pairing the affected student program participant with a current program mentor.

The research for this program was impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. All research was conducted through the Zoom platform. This could be classified as both a weakness and a strength. It was a weakness in that the research had to be done in a somewhat restricted format. It was a strength in that the research was recorded and was much easier to transcribe and analyze.

Unexpected Observations

Perhaps the most surprising part of the study was how the Christian leadership program is still affecting the student program participants two years after the program concluded. In their reporting, the student program participants identified how they were using their increased self-awareness in building friendships.

Another surprising element that the study revealed was how the student program participants varied in selecting their favorite non-field trip meeting and in their favorite field trip. It was not surprising that student program participants had different favorites.

Rather, it was surprising to encounter the wide spectrum of reasoning for why a non-field trip meeting or field trip was selected.

Recommendations

Future adaptations of a Christian leadership program would be wise to seek diversity. This might mean a mostly homogenous congregation would need to work with other congregations to achieve this goal. It would benefit Christian ministry to determine if a program like this would achieve similar or better results with a more diverse group of participants and mentors.

Likewise, a future versions of a Christian leadership program could benefit from expanding the age from late high school to early high school and lengthening the program.

Further, future adaptations of a Christian leadership program should include clear expectations regarding the amount of time a program like this will take from a mentor or participant's schedule.

Finally, it would be wise for future adaptations of a Christian leadership program (like the one evaluated) to retain taking field trips given the benefit of experiential learning for adolescents and emerging adults. Personality inventories should also be administered and discussed in any future versions of a program like the one assessed in this project. Self-awareness is important for identity formation for adolescents and emerging adults (Erikson, *Childhood*) and the administration and debriefing of personality inventories adds significant value to producing Christian change agents.

Postscript

Creating a Christian leadership program and then studying and analyzing its effectiveness in this project has been an arduous and equally rewarding journey. The journey included writing this project during a global pandemic and what was easily one of the most difficult years of my life (2021). But the journey also included the joy and humbling honor to work with the program leaders and the student program participants. I learned so much from these individuals about discipling and mentoring.

I believe there is tremendous value in continuing to refine and conduct Christian leadership programs like the one evaluated in this study. In doing so, Christian leaders can fulfill the great Psalm that “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate” (145:4–5).

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Christian Change-Agents: Analyzing the Effectiveness of a Christian Leadership Program Among Students in a Central Kentucky Restoration Church

You are invited to be in a research study being done by **James Bush, a doctoral student** from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because ***you participated in a Christian leadership program that is now being evaluated for its effectiveness.***

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last one hour on the Zoom platform.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

The Zoom session will be recorded for the purpose of transcribing your interview answers and analyzing data. You will be interviewed by James Bush. Your confidentiality is of the utmost importance. The data will be stored in a secure, password-protected server and will be destroyed upon the completion of this study.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell **James Bush**, who can be reached at **james.bush@asburyseminary.edu**. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact **James Bush** at **james.bush@asburyseminary.edu**.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Christian Change-Agents: Analyzing the Effectiveness of a Christian Leadership Program Among Students in a Central Kentucky Restoration Church

You are invited to be in a research study being done by **James Bush, a doctoral student** from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because ***you participated in a Christian leadership program that is now being evaluated for its effectiveness.***

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group that will last one and half hours on the Zoom platform.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

The Zoom session will be recorded for the purpose of transcribing your interview answers and analyzing data. You will be interviewed by James Bush. Your confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Although confidentiality will be encouraged, it cannot be guaranteed due to the presence of other participants. The data will be stored in a secure, password-protected server and will be destroyed upon the completion of this study.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell **James Bush**, who can be reached at **james.bush@asburyseminary.edu**. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty.

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Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

APPENDIX B

Christian Leadership Student Interview

Research Questions:

RQ #1. What did the program participants (students) identify as its strengths and weaknesses?

RQ #3. What best practices would improve the program for its next iteration?

Interview Questions Program Participants (Students)

- I. Opening Section
 - a. Consent
 - b. Description of interview
 - c. Prayer
- II. Research Question #1 Sub-questions:
 1. Thinking back to the leadership program, What do you recall about the vetting and application process?
 - i. Follow-up. Do you recall the instructions being clear? Was our communication with you timely and helpful?
 2. How did this program impact your relationship with God?
 3. On a scale of 1-4, how was your overall experience with the leadership program? (1 means very negative while 4 means very positive)
 4. What did you enjoy most about the program?
 5. On a scale of 1-4 how impactful were the field trips in the leadership program? (1 means not impactful at all while 4 means highly impactful)
 6. Which field trip was the most beneficial to you? And why?
 7. Which field trip was the least helpful for you? And why?
 8. Thinking back to the non-field trip gatherings, on a scale of 1-4 rate those gatherings impact on you? (1 means not impactful at all while 4 means highly impactful)
 9. Which non-field trip gathering made the deepest impact on you?
 10. Which non-field trip gathering was the least impactful for you?
 11. On a scale of 1-4 how helpful was the mentor with whom you were paired in the leadership program? (1 means not helpful at all while 4 means highly helpful)
 12. What was the best part of being paired with a mentor?
 13. What was the most difficult part about being paired with a mentor?
 14. As you think back on the leadership program, what was the weakest part of the program?
- III. Research Question #3 Sub-questions:
 15. If this leadership program were to be conducted again with new participants, what would you recommend we do to improve the program?
 16. Specifically, how could we better prepare the mentors?
 17. Is there anything that should be dropped from the leadership program for future iterations?
 18. Is there anything else you want to add that the questions didn't address?

APPENDIX C

Christian Leadership Program Mentor Focus Group

Research Questions:

RQ #2. What did the program leaders (mentors) identify as its strengths and weaknesses?

RQ #3. What best practices would improve the program for its next iteration?

Focus Group Questions Program Participants (Mentors)

- I. Opening Section
 - a. Consent
 - b. Description of focus group
 - c. Prayer

Question 1: Upon reflection, what are some of your best memories from participating in the leadership program?

Question 2: During the leadership program, field trips to interview Christian leaders were taken, personality and discipleship inventories were filled out and discussed, and leadership principles were taught. Can you give me an example of what you discussed with your mentee regarding one or more of these elements of the program? Which aspects do you think were most valuable and why?

Question 3: How effective was the mentoring process during the program?

Question 4: Please evaluate the communication/training you received for mentoring?

Question 5: Please evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership program. What worked?

Question 6: What parts of the leadership program were challenging for you?

Question 7: If this leadership program were to be conducted again with new participants, what would you recommend we do to improve the program?

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