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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF SELECT
HOUSE CHURCH NETWORKS IN NORTH AMERICA:
A MULTI-CASE STUDY

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To Angela,
my beautiful example of perseverance and grace
and to
the staff and elders of Apex Community Church

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PREFACE

I am typing this page on a very cold Ohio morning at 1:40 am. An old lamp is casting a dirty light on a table full of books, old soft drink cans, and a solitary laptop. My beautiful wife of fourteen years is sleeping just a few feet away as I near the end of this academic journey. The perseverance of my Lord through Angela and our four children – Rachel, Gabriel, Christopher, and Chloe – have left me very thankful for God’s extravagant grace. My personal prize from this research is being more available to my family and deeper sanctification from my Lord Jesus.

Gaining wisdom is a collective effort and my colleagues, humorously named The Imposters, have made this research endeavor a wonderful, joyous, and challenging experience. Little did I know that our Cohort 2 would be weeks of long hours but some of the sweetest moments of my life. My supervisor, Dr. Michael Wilder, has gone the long road of servanthood in order for this man to graduate. The phone calls, numerous e-mails, and meetings over coffee have modeled Christian academics at its best. I thank you Dr. Wilder for being my brother and friend. Those terms rise above our academic relationship any day! It gladdened my heart to hear that Dr. Pettegrew was on my doctoral committee. His gentleness, humbleness, and grace will be an enduring memory to my family.

The elders of Apex Community have been men that have been very supportive of me pursuing this degree. Neither they nor I could have envisioned the amount of vital

ministry hours that were sacrificed for this academic endeavor. I can only pray that I can be a better servant to them and the ministry of Apex for years to come. If I come to them again and ask if I could go back to school, they should tell me to sit down. My blood-bought family of Apex Community has been a source of great joy. They have lavished me with grace as I have learned with them what it means to be a bride of Jesus. Janet Ogden has been such a gift to me as my reader. I cannot imagine the many looks on her face as she read through lengthy papers from a very rusty Ph.D. student. I thank her. Gratitude also goes to Kristen Denman, Linda Martin, and Jason Zastrow who provided help in transcribing the numerous recorded interviews for this research.

Jesus, I knew quickly after I started down this road of academia that this was more than just getting a degree. It was another conduit that you were going to use to reveal more about Yourself and by consequence, myself. I have found that You are bigger, grander, and more majestic than I had ever dreamed. I have also found I have much more to go in being conformed to Your wonderful Image. Your cross and empty tomb are infinitely better than this degree. Those are enough for me so I am once again stammered by Your deep, deep love for your adopted children.

Rob Turner

Dayton, Ohio

May 2011

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

The American church is morphing. This is the assertion made by Eddie Gibbs, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and a researcher of emerging church movements. This “morphing,” according to Gibbs is the transition of the church to new expressions within the North American context. He further states,

There is a growing realization among leaders committed to mission that the challenge will not be adequately met by adding new programs to ensure the local church’s-- or a denomination’s-- institutional survival. Such leaders are talking about an unfettered reimagining of the church, resulting in a comprehensive change in its self-understanding and its configuration. (Gibbs 2009, 16)

One example of this “reimagining” is the house church movement (HCM), which is growing in North America. This movement is not always the stereotypical “anticlergy, antiauthority, antiliturgy, antisermon, antibuilding, anti-most ways of doing church over the last 1,700 years” (Deyoung and Kluck 2009, 179). It has even captured the attention of the *New York Times*, which reported the existence of 1,600 house churches from all fifty states of North America (Stetzer 2003, 112). This is a cautious estimate for many house churches do not utilize any kind of mechanism to report their existence. Ed Stetzer, an American missiologist and researcher, contends that as many as four million Americans worship within non-traditional church settings such as house churches. This figure, though cautious, is large enough to garner much needed research (Stetzer, [countpeople.html](#)).

The goal of this proposed research is to observe, classify, evaluate, and interpret leadership development within North American house church networks. The ministry philosophy of house churches contains certain attributes that not only distinguish it from other church movements but also place importance on particular behaviors that maintain its identity. One of those identifying behaviors of house churches is the desire for ongoing multiplication of other house churches (Comiskey 2007, 117).

This house church multiplication occurs with leaders who get little or no financial compensation for developing leaders within their respective network. Most of the leaders that are trained have families and full time jobs while leading the various aspects of their house churches. Despite these perceived challenges, the North American house church movement is still gaining national attention through national conferences (Dale, conference.html) and acknowledgement from prominent evangelical leaders. House church multiplication combined with its highly autonomous nature cannot be achieved without the development of individuals who will lead these emerging faith communities (Hadaway, Dubose, and Wright 1987, 203).

House churches are also driven by a desire to practice what is conceived as “grassroots Christianity.” One influential proponent of house churches describes this term as house churches that are fully functioning, self-governing, fully participatory, intending to multiply into other new house churches, and eventually form cohesive networks (Zdero 2007, 9-10). Consequently, many proponents of house church philosophy look upon early church structure as highly normative rather than descriptive in nature.

The house church movement has long been documented as an influential expression of discipleship in international contexts. Dave Garrison, a noted missiologist,

has studied church planting movements all over the world and came to the conclusion that church planting movements occur primarily through house churches. Garrison states, “Church buildings do appear in church planting movements. However, the vast majority of the churches continue to be small, reproducible cell churches of 10-30 members meeting in homes or storefronts” (Garrison 2007, 271).

The reasons for these movements may seem logical such as a lack of financial resources to build or maintain buildings of corporate worship or governmental oppression of public expressions of Christian worship. These dynamics certainly affect the norms of a growing faith community but there is disagreement about the degree of importance placed on issues of financial hardship and persecution in the historical growth of house churches. Steve Atkerson, who is an influential teacher and writer in the North American and international house church movement, believes persecution, poverty, and progression are not adequate reasons to explain the phenomenon of first century house churches. Rather, the apostolic church did not erect church buildings in large part because they simply did not need them (Atkerson 2007, 150).

The most notable example of the house church movement is seen in the significant growth of the Christian church in China. Missiologists assert that the underground church in China, which is primarily house churches, had 700,000 professed believers in the late 1940s. This time period is significant in that Mao came into power in 1949. A ruthless atheist committed to a communist rule, Mao, engaged in a campaign to systematically eliminate any vestige of Christian influence in China (Gehring 2004, 306). Missionaries were expelled from the country and indigenous church leaders were threatened, tortured or killed (Hattaway 2007, 298).

When Mao died in 1976 and missiologists slowly penetrated China to study the state of the Christian presence what they found was remarkable. An estimated forty million indigenous believers were meeting in house churches throughout all of China. Despite an oppressive government and no official church structures, the church in China not only survived but also flourished (Wright 1989, 130). Paul Hattaway, director of *Asia Harvest*, believes there are now between 80 and 100 million indigenous believers in China. This is significant growth from an estimated 700,000 believers in 1949. Hattaway also contends that as many as 30,000 Chinese are coming to Christ every day (Hattaway 2007, 294-95; Garrison 2004, 54).

As fascinating as stories like the house church movement in China may be, is there evidence of house church movements flourishing in North America? Rad Zdero, a Canadian practitioner and researcher of house church movements, gives two examples of house church movements that do indeed exist in North America. The Dove Christian Fellowship, based in Lititz, Pennsylvania, within 20 years saw a growth from three cell groups totaling 25 people to 80 cell groups and house church networks spreading across five continents involving 20,000 people (Kreider and McClung 2007, 16-17). Church Multiplication Associates, based out of Signal Hill, California, have started 1,000 churches that meet in homes, offices and various other places in less than a decade (Cole 2005, 26).

The concern that drove this research is related to the network aspect of these Western house church movements. Not all house church movements strive to be completely disconnected from each other so they create relationships with one other to ensure missional movement and biblical fidelity. British church planters Tim Chester and Steve Timmis have gleaned from church history that “apostolic churches became

networks of small communities rather than one large group, to safeguard apostolic principles of church life” (Chester and Timmis 2008, 93). Apostolic principles are those principles that find their foundational meaning in the revealed Word of God.

Could there be principles and practices of leadership development within these house church networks that could contribute to the whole body of Christ regardless the varied forms of worship and governance? This research attempted to discover the explicit or implicit attributes of leadership development utilized by select North American house church networks. The descriptive nature of this study used a multiple case study format that will elicit aspects of commonality and divergence that exists between the selected house church networks.

As the literature review will show, there is a dearth of scholarly research about North American house churches. Conversely, dissertations abound that address aspects of the house church movement in other parts of the world like China, South Korea, and South America. This does not mean that North American house churches are a recent phenomenon but rather a movement that needs more in depth research in order to extrapolate principles and practices to further God’s kingdom in North America.

There are published books by individuals such Larry Kreider, Rad Zdero, Neil Cole, and Tony Dale that address the North American house church movement. These treatments of the movement are highly theoretical but also contain practical methods to foster healthy house church movements. Leadership development has been addressed by others within the house church movement and have taken the biblical witness and applied its precepts to building leaders for house church ministry. The desire of this research was to see how those precepts are practically contextualized within select house church

networks. The intent of this type of research is to uncover a unifying theory of leadership development.

The unique contribution of this research is in its qualitative nature. There are no scholarly treatments of the movement that take a select number of house church networks and apply case study research methods to them. Dissertations discovered by this researcher addressed foreign movements of house churches or a specific component of North American house churches such as evangelistic effectiveness (Payne 2007). This research takes into account contextual factors like such as place, demographics, and size to accomplish the research purpose.

The qualitative nature of case studies provided the needed research mechanism to accomplish this goal. The focus of this research was to discover those practices and criterion used by house church networks to select, train, and maintain house church leaders. Precedent literature does show treatment of the importance of training house church leaders (Kreider and McClung 2007, 141-44) but there is limited content related to processes of leadership development as a network. The intent of this researcher was to show how these house church networks develop leaders from within the networks.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership development process of select house church networks in North America.

Research Questions

The research into this topic was guided by the following questions:

1. What process is utilized by house church networks for the selection of potential house church leaders?

2. What were the methods utilized by house church networks to develop potential house church leaders?
3. What were the methods utilized by house church networks to provide ongoing leadership support to the house church leaders?
4. What were the self-perceptions of house church leaders regarding the effectiveness of their leadership development process as related to network goals?
5. What were the self-perceptions of house church leaders regarding the inadequacies of their training?

Delimitations of the Study

Many facets of the house church movement are open for academic scrutiny such as theological presuppositions and historical precedence. In order to limit the scope of the proposed research, the following issues, which are related to the house church movement, were not addressed:

1. This research did not argue for house church methodology over and against other kinds of ecclesiastical forms.
2. This research did not study house church networks that utilize a hybrid or cell church model. The cell church model is commonly confused with the house church model because both models utilize houses in their respective ministry philosophies. Cell churches still maintain weekly corporate gatherings, paid staff and designated buildings for corporate worship or office space.
3. This research did not study house church networks that own property designated as places of worship.
4. This research did not study house church networks outside of the Continental United States.
5. This research did not study house church networks that do not have an active plan to birth new house churches through the development of new house church leaders.
6. This research did not study house church networks that exist outside of a large metropolitan area. Though house churches do exist in low density populations, the literature review shows that the dominant expression of house church networks is located in cities.

Conclusions from this research could be limited in several ways. The research findings may not necessarily be generalized to traditional church models. The research

findings will not necessarily apply to house church networks outside the continental United States, however they may well benefit from them. As mentioned earlier in the delimitations, the potential results of this research may not be thoroughly applicable for “stand alone” house churches unconnected to a house church network. House churches or house church networks in remote or highly suburban geographical areas will need to contextualize the research findings, which is beyond the purpose of this research. This research was generalized to the four house church networks that comprise the focus of the research.

Terminology

Any mention of house churches, especially house church networks can invite instant scrutiny and misunderstanding. Therefore, it is important to define key terms and concepts for a proper understanding of the context of house church networks and leadership development.

Apostolic. Within the precedent literature the term, “apostolic” is consistently used in the discussion of house church leadership. This modern use of “apostle” does not mean equality with the Lord’s twelve apostles and therefore leaving open the canon of scripture but rather individuals who are gifted to the church for the sake of planting new churches for the gospel in new territory. These individuals are also important in the training of house church leaders (Simson 1998, 114-15). The similar terms “apostle” and “apostolic” may have too much contemporary baggage to be recovered. The emphasis is on the church planting function of the term. In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul defines his apostleship both in terms of his vision of the risen Christ and his work as a church planter (Chester and Timmis 2008, 91).

Cell church. The Cell church model integrates both traditional and house church philosophies of ministry. This model has weekly, corporate worship gatherings, a paid staff, and owns property. Furthermore, this model of church uses the worship gatherings to funnel individuals into house churches or cells that meet weekly and are within that church's geographical region (Zdero 2004, 127). This particular model of church is one that most closely parallels this researcher's own context of ministry and is not the research population of this proposed research.

Decentralized. Decentralized refers to the antithesis of what some in the HCM would classify as a traditionally centralized approach to kingdom life. Instead of power that is derived from a specific location or ministry program, power is "distributed to each part that can in turn generate new life" (Cole 2005, 44). This concept of decentralization has led proponents of the HCM to avoid meeting in church buildings and the paying of a full time staff (Zdero 2004, 71).

Five-fold ministry team. The gifts expressed in Ephesians 4:11 involve the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. These "people gifts" are referred to in much of the precedent literature as integral for the health of the house church movement. Individuals, endowed by the Spirit with these gifts, aid house churches to function within biblical integrity, be evangelistically minded and authentically care for each other (Kreider and McClung 2007, 154-57). It is important to note that research has shown the validity of pastor and teacher being one person instead of two distinct individuals (Gaebelein 1978, 58).

House church. One researcher of church planting movements offers this concise definition of house church:

House Churches are stand alone churches that happen to be small enough to meet in homes. After filling their limited space, they grow through multiplication rather than

increasing their membership. Each house has its own leadership and derives its authority directly from Christ rather than through a church hierarchy, and function in every way as a church. (Garrison 2004, 271)

Common attributes of house churches are the taking of communion, mutual teaching, baptizing, learning, and engaging their immediate geographical context with the gospel (Simson 1998, 81-91).

House church leader. A house church leader is the facilitator for the practices carried out by the members of the house church. This person and if needed, a co-leader, provides general leadership over the house church and is entrusted with keeping the overall vision in front of the members of the house church. The goal of the house church leader is to help other members of the house churches discover, sharpen, and use their spiritual gifts, capabilities, and resources to accomplish God's purposes in the church and in the world (Zdero 2007, 448).

House church network. A cluster of house churches in a particular geographical area that reproduce other house churches. These networks also share a common purpose, principles and practices. Networks are also marked by strategic leaders who visit from house to house to encourage and exhort the mission of the house church, regular meetings of house church leaders and semi-regular celebrations that involve the gathering of regional house churches (Zdero 2007, 10).

Incarnational. House church proponents compare the differing philosophies between traditional church and house church models by stating one as attractional and the other incarnational. The traditional or attractional model of ministry has been critiqued as a "come and hear" evangelistic philosophy while incarnational adopts a totally different stance:

Rather than investing time in the creation and development of sacred religious spaces for people to meet God, this [Incarnational] mode recognizes that church is a

much more organic, dynamic, and non-institutionalized set of relationships than the old Christendom mode allows. If the attractional mode sees the world as divided into two zones, the “in” and the “out,” the incarnational model sees it more as a web, a series of intersecting lines symbolizing the networks of relationships, friendships, and acquaintances of which church members are a part. (Hirsch 2003, 44)

Missional. Missional is a theological outlook that describes the intent of many house church movements. If God’s glory defines the vertical implication of the house church, being missional describes the horizontal implication for the house church. J. D. Payne, author of *Missional House Churches*, asserts that the missional church “is not content to talk about the need to do missions, to have missions as a separate program within the congregation, or to understand missions as something done two weeks every summer or on Thursday nights at the homeless shelter” (Payne 2007, 8). A missional approach is aptly described as making a transition from being the inviting church to being the invading church (Comiskey 2007, 80).

Organic. The planting of churches wherever the seed of the Gospel is planted: in coffeehouses, campuses, businesses, and homes. Organic planting adherents believe that church should happen wherever life happens; people should not have to leave life to go to church (Cole 2005, 24).

Traditional church. In the context of this research, the term traditional will refer to any ministry method that uses small groups as an optional enhancement program for an otherwise traditional church system that includes church buildings, hierarchical leadership systems, preplanned worship services, and a programmed approach to doing ministry (Zdero 2007, 9).

Research Assumptions

The following research assumptions were foundational to this study:

1. The researcher assumed that house church networks value the importance of leadership development. Regardless of differences between varied church models, the call to develop leaders is an enduring core mandate (Matt 28:18-20).
2. The researcher assumed that house church leaders have specific goals and content that is communicated to prospective house church leaders.
3. The researcher assumed that house church methodology is a legitimate expression of biblical ecclesiology.
4. The researcher assumed that house church leaders perceive themselves as competent in developing leaders.

Procedural Overview

Research of this nature lends itself to a highly qualitative research design. Depending on the volume of house church networks that meet the population and sampling criteria, a case study methodology of research could be well suited for this research. This research examined four house church networks that implement a deliberate process to select, develop, and maintain leaders who accomplish the goals and objectives of the house church networks.

The research population were comprised of four house church networks that exist in diverse areas of North America. The networks are Vineyard Central in Cincinnati, Ohio; The MetroSoul house church network in New York City; Christ Fellowship of Kansas City, Missouri; and the Denver house church network in Denver, Colorado. These networks differed in terms of geographical and cultural contexts but also hold a common commitment to birth other house churches, to maintain a network in their respective geographical areas and have minimal if any financial overhead devoted to buildings and staff.

These networks also differentiated themselves by how they express their respective ministries. Vineyard Central places importance on renewal of the individual

but also our environment. MetroSoul is located in an extremely urban environment and is highly influenced by the Christian church. Christ Fellowship emphasizes the role of doctrine and is overtly Calvinistic. The Denver House Network has a desire to reach the Denver metropolitan area.

The qualitative approach for the proposed research will incorporate various strategies of inquiry. This research employed *purposeful sampling* that meets criteria found in the literature review. The researcher engaged in *observing the phenomenon* in its natural context. Within that natural context, extensive notes were taken to provide the reader a contextual framework in understanding each house church network.

Interviews were the main protocol to achieve the research purpose. Interviews were conducted on the field and will employ specific and generally open-ended questions. The intent of these interviews was to elicit extensive views and perceptions of the participants.

Another aspect of this qualitative research employed a thorough *content analysis*. Content such as websites, published materials, handouts, and evaluative documents will be analyzed for common and divergent themes running through the selected house church networks. Content analysis will aid the researcher in observing symmetry or discrepancies between stated content and actual accomplishment of stated goals.

This researcher will be careful to validate the research conclusions. The research findings will only be preliminary until the findings are reported back to the participants for accuracy, clarifying researcher bias, and utilized a “peer debriefer” (Creswell 2003, 196). Ethical protocols for the research process were closely adhered to,

such as: permission forms and clear communication of the expectations of the participants and this researcher.

The analysis of this research utilized NVivo 8 software made by QSR International. NVivo 8 takes “unstructured information – like field notes, videos, transcripts and audio recordings, instead of numbers to arrive at conclusions” (QSR, NVIVO8.html). This software is important for the objectives of this research because it culled the substantial data and provided management and meaning to it.

Conclusion

The following chapter provides biblical and theological support for house churches and accordingly, house church networks. The same treatment will be done for the importance of developing leaders. Not only will leadership development be treated biblically and theologically but this researcher examined previous research from other fields of inquiry. Chapter three provides the specific method used for the research design. Chapter four analyzes the research findings and chapter five offers the conclusive implications from those findings.

It is the hope of this researcher that these case studies will contribute to the literature on a movement that is growing but still shrouded in a certain degree of mystery and misunderstanding. A corollary of this research can aid in demystifying a particular facet of house church networks: leadership development. The house church movement has been a catalyst for discipleship in many parts of the world but can it be an incubator of biblical leadership in North America? Wayne Meeks, in his book on the early church called *The First Urban Christians*, maintains that

no group can persist for any appreciable time without developing some patterns of leadership, some differentiation of roles among its members, some means of managing conflict, some ways of articulating shared values and norms, and some

sanctions to assure acceptable levels of conformity to those norms. (Meeks 1983, 111)

Paul's words to Timothy, written hundreds of years ago are still ringing true today, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). The mandate to develop biblical leaders is an important one and lessons gleaned from these house church networks could serve the broader kingdom of God in developing disciples of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

In his doctoral dissertation, James Reid noted that the house church has emerged as an exciting alternative to existing church forms in North America. Reid continued to ask two important questions: “Is the house church simply a passing fad, like so many other things, both inside and outside the church? Is the house church to be regarded seriously, or should it simply be dismissed from the mind with the notion that it will disappear?” (Reid 1980, 18).

Thirty years later, it is evident that the house church in North America did not disappear and has increasingly become part of the American fabric of church life. Evidence of this growth has been the increase of theological and theoretical literature that addresses different facets of the house church movement (HCM). To examine this specific body of literature, the following framework will be used to guide this chapter.

The first section of this chapter will examine the biblical and exegetical foundations that undergird the HCM. The second section will provide theological distinctives of the HCM and theoretical approaches that arise from authors and practitioners within the movement itself. The third section of this chapter will examine the biblical and theological foundations of leadership development. The last section will address theoretical approaches to leadership development with an emphasis placed on the role of house churches in the leadership development process.

House Churches within the Bible

Robin Lane Fox, a lecturer in Ancient History at Exeter College in Oxford England, made a claim about the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire by the fourth century. He stated, “It was through the household and the house church that Christianity and its other-worldly ‘assembly’ first put down its roots, then grew to undermine the old civic values and the very shape of the pagan city” (Fox 89, 1989). This observation is reiterated by David Geddes, who stated in the *Calvin Theological Journal* that “the household was the key structure and setting for early Christian expansion” (Feddes 2008, 276). The house is “truly the axis of life of the early churches” (Barbero 2001, 222).

Floyd Filson, who taught at Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago, wrote a seminal article called “The Significance of the Early House Churches.” Filson’s article was his attempt to demonstrate that primitive Christianity would be better understood if more attention was given to the physical conditions under which first century Christians met and lived (Gehring 2004, 2). First, although Christian worship was indebted to Jewish practices, the house church made possible “a distinctively Christian worship and fellowship from the very first days of the apostolic age.” Second, the house churches provide insight on the emphasis Paul places on family life throughout his letters.

Third, the existence of house churches in one city helps explain the existence of “party strife” within the apostolic age. Filson explains,

Much has been written to show the deep doctrinal differences which divided one group from another in Corinth and other centers. We need not deny the importance of such factors. Nevertheless, the proneness to division which we mark in the apostolic churches was not unconnected with the division of the Christians of a city into house churches. ‘Birds of a feather flock together.’ Christians of a certain tendency grouped together and thereby were confirmed in that tendency. Separation

from Christians of somewhat different background, views, and interests must have operated to prevent the growth of mutual understanding. (Filson 1939, 110)

Fourth, a study of the house church situation provides insight into the diverse social status of first century believers. Lastly, the development of church polity cannot be understood outside the context of first-century house churches. These insights from Filson emerged from his research into the biblical witness about house churches along with archeological evidence discovered in the 1930's in Dura-Europos. It was there that a Christian house church was discovered that was dated AD 232 (Filson 1939, 109-12).

Archaeological evidence does offer compelling insights into first century house churches but it is important to examine the foundations of house church through the evidence of scripture. It is within the biblical data that the house church movement will find its ongoing Christian relevance. Beginning with the Gospels and moving through the Epistles will achieve this.

The Gospels

An assumption could be made that biblical discussion of house churches begins in the Book of Acts, which undoubtedly provides a detailed narrative of the burgeoning Christian movement. However, recent scholarship has indicated a methodological theme within the Gospels that highlight the *oikos* (house or household) as strategic in the ministry of Jesus. The context of the house provides a backdrop to well-known acts of Jesus such as His proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom (Luke 8:30; 10:5-8; unless otherwise noted, biblical texts will be in the English Standard Version), teaching (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 7:36-50; 10:38-42; 14:1-24), and healing (Mark 2:11-12; Luke 4:38-41).

Roger Gehring, an Adjunct Professor at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, has provided a recent and scholarly treatment of ministry practice within the parameters of the Gospels. Gehring contends that the historical data from five verses of Mark (1:29, 33; 2:1; 3:20; 9:33) demonstrate that a significant amount of Jesus' healing and teaching ministry took place in and around the residence of Peter in Capernaum (Garland 1996, 73; Edwards 2002, 59; Evans 2001, 60). The location of Capernaum and its surrounding villages provided Jesus with a geographical area that had a relatively large population, centrally located on an important trade route between Damascus and Caesarea but far enough from larger cities such as Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Jerusalem. This provided Jesus a way of spreading the message of the Kingdom without initially confronting the political or religious leaders in those cities (Gehring 2004, 37-41). Gehring offers a compelling conclusion:

Our study demonstrates that there are good reasons to believe that, already in the pre-Easter period, the house of Peter served as kind of prototype of a house church with most of the key elements included in our definition of a house church in the full sense of the word. Prayer, fellowship, missional and instructional proclamation are all elements of a full-fledged house church. But assuming that Jesus and his disciples, as good Jews, most likely attended a synagogue as their main form of public worship, it would be premature to speak of the pre-Easter house of Peter as a house church in the complete sense. The house of Peter before Easter was a place where the first core group of disciples gathered around Jesus in a house community that can be described as a kind of house church in embryonic form. (Gehring 2004, 46-47)

Del Birkey, a researcher and practitioner within the HCM, expounds on Gehring's conclusions. In observing the ministry method of Luke 10:1-11 where Jesus appointed seventy-two of His followers and sent them to every town and place he was about to go, Birkey observed five principles. The first principle was the small composite of the different teams, possibly for the sake of mutual accountability and support.

Second, was the implied exhortation to trust God for their physical needs as they searched for a person of peace. Third, if they did find such a person, they were to accept the hospitality of that house. Fourth, they were to remain in that home and build a base of operations while reaching those relationships that were connected to that particular home. The last principle for the disciples was the admonition to not spend undue time in an area where the message of the Kingdom was resisted (Birkey 2007, 50-51; Bock 1996, 291-92). Luke in his Acts of the Apostles extends this emphasis on the house as integral in the expansion of the Gospel.

The Acts of the Apostles

As noted earlier, it is in Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* where one sees clearly the significance of homes within the early church. Brad Blue, an authority on the material culture of the ancient Graeco-Roman world, contends that "the ostensible function of Acts is to give a selective account of mission to Jews and Gentiles from Jerusalem to Rome while indicating the *modus operandi* for the expansion, i.e. house-to-house, as the Christian community defined itself in reference to Judaism and the pagan world" (Blue 120, 1994). There is limited biblical information that provides day-to-day details of house churches, especially those house churches that were planted, cultivated, or encouraged by the Apostle Paul. Fortunately, Acts does provide foundational understandings that guided house churches as the Gospel expanded from Jerusalem into the Gentile world (Blue 120, 1994; Fitzmyer 1998, 206; Witherington 1998, 156-63) .

It is important then to capture the various roles of the *oikos* (house) within the narrative genre of *Acts*. The Book of Acts provides the widest Scriptural scope of the existence and importance of homes within early church history. Toward that goal this researcher provides the following figure that conveys a visual, general sweep of moments

within Acts where an *oikos* provided the location for significant moments in the expansion of the Gospel:

Table 1. The significance of homes within the Acts of the Apostles

Biblical Reference	Location	Situational Context
Acts 1:13-15; 2:2	Jerusalem	Prayer in the upper room
Acts 2:42-46	Jerusalem	The fellowship of the saints
Acts 5:42	Jerusalem	Teaching and proclaiming from house to house
Acts 8:3	Jerusalem	Saul's persecution aimed at believer's homes
Acts 9:11	Damascus	Saul's meeting with Judas
Acts 10:22	Caesarea	Household conversion Cornelius
Acts 12:1-17	Jerusalem	Joyous report of Peter's release from jail
Acts 16:15	Philippi	Household conversion of Lydia
Acts 16:32	Philippi	Household conversion of the Philippian jailer
Acts 16:40	Philippi	Paul revisits Lydia to encourage the saints
Acts 18:1-11	Corinth	Paul's visit with Titius Justus
Acts 20:20	Ephesus	Paul's exhorting Ephesian elders
Acts 21:8	Caesarea	Paul's visit with Philip the evangelist

It is evident from this table that homes provided a prominent backdrop for the emerging Gospel movement. The task of this chart is to be descriptive rather prescriptive. Simply describing the location of a religiously significant event does not in itself give warrant to ongoing legitimacy as a modern day church movement. John Stott, in his book *The Spirit, The Church, and The World: The Message of Acts*, warns those who set a hard dualism between structured and unstructured church forms:

The Holy Spirit's way with the institutional church, which we long to see reformed according to the gospel [sic], is more the way of patient reform than of impatient rejection. And certainly it is always healthy when the more formal and dignified services of the local church are complemented with the informality and exuberance of home meetings. There is no need to polarize between the structured and the unstructured, the traditional and the spontaneous. The church needs both. (Stott 1990, 85)

That reform of the church must not only begin with a desire for renewal but must be governed by God's revealed witness in Scripture. The following section will

provide exegetical treatments of particular passages that are pertinent in building toward a theology of the HCM. The texts that will be examined are Acts 2:42-6; 5:41-2; 8:1-3; and 20:18-21. The reason for these particular texts is because they are used predominately throughout the house church literature base. Pauline texts that are critical in understanding the biblical validity of the HCM will also be examined. Each textual examination will conclude with principles that are derived from the exegetical review.

Acts 2:42-47. Luke provides the first glimpse of the post-resurrection early church:

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

This section of Luke's narrative is the epicenter of biblical and theological research into the early life of the church. The effects of the Spirit's indwelling believers fostered an awe that came upon every soul (v. 43), continual praise of God, having favor with all people, and daily conversions to Christ (v. 47). The Spirit also empowered certain activities that were displayed by the new believers in Jerusalem.

Verse 42 describes the early church as "devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers." The imperfect periphrastic verbal construction, "ἤσαν δε προσκατερουντες," (devoting themselves) connotes the idea of a persistent and persevering action. The phrase appears six times in Acts (1:14; 2:42; 2:46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7). It echoes the unity of mind Luke describes in Acts 1:14. The early church's devotion to the four activities of the apostles' teaching,

fellowship, breaking of bread, and to prayer reveals the basic work of the community of faith (Bock 2007, 149).

The “apostles teaching” (των αποστολων διδαχη) describes the specific information that was taught among the thousands of new believers in Jerusalem (2:41). The content probably consisted of the apostle’s knowledge in relation to the person and work of Christ. Richard Longenecker, in his commentary on Acts contends,

The ‘apostles teaching’ refers to a body of material considered authoritative because it was the message about Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed by accredited apostles. It undoubtedly included a compilation of the words of Jesus (cf. 20:35), some account of his earthly ministry, passion, and resurrection (cf. 2:22-24), and a declaration of what all this meant for man’s redemption (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-5) – all of which was thought of in terms of a Christian ‘tradition’ (*paradosis*) that could be passed on to others (cf. 1 Cor 11:2; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). (Longenecker 1981, 289)

Peter had already displayed this type of teaching in his initial sermon to the inhabitants of Jerusalem during Pentecost (2:14-36). Jesus had not only commanded the apostles to make disciples by baptizing and teaching (Matt 28:18-20) but had also promised them that the Spirit would help them recall all that had taught them (John 14:26) (Wright 1989, 23).

The early church was also devoted to what has been translated “the fellowship” (κοινωνια). Ben Witherington, professor of New Testament at Asbury Seminary, has noted,

The term κοινωνια is found only here in all of Luke-Acts, though the idea is common. The term itself means a participation or sharing in common of something with someone else, in this case eating and praying. Thus, fellowship is not a very helpful translation, for fellowship is the result of κοινωνια, of sharing in common; it is not κοινωνια itself. Κοινωνια is an activity which can result in fellowship of some sort, and it can entail things like sharing not just spiritual activities such as prayer but also physical food or other goods in common. (Witherington 1998, 160)

Κοινωνια can refer in other parts of the New Testament as the fellowship that believers have with each other because of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 1:9; 10:16; 2 Cor 6:14; 13:13; Gal

2:9; Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; Heb 13:16; 1 John 1:3). In this particular context of Acts the term takes on a more practical meaning such as the sharing of material possessions (Acts 2:45; 32-37; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13) (Johnson 1992, 58).

They were also devoted “to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Much discussion has ensued about the theological significance of “the breaking of bread (κλασει του αρτου). Is this continual action by the early church a celebration of the Lord’s Supper (Fitzmyer 1998, 271; Johnson 1992, 58) or a reference to the simple action of eating together (Bock 2007, 150)?

This researcher agrees with John Stott who writes, “On the whole, then, the phrase ‘the breaking of bread’ seems to be a primitive way of alluding to the Lord’s Supper, though it cannot be ruled out that the reference is to an ordinary meal” (Stott 1998, 161). Stott believes the key to interpreting this theological issue is to remember the social significance of Luke’s portrait of the early church. “The early Christians met in homes and treated each other as family, sharing meals and possessions as well as more spiritual and verbal fare” (Stott 1998, 161). It seems that the Lord’s Supper served as an *extension* of the ongoing meals that were occurring within the homes of believers in Jerusalem.

Luke’s portrait of the early church also shows a redeemed people who are constantly in prayer. The connection between “eating” and “praying” could be a parallelism that shows the deep physical and spiritual importance of those two activities for life of the early Church. The plural phrase “and the prayers” (και ται προσευχαις) denotes a continual uttering of multiple prayers that could have been set prayers that were tied to temple life or prayers that were broad and spontaneous (Bock 2007, 151). John Polhill, in his commentary on Acts, suggests that the prayers were “probably much

broader and involves primarily their sharing in prayer together in their private house worship” (Polhill 1992, 120).

The early church also displayed a sacrificial love for each other. This love was fostered by the Gospel that had rendered them as “one in Christ” (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:11). The practical consequence of this new humanity is a “having all things in common.” This unity within the community “derives from and is guided by the gift of the Spirit that lies at the heart of its life together” (Polhill 1992, 121). The outflow of that Spirit created a community that functioned with appropriate love and compassion toward those within the community that had material needs (Bock 2007, 153). This action by the early church is not a mandated communism but a voluntary selling and distributing of possessions to those within the community that were in need.

The specific locale of these activities for the early Church was the temple and in homes. The role of the temple would eventually diminish and the role of the *oikos* (Acts 5:42; 8:3; 11:14; 16:15; 31-32; 18:8; 20:20) will come into greater prominence in Luke’s narrative (Johnson 1992, 59). The phrase “in their homes” (κατ οικον) could mean in various homes but it is evident that these early believers were worshiping and fellowshiping in their everyday environments (Bock 2007, 154).

It is evident from Acts 2:42-7 that particular attributes accompany the initial life of the early Church. A commitment of perseverance marked the early believers. This commitment is shown by their adherence to the apostles’ teaching and to communion with each other. That communion exhibited itself in several ways: eating together, which could have involved a recalling of the death of Christ for their sins; praying together; having a view of all things in common; a willingness to hold

possessions loosely in order to serve those who were in need; and expanding the role of the *oikos* as a place of religious activities.

Acts 5:41-42. The *oikos* is described in Acts as a growing hub of apostolic teaching. In chapter five of Acts the apostles are brought before the captain of the temple and chief priests and explicitly told not to teach in the name of Jesus (5:28), a command defied by Peter and the apostles (5:29-32). The chief priests eventually defer to the wisdom of Gamaliel and set the apostles free but only after they are beaten (5:34-40). Luke then writes, “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

Relevant to the current discussion is the fact that Peter and the apostles were continually using both the temple and individual homes as platforms for their teaching and preaching. This is also the first time the verb *εὐαγγελίζω* (to preach good news) appears in Acts with Jesus as the object of the message (*τον χριστον Ιησου*, the Christ as Jesus) (Bock 2007, 253). Luke employs a Greek rhetorical construction in verse 42 called a chiasm, which is most easily pictured as an A-B-B-A pattern. Polhill describes this pattern within this verse by stating, “In the temple (A) and in homes (B), the apostles taught (B) and preached the Gospel (A). The role of teaching was the task within the Christian fellowship and preaching was the public task in the temple grounds” (Polhill 1992, 174). This pattern also underscores the fact that the content in both settings was essentially the same (Gehring 2004, 74).

Acts 5:41-2 describes the role of the house as the significant conduit of Gospel proclamation and Gospel growth within the early church. The role of the house begins to

emerge as parallel and eventually superseding the religious role of the temple. This is supported by the evidence that the content of apostolic teaching was consistently about Christ on the temple grounds and in homes. This observation only underscores the fact that the apostles seemed to regard the home as a viable venue of corporate worship. A location that at one time was reserved largely for the temple.

Acts 8:1-3. The prominence of the *oikos* is also seen in a tragic sense by the growing persecution that departs from the idyllic reality of Acts 2:42-47 where the believers were enjoying at one time the “favor of all the people” to the Jewish rulers desiring to quell the Gospel movement (Acts 4:17-18). On the heels of Stephen’s martyrdom, Luke introduces this transition in the life of the early Church:

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (Acts 8:1-3)

Ironically, the prominent “point person” for this persecution would later become the “point person” for the expansion of the Gospel into the Gentile world.

Saul had easy access to the believers because it was well established that homes were the main gathering places for apostolic teaching and worship. Breaking into homes became the main method of finding believers to imprison or worse, to torture. The word “ravaging” is found only here in the New Testament. The imperfect tense of the verb shows that the ravaging of the church was a continual action on the account of Saul. It was a brutal action. The verb *ελυμαινετο* is a “strong expression that is used in the Septuagint for wild beasts, such as lions, bears, and leopards tearing at raw flesh”

(Polhill 1992, 212). The brutality of Saul upon believers was so ongoing and brutal that Luke writes that the church experienced “peace” upon Saul’s later conversion (9:31).

The importance of this particular narrative that is germane to this research is the connection within the Lukan narrative between the concept of the *ekklesia* (church) and the *oikos* (house). This is the first instance in Acts whereby the house is emphasized as the main gathering place of the early Christians. The gathering of Christian believers in private homes (or homes renovated for the purpose of Christian gatherings) continued to be the norm until the early decades of the fourth century when Constantine began erecting the first Christian Basilicas. For almost three hundred years the believers met in homes, not in synagogues or edifices constructed for the sole purpose of religious assembly (Blue 1994, 120-21). This examination will deal more extensively on the significance of *ekklesia* in the ensuing theological section of this research.

Acts 20:18-21. On his third missionary journey Paul bypasses Ephesus in order to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost. While on this route he summons the Ephesian elders to come to him and then declares to them,

And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:18-21)

Paul appeals to the elders by referencing his relationship with them (v. 18), his attitude in serving with them (v. 19a), and his persecution portrayed in front of them (v. 19b). Paul “did not shrink” from declaring repentance “toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The tense of the verbs “αναγγελλειν (declaring) and “διδασκειν” (teaching) is in the aorist form, which connotes a particular point in time of an action and that action’s continuing effects. Paul not only exerted his ministry among the Ephesian believers in a public manner but also from “κατ οικον” (house to house) (Johnson 1992, 360). The audience for Paul’s ministry was both Jews and Gentiles. This underscores the fact that both Jews and Gentiles needed the same message of repentance (Longenecker 1981, 512) and that the practice of house to house ministry was utilized by both groups (Witherington 1998, 617). House church ministry was not a contextualized mode of ministry toward one group and not the other; rather, it was the mode to expand the Gospel reach to all people.

Pauline House Churches

The existence and fruitfulness of house church did not stay in Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul, who previously hunted and persecuted house churches, takes the mantle of Christ’s commission (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) to extend the Gospel’s reach into the Gentile world. The following section will address the three geographical localities about which Paul gives us the most information: Rome, Corinth, and the region of Colossae (Branick 1989, 58).

Romans 16:3-16. A significant text occurs near the end of Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. In a lengthy conclusion Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to send greetings from him to various believers:

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my

beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. (Rom 16:3-16)

This section of Romans points to possibly five house churches that are greeted: the home of Prisca and Aquila (v. 5), those who belong to Aristobulus (v. 10), those who belong to Narcissus (v. 11), and verses 14 and 15 contain probable members of two house churches.

Thomas Schreiner, a noted New Testament scholar, contends,

Evidence for a house church in verse 14 is contained in the words “and the brothers and sisters with them” (*και τους συν αυτοις αδελφους, kai tous syn autois adelphous*), suggesting that Paul names the five members of the church he knows of and then greets the rest of the church generally. Similarly, in verse 15 he greets the five persons he knows, and then greets the rest of the church with the words “and all the saints with them” (*και τους συν αυτοις παντασ αγιους, kai tous syn autois pantas hagiouss*). (Schreiner 1998, 797)

Douglas Moo, professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, has done extensive research on the names that are mentioned within these greeting and arrives at three themes: (1) A majority of the names are Gentile, which confirm the highly Gentile makeup of the church at Rome; (2) a significant amount of the names are those of slaves and “freedmen,” or the descendents of slaves/freedmen; (3) these greetings provide a glimpse of church organization in Rome by mentioning separate house churches.

Moo writes, “Early Christians did not have large public facilities for meeting, so they used their own houses. And since even the largest house of the wealthiest Christian would hold no more than seventy or eighty for worship, growth beyond that point required that the Christians split up into house churches” (Moo 1996, 918-19).

James Dunn, professor of Divinity at the University of Durham, England, proposes that each house church within Rome was quite small and presumably functioned on a weekly basis (Acts 20:6-7; 1 Cor 16:2) while meeting less regularly as a “whole church” (Rom 16:23) (Dunn 1988, 893).

This researcher believes that three conclusions can be made from Romans 16:3-16. First, house churches contained Christians who were from different strata of culture. House churches in Rome apparently lived out the truth that everyone is “one in Christ” (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:10-12). Second, this excursus by Paul provides credibility that multiplication of house churches was an intentional strategy toward Gospel expansion into the Gentile world. Third, Roman house churches were connected with each other and at times met as whole.

1 Corinthians 16:19. The Apostle Paul concludes his first letter to the church at Corinth with these words, “The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord” (1 Cor 16:19). Aquila and Prisca (a variant of Priscilla) were an important couple in Paul’s ministry. Paul explicitly refers to them as his co-workers (Rom 16:3-5). Anthony Thiselton, professor of Christian Theology at the University of Nottingham, England, proposes that Aquila and Prisca were probably former slaves who had bought their own freedom and left Rome in AD 49 when the Emperor Claudius closed down a Roman synagogue (cf. Acts 18:1-3)” (Thiselton 2000, 1343; Fee 1987, 835).

They also accompanied Paul when he traveled to Ephesus, where they led Apollos to Christ (Acts 18:18-26), and where they still are at the time of Paul’s writing to church at Corinth. Later they have another house church in Rome (Rom 16:3-5); and in 2 Timothy 4:19 are back in Ephesus. Gordon Fee, Professor Emeritus at Regent College,

observes that Aquila and Prisca's "mobility and their patronage of house churches (in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome) indicate that they were well to do" (Fee 1987, 835-36).

The phrase "the church in their house" is used here for the first time in Paul's writings. Robert Banks, Adjunct professor of Ancient History at Macquarie University, Australia, attests that "the term *oikos*, house, could refer to the *quarters* that Priscilla and Aquila occupied (or possibly to a particular room within them, though this seems unlikely here) or to the *household* that was in their charge. If it means the latter term then the home of Priscilla and Aquilla was the meeting place for some or all Christians in Ephesus (Banks 1994, 31).

Mario Barbero, whose dissertation is titled, *A First-Century Couple, Priscilla and Aquila: Their House Churches and Missionary Activity*, addresses this text of 1 Cor 16:10 (along with Rom 16:5; Phlm 1:1-2, and Col 4:15). These texts

Relate closely *οικος* and *εκκλησια* in the expression *η κατ οικον εκκλησια*. In each of these texts *οικος* is preceded by *κατα* indicating place, and the obvious translation seems to be "the church in their/her/your home." The Vulgate both in 1 Cor 16:19 and Romans 16:5 (the two texts referring to Prisca and Aquila) renders the noun *οικος* as an adjective, making a closer association between "church" and "home." Thus, in the Vulgate, 1 Cor 16:19 is "cum domestica sua ecclesia" and Rom 16:5 is "et domesticum eorum ecclesiam." This could mean "the family that is also a church. (Barbero 2001, 190-91)

Colossians 4:15-16. During his first imprisonment (Acts 28:16, 30) the Apostle Paul wrote, "To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae" (Col 1:2a). This was a church that Paul had never actually visited and was writing in response to the concerns of Epaphras, who was an important teacher in Colossae (1:7; 4:12). As he gives his final greetings Paul writes, "Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you,

have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea” (Col 4:15-16).

Nympha, who commentators generally believe was a woman (Bruce 1984, 183; O’Brien 1982, 256; Dunn 1996, 284), could have been a widower who hosted the church in her home (Bruce 1984, 183) or acted in a particular leadership role. The fact that the church was in “her house” (αυτης εκκλησιαν) shows that Nympha had substantial financial means that enabled her to own her own home (Dunn 1996, 285). Nympha is one example of the significance of women in the life and mission of the early church. Lydia (Acts 16:14-15, 40), Prisca (1 Cor 16:19), Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), Euodia, Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3), and Junia (Rom 16:7) are other Christian women that served in some capacity within New Testament house churches. Researchers have concluded that “it can be established that women, probably for the most part widows who had autonomous administration of their own households, hosted house churches of the early Christian movement. This fact itself does not necessarily mean that they had leadership in teaching or other spiritual responsibilities” (Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch 2006, 163)

This text also shows Paul’s theological view of the connection between the universal church and the individual house church. Dunn addresses this point in his commentary on verse 16:

Since “the church (as a whole) in Laodicea” is also referred to in 4:16, it is evident that “church” can be used equally for the individual home-meeting and for the Christian community as a whole in a given place, as indeed, it would appear, for the totality of the Christian presence in the world. This holds wherever Nympha lived, since Colossae contained at least both the church in Colossae and the church in the home of Philemon. The point is that being “church” consists in believers worshiping and acting together, whether on the microcosmic or on the macrocosmic scale. (Dunn 1996, 284)

This text of Colossians 4:15-16 highlights again the significance of women and Paul's desire that his communication be distributed through a geographical region (Laodicea) of house churches. The connection between the universal and individual local church will be discussed more in the theological section but suffice it to say at this point that a relationship of some degree does exist between the universal church and local church. Furthermore, a relationship also exists between two or more local churches.

Philemon 1:2. The Epistle to Philemon is closely related to Paul's epistle to the church in Colossae. They were both written by the Apostle Paul and from the same place, his imprisonment in Rome. The purpose of this personal letter is to appeal to Philemon about the treatment of his runaway slave, Onesimus (vv. 1, 2; Col 4:9, 17). Paul involves himself in this matter because Onesimus had come into contact with him, perhaps as a fellow-prisoner (O'Brien 1982, 266). Peter O'Brien, who has taught New Testament and Missions at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia, asserts that perhaps Onesimus "had sought refuge in Paul's company because he had heard his name mentioned in the house of his Christian master and had now hastened to him for help in his trouble" (O'Brien 1982, 266).

Paul enters into this domestic situation with this greeting, "Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phm 1:1-3). There is a significant progression within this greeting that will affect how Paul addresses this issue with Philemon. Paul not only addresses Philemon and his family members Apphia and Archippus but also the church that met in his house. It is ironic that this matter seems to

be a personal matter between Paul and Philemon but Paul seemingly chooses to involve the rest of the church (Hays 1996, 57).

Theologians such F.F. Bruce and Peter O'Brien believe this is nothing more than a literary courtesy because Paul never mentions the specific names of the individuals within Philemon's house church and the body of the letter is for Philemon alone. This researcher disagrees because the fact of not mentioning names of individuals in the house church does not mean that he does not want that church involved in a potential domestic dispute. Paul may not have mentioned names because he simply did not know the names of the members within the house church. Dunn offers this commentary on the straightforward reading of this greeting:

The assumption is that the letter would be read openly at a meeting of the house church. Of course, this was a not altogether subtle way of bringing pressure on Philemon, but the very fact that it could be done indicates that Philemon was likely to recognize the church's right to take an interest in and even advise on the internal affairs of his own household; this was the character of their shared faith (vs. 6). This is all the more striking since almost certainly slaves (Philemon or others') would also be members of the house church (cf. Col 4:22-25). If all this is so, we can deduce that in this case at least, the church in Philemon's home partook of something of the character of its meeting place; that is, it functioned in some real sense as an extended family. (Dunn 1996, 313)

Paul also addresses his own leadership role in regards to this particular matter involving Onesimus and Philemon. In verses 8 and 9 Paul writes, "Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus" (Phm 1:8-9). The phrase "am bold" translated in the ESV as "bold enough" is the Greek noun "παρρησιαν εχων," which can mean "full liberty." The liberty that Paul is addressing is his own apostleship and therefore has authority to mandate his preferred actions upon Philemon, his family, and his house church (Bruce 1984, 211). Paul instead chooses to "appeal" to Philemon as an "old man" and "prisoner" for Christ Jesus.

The word “appeal” is from the Greek verb “*παρακαλω*,” which can also be translated as “entreating someone.” This word (*παρακαλω*) is the dominant term that Paul uses throughout his letters when he urges churches toward a particular behavior or action (Rom 12:1; 15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 4:16; 16:15; 2 Cor 2:8; 10:1; Phil 4:2; 1 Thess 4:1, 10; 5:14; 2 Thess 3:12; Eph 4:1). Paul is using a play on words to exhort Philemon to act graciously toward Onesimus (O’Brien 1982, 285). Paul, though having freedom to be bold with Philemon is voluntarily choosing to address him as a “prisoner” of Christ. This is done so that Onesimus, who is a slave, will be received not as a slave but as a “beloved brother” (v. 16). Bruce makes this point, “Orders are liable to be resented, from whomsoever they come, but an appeal from a friend is difficult to resist, especially when it is made expressly “for love’s sake” (Bruce 1984, 211).

Theological Distinctives of the House Church Movement

Moving through biblical examples of house churches and house church networks provides evidence for the existence of house churches; but in order for there to be credence to the continuing validity of the HCM this researcher must give an overview of the theology of the HCM. The ongoing relevance of house church forms cannot be found in its descriptive historical existence but rather in timeless biblical theology. Each of these theological distinctives: house church *ecclesia*, *koinonia*, authority, and mission will conclude with theoretical contributions from practitioners within the HCM.

House Church Ekklesia

The theological concept of *koinonia* imbued new meaning into the historical term, *ekklesia*. The Greek word in the New Testament for church (*ἐκκλησία*) referred in classical Greek simply to the assembly of the citizens of a city (Erickson 2001, 340;

Grudem 1994, 854). Robert Banks, a former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, has distinguished the New Testament word *ekklesia* from meetings of the Jewish synagogue and the Hellenistic mystery cults. Banks discovered specific attributes of *ekklesia* that were distinctively Pauline.

Banks' view of Pauline *ekklesia* encompassed three interwoven thoughts. First, *ekklesia* is a voluntary association, with regular gatherings of relatively small groups of like-minded people. Second, *ekklesia* has its roots in and takes some of the character of the household unit. Last, *ekklesia* is invested with supranational and supratemporal significance, a visible manifestation of a divine and eternal commonwealth (Banks 2007, 192).

Millard Erickson, in his *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, writes,

In the New Testament, the word *church* has two senses. On the one hand, it denotes all believers in Christ in all times and places. This universal sense is found in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus promises that he will build his church, and in Paul's image of the church as the body of Christ (e.g., Eph 1:22-3; 4:4; 5:23). More frequently, however, "church" refers to a group of believers in a given geographical locality. This is clearly the meaning in, for instance, 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1. (Erickson 2001, 340)

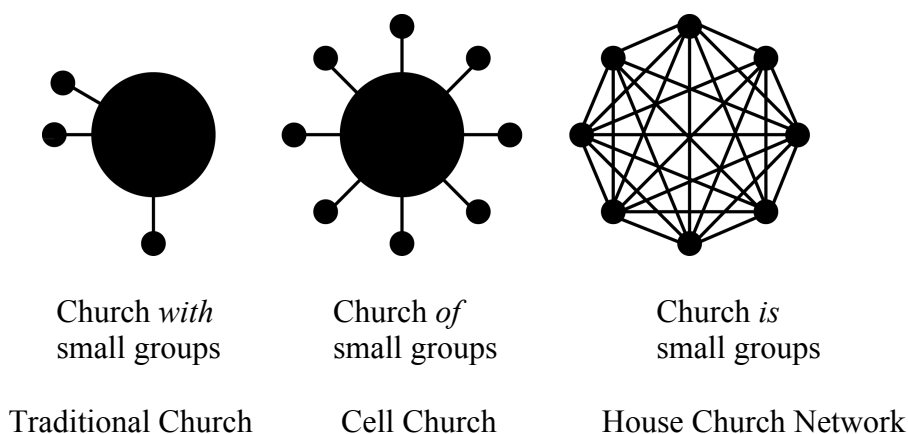
This concept of "geographical locality" is affirmed by other scholars, who contend that the Pauline salutations within his epistles (Rom 1:6-7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:2; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1), likely address clusters of house churches within each respective city (Moo 1996, 54, Dunn 1996, 48; Fee 1987, 31). Anthony Thiselton, in his *New International Greek Testament Commentary* on 1 Corinthians, believes that Paul's salutation to the Corinthian church (1:2)

Reinforces the thought that the church at Corinth *is not a self-contained autonomous entity: they are not a self-sufficient community; they are not the only pebble on the beach*. Their lifestyle and practices are monitored by translocal "fellow workers" of Paul's (notably by Timothy, 1 Cor 4:17), and they are required to follow patterns of thought and lifestyle which characterize traditions or "order" (διαστασσομαι) "in all the churches" (ενταις εκκλησιας πασαις, 1 Cor 7:17). (Thiselton 2000, 74-75)

Thiselton's comment is significant to this research because it provides a theological rationale for house church *networks*. House church networks are comprised of house churches that are distributions of the local church. (Gehring 2004, 157). He further states, "It is possible to speak of the "catholicity" of the church of Paul's day, as well as its diversity. For its networks and shared commonality in Christ, in the Gospel, and in a common apostolic witness to Christ amounted to more than a loose federation of autonomous communities" (Thiselton 2000, 75). Recent scholarship has noted that the early churches existed in two forms: the house church and the whole church at any given location (O' Brien 1982, 59; Meeks 2003, 107-8; Banks 1994, 42; Branick 1989, 22-23).

Theoretical application. The following figure displays what the distinct structure of a house church network compared with a traditional or cell church model could be (Zdero 2007, 8):

Figure 1. A comparison of three models of church structure



It is here that the concept of house church *network* comes to the forefront of this research. The early house churches did not operate in a completely autonomous

fashion but rather fostered relationships with other churches for the sake of the global mission. A leading authority on house church theology and practice highlights the role of house church networks:

Was the early church a scattered bunch of house groups peppered across the vastness of the Roman Empire, going it alone? Or, was there a kind of glue that bound them together to guarantee doctrinal accuracy, sustainable growth, and clear vision? Biblically, the theology promoted by the apostles that the church is united, the body of Christ is one, was played out in their efforts to connect- relationally if not organizationally- into a cohesive body. Sociologically, the idea and reality of belonging to an expanding global movement certainly added a sense of being part of something bigger than just one's own house church and gave people a bigger vision for what God was doing in the world at large. (Zdero 2004, 49)

The network practices that united these house churches together were behaviors such as traveling apostolic workers, the circulation of apostolic letters, and citywide gatherings of the individual house churches (Zdero 2004, 49-51). The livelihood of the HCM was dependent on house church networks in order for them increase their influence on local, regional, national, and international levels (Zdero 2004, 114). Abraham Malherbe, who wrote *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, also contends that individual house churches together would have represented the church in any one area. This assertion is based on the fact that the apostle Paul and his followers, “although they knew of separate groups in an area, wrote one letter to the church in the immediate area, apparently on the assumption that it would suffice for all groups (e.g. Romans)” (Malherbe 1977, 70).

House Church Koinonia

Robert Banks, who wrote the heavily cited *Paul's Idea of Community* (Grudem 1994, 871; Schnabel 2008, 199; Witherington 1995, 90), has remarked that “Paul’s approach to community has stimulated the creation of alternatives to ecclesiastical structures and counterculture groups, e.g., house churches and basic Christian

communities, and at times these have been accompanied by a contemporary version of Paul's work to complement and enhance their activities" (Banks 2007, 192).

The principle of simplicity that pervades the HCM is strongly influenced by this theological metaphor of family. The aversion within the HCM toward structures such as buildings and potentially costly programs comes out of a commitment within the HCM to do nothing that would lessen an emphasis on the supremacy of Christ (Polhill 1992, 121) and the biblically redefined family. Steve Atkerson, who has written *House Church: Simple, Strategic, Scriptural* reminds readers that believers are the family of God (1 John 3:1), birthed by Jesus (John 12:13), into the household of God (Eph 2:19), and with new brothers and sisters in Christ (Rom 16:2) (Atkerson 2008, 86).

This strong commitment to the metaphor of the "family of God" places a behavioral emphasis on the mutuality connection and priesthood of all believers (Gal 3:27-29; 1 Pet 2:9-10; 1 Cor 14:26-27) (Foster 1976, 7). Vincent Branick, in his book *The House Church in the Writings of Paul*, states,

The Christian gatherings under Paul may not have even looked like a religion to an outsider. The Christians had no shrines, temples, cult statues, priests, or sacrifices. For Christians, Paul writes, the community is the temple: Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple (1 Cor 3:16-17). One's whole life makes us worship and sacrifice: 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 (Rom 12:1-2). The language of cult is there- 'sacrifice,' 'holy,' 'worship.' But Paul has reinterpreted it- in a way not dissimilar from the prophets- so that cult is not clearly distinguished from daily life. The Christian gathering as a sharing of gifts, as exercise of mutual 'edification,' was for Paul, then, an act of worship. Sacred space was not an issue. The assembly was its own sanctuary. Hence even the family dining room was an appropriate place for the church. (Branick 1989, 104)

A practical implication of this principle is a de-emphasis on a rigid hierarchical structure that would threaten the familial ethos that exists within the HCM.

Theoretical application. Within the HCM there is a consistent stress that is placed on the forty-four “one anothers” (Appendix 3) found in the New Testament.

There is sentiment within the HCM that an over emphasis on weekly large group gatherings and buildings can inhibit these “one another” commandments. One HCM proponent explains,

The Scriptures are full of the “one another” commands. Church is to be about accountability, community, and maintaining church discipline (Mt 18:15-20). These ideals are best accomplished in smaller congregations where people know and love each other. Church is to be about relationships. A large auditorium of people, most of whom are relative strangers to each other, will not easily achieve these goals. Nominal Christianity is harbored as it becomes easy to get lost in the crowd. Churches that meet in homes best foster the simplicity, vitality, intimacy, and purity that God desires for His church. (Atkerson 2008, 87)

This statement, though overstated at particular points, explains a ministry philosophy that evolves into house churches that are highly participatory. House church members will often eat, pray, handle Scripture, serve, and play together. Frank Viola, whose writings have had significant influence within the HCM, contends that “the elements of singing, sharing, eating, praying, playing, handling Scripture, and releasing gifts should find their way into participatory meetings in a spontaneous, interactive, participatory, and Spirit-led manner” (Viola 2007, 400).

The participatory nature of the HCM can have a tenor of idealism. Rad Zdero, editor of *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader*, acknowledges the relational hardships that can be endemic among house church members:

Life as part of a house church or house church network can be exhilarating because of the close-knit nature of the relationships that are developed over time. However, the opposite is also true- when tensions and conflict arise, they can be significant. Everything is amplified in a house church that attempting to experience ‘true community.’ Along with this, come the more mundane realities of being in relationship to one another and doing things together, as we seek to deepen our relationship with God. These practical realities include spending quality and quantity time together, conflict resolution, decision making, children, money, baptisms, weddings, and hosting. (Zdero 2007, 401)

It is this relational diversity, participation and potential dissonance that can aid in ministering to the whole person. This was the point of one of the first sociological treatments of the American HCM by Philip and Phoebe Anderson, who were on faculty at Chicago Theological Seminary. They discovered that

it is the commitment of house church members to love and care for one another in God's name which sets the house church apart from small group experiences outside the church. Neither sensitivity groups, nor encounter groups, nor therapy groups are founded on the premise which is basic to the house church: love incarnate is the Good News which is available to all women and men. (Anderson and Anderson 1975, 33)

In their book *The House Church*, written in 1975, the Andersons assert that human beings are made to think, feel, and act and that house church practices can have a significant impact on all three human components (Anderson and Anderson 1975, 35-36).

House Church Authority

The roles of leadership is another theological distinctive of the HCM. The issue of mediated authority is important throughout the epistles of the NT though some believe that there is significant ambiguity in Paul's letters about church order and leadership in his Gentile churches (Longnecker 2002, 85; Erickson 2001, 354-55).

Edmund Clowney, who was president and professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, contends that

our understanding of the government of Christ's church must begin with the Lord himself and his *kingdom authority*. He is the Head of the church; his rule is unique and incomparable. A second principle derives from the first. The church shows the *organic life* of Christ's body: it lives as an organism, not just an organization. The third principle is no less essential. The church is not like the kingdoms of this world, for it is organized for service, not dominion. All government in the church is *stewardship*: *i.e.* its leaders are servant-managers, who use their authority only to advance the interests of those they represent and serve. (Clowney 1995, 202)

What can be known is that Paul did recognize the presence of local leaders (1 Thess 5:12-13) and asks his converts to "respect" them and "hold them in the highest

regard in love because of their work.” These local leaders probably functioned as elders (επισκοποι) and deacons (διακονοι) (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:1, 17, 19; Titus 1:5-6; Grudem 1994, 920-23).

Leadership within the HCM however is usually expressed in implicit rather than explicit ways. Robert Banks, in his observation of the Apostle Paul’s use of authority, delineated four principles. The principles of authority and decision-making have been summed up as follows: (1) Authority stems from God as revealed in Christ and is mediated through the Spirit. (2) The objective Word of God is the definitive expression of God’s will and normative for all that precedes and follows. (3) God continues to speak and work authoritatively, not through coercion of people’s personalities, but by convincing their minds of the truth and warming their hearts with love so they can embrace it. (4) Authority is exercised through the service of others in word and deed, not through domination (Banks 2004, 94)

A unique perspective on authority is the HCM’s emphasis on the equipping gifts of Ephesians 4:11-13: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” This text, according to Marcus Barth, “is a *locus classicus* pointing out the coherence of the church’s origin, order, and destiny. Certain ministries are given by Christ (v. 11) in order that the church fulfill her present task (v. 12), and, at the end, reach the goal set for her (vs. 13)” (Barth 1960, 478).

These ministries that equip the church toward Christian maturity are gifts from Christ that are different from the spiritual gifts elucidated in four other sections in

scripture (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; 1 Pet 4:10-11). Ernest Best, in his *International Critical Commentary* on Ephesians, writes that “these gifts are not gifts made to people but gifts of people; people who have a particular role to play in the church” (Best 2001, 388). The appropriate question is, “How do the ‘people gifts’ of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor, and teachers contribute to the equipping of the church?”

Views are varied in terms of the ongoing legitimacy of the role of the *apostle* (τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους). Scholars contend that the *apostle*, along with the *prophet*, played a foundational but temporary role within the first century church (Best 2001, 389-90; Clowney 1995, 255-68; Berkhof 1941, 585; Yarnell 2007, 675). This role became more “marginalized in the Christian movement as their leadership role was taken over by the more stable teaching and ruling ministries” (Lincoln 1990, 249). Other scholars dispute the temporary interpretation of these gifts (Barth 1960, 437; Hoehner 2002, 541-42). Peter T. O’Brien also believes that the gifts of *apostle* and *prophet* continue by commenting, “*Evangelists, pastor, and teachers* exercised their ministry during the apostles’ time and subsequently, and were no doubt the church workers whom most of the readers had encountered” (O’Brien 1999, 298).

Harold Hoehner, Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, provides a compelling insight into the ongoing relevance of an apostle:

There are three kinds of apostles mentioned in the NT: those who had been with Jesus in his ministry and had witnessed his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22); Paul, who was born out of season (1 Cor 15:8-9); and those who received the gift of apostleship. The first two categories are to be regarded as offices, whereas the last is a spiritual gift to the church. In the present context the apostle refers to the third kind, the gift of apostle. There were people in addition to the original twelve who had not been with Jesus in his ministry and did not witness his resurrection but who are listed as apostles. To mention some, we cite Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 9:5-7), James,

the Lord's brother (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19), Apollos (1 Cor 4:6, 9), probably Silvanus (1 Thess 2:6), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), and possibly Andronicus and Junia[s] (Rom 16:7). These had the gift of apostleship. It seems then that the main function of an apostle is to establish churches in areas that have not been reached by others (Rom 15:20). They are God's messengers to open up new territories for Christ. (Hoehner 2002, 541-42; see also Polhill 1992, 94)

The role of the *prophet* (τους δε προφητας) is to communicate divine revelation. More specifically, it seems that prophecy is a gift that provides edification, comfort, and encouragement (1 Cor 14:3, 31), as well as for the purpose of understanding and communicating the mysteries and revelation of God to the church (1 Cor 12:10; 13:2; 14:6, 22, 30-31) (Hoehner 2002, 400, Barth 1960, 437). Ernest Best disagrees with this for he believes that the letter to the church in Ephesus, "leaves no place for continuing prophetic activity in congregations" but concedes that all the rest of the NT suggests that prophetic activity did indeed exist (Best 1998, 390). *Evangelists* (τους δε ευαγγελιστας) work both inside and outside the church by continually speaking the message of Christ's salvation (Best 1998, 390; O'Brien 1999, 299; Lincoln 1990, 250; Hoehner 2002, 542-43).

Pastors and teachers (τους δε ποιμενας και διδασκαλους) has elicited much scholarly discussion on if this is two people or one individual. This discussion is grounded in that fact that only one definite article (τους δε) precedes both nouns (ποιμενας and διδασκαλους). Noted commentators do not interpret the grammar dogmatically either way. Marcus Barth believes that

the wording is so ambiguous that is difficult to decide the exact character of the fourth group. Does it unite two lesser groups, i.e. "teachers" and shepherds," or is it composed of one ministry only, that is, of teaching shepherds, or of shepherding teachers? While sometimes in the NT "teachers" and "shepherds" (or the equivalent of shepherds) are mentioned separately, and at other occasions the titles "bishop" and "elder" occur, all these functions probably belong together. (Barth 1960, 438)

What is seen more clearly are the functions of a pastor/teacher. *Pastors* provide leadership through nurture, care, and guidance. It is probably that the pastor of Eph 4:11 fulfills functions located elsewhere in Paul's writings such as προϊστημι, "to rule, manage" (1 Thess 5:12; Rom 12:8), κυβερνησις, "administration" (1 Cor 12:28), and επισκοπος, "bishop, overseer" (Phil 1:1) (Lincoln 1990, 251). *Teachers*, as addressed in this Ephesian context, communicated and interpreted tradition from the OT and earlier Christians (Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 4:17; Col 2:7; 2 Thess 2:15) as well as how those teachings influence life situations (Best 2001, 391).

This researcher agrees with most of the noted commentators that there is ongoing relevance of all five gifts to the church. This comes with a concession that the practical scope of the apostle and the prophet are not as clear as the evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Despite this concession there is no definitive biblical text that abrogates the gifts of apostles and prophets. It appears to do damage to the text by segmenting apostles and prophets from the rest of the gifts in Ephesians 4:11. There is nothing in the grammar or context that would logically dismiss the ongoing relevancy of apostles and prophets at the expense of the other gifts (evangelists, pastors, and teachers). The practice of modern apostolic ministry could be planting new works of the Gospel in unreached or hard to reach areas. Furthermore, there is still need of individuals who act prophetically by calling God's own people back to righteousness and alignment with His revealed Word.

Theoretical application. Practitioners within the HCM, as a whole, interpret these people gifts as five different individuals who provide the foundational structure for HCM's. These individuals travel throughout a given network of house churches to equip

them with vital competencies needed for Kingdom success (Kreider 2001, 99). Wolfgang Simson, an influential leader within the HCM, contends that these five “people gifts”

Function as a spiritual blood-circulation system by nurturing all house churches with the elements necessary to become or remain healthy and therefore to multiply. Those ministries are like sinews and joints, linking the various house churches together to be a whole system. Their ministry transcends the individual house church and serves the body of Christ like a spiritual gene pool, which the house churches of an area or a region, and sometimes beyond, can draw from. (Simson 2001, 123)

These individuals are trans-local and roam throughout a house church network to provide the appropriate equipping for individual house churches. Individuals who are gifted apostolically enable the house church to move forward and be committed to multiplying to new areas of the city where the gospel has not made an impact. They are always looking to take new territories for the Kingdom. Prophets challenge members of house churches to faithfulness to God’s Word.

Evangelists aid in the house churches’ mission to reach the lost, but also equip house churches to keep the gospel central to everything they do. Pastors provide the warmth of community to the house church while equipping the house church to care for hurting people. Lastly, the teacher provides training for the house church in deepening the understanding of God’s Word (Simson 2001, 98).

What is a contemporary expression of how these particular gifts function with the in the church? Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, authors of *Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st –Century Church*, provide the following figure to display the role, focus, myopia (possible barriers), and impact of each gifting (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 170).

Table 2. A comparison of roles mentioned in Ephesians 4:11

Role	Definition	Focus	Myopia	Impact
Apostle	One who is sent	Urgency of tomorrow	Demands of today	Extension
Prophet	One who knows	Demands of today in light of tomorrow	Demands of today	Integration
Evangelist	One who recruits	Urgency of today	Demands of today	Expansion
Pastor	One who cares	Demands of today	Urgency of tomorrow	Nurture
Teacher	One who explains	Integration	Time	Understanding

Frost and Hirsch, who give this Ephesians 4:11 gifting the acronym APEPT, conclude from their reading of Eph 4:12-16 that

Paul actually sees APEPT ministry as *the* very mechanism for achieving mission and ministry effectiveness and Christian maturity. He seems to be saying that without the fivefold ministry pattern we *cannot* mature. If this is true, it is impossible to estimate what terrible damage the church has done through the loss, even active suppression, of this crucial dimension of New Testament ministry and leadership. But if we take these verses at face value, then it is our contention that the impact has been significant indeed. Perhaps the fact that APEPT has not been intentionally nurtured and practiced might have something to do with the immaturity we find in the Western church that inhibits fulfillment of its mission. (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 169)

House Church Mission

The role of the house also played a strategic role in the expansion of the Gospel from Jerusalem into the Gentile world. An example of this can be found in Acts 16:14-15:

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us. (Acts 16:14-15)

This text is the first narrative of a household baptism. Luke uses the phrase “σεβομενη τον θεον (worship of God)” to describe Lydia. Darrell Bock claims that “this phrase often describes former polytheists who become worshipers of the God of Israel, adopt monotheism, and attend the synagogue but do keep the entire law (Acts 13:43) (Bock 2007, 534). The significance of this point is to show the geographical expansion of the Gospel movement from Jerusalem into the Gentile world. Furthermore, it shows the importance of homes as means of that Gospel expansion.

Ben Witherington comments that the term “φεβομενη” is not found prior to Acts 13:45-46 and is a term that would be more familiar to Gentiles. This term gives the connotation that the Acts narrative deals more and more with Gentiles and Gentile territory and therefore, the direction of the mission (Witherington 1998, 493). This text, along with others within the Acts narrative (16:29-34; 17:1-9; 18:1-4, 7-8), support the fact that homes not only were places of worship but that they played an important role in the Pauline mission.

House churches and mission is the subject of scholarly research by Roger Gehring, Adjunct Professor at George Fox Evangelical Seminary. In his book *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity*, Gehring has emphasized that

Houses served also as missional bases of operation. They provided the mission with co-laborers for outreach in the city and surrounding area. Houses offered Paul, his assistants, other itinerant missionaries, and fellow believers room and board during their missional stay at any one location. At the same time, houses made significant contribution to the mission of Paul and his coworkers in their function as assembly places for missional proclamation, catechetical baptismal instruction, and Christian teaching. A hospitality-providing network of οικοι was the basis that made possible Paul’s letter writing ministry, so very important for his work of church planting and building. In addition, houses made missionary travel possible in that they provide necessary material and financial support for the trips. The house with its workshop and its network of relationships (extended family, clients, and association and business contacts) offered natural evangelistic contacts and conversation

opportunities. Moreover, not only individual but also entire households were baptized, and this was one of the most significant factors contributing to the rapid spread of the gospel. (Gehring 2004, 227)

Abraham Malherbe, one time professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School, contends that sociological factors such as house church planting among important trade routes and the spread of Greek culture and language also contributed to the rapid expansion of the Christian movement (Malherbe 1977, 62-65).

Theoretical application. Christian researcher Kirk Hadaway asserts that a strong link is made by Jesus between His mission and the purpose of the church (Matt 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:8). This link, according to Hadaway, is that the “ultimate implication of the instrumental nature of the church is that mission is its very nature and function” (Hadaway 1987, 58). A popular teacher and practitioner of house church philosophy agrees that mission must be the organizing principle by which a church exists. Furthermore, “experience tells us that a church that aims at ministry seldom get to mission even if it sincerely intends to do so. The church that aims at mission will have to do ministry, because *ministry is the means* to do mission” (Hirsch 2007, 236).

The corrective toward mission being the church’s organizing principle is valuing what Hirsch calls “*incarnational*” ecclesiology, which occurs when the identification of God with humanity becomes the essential signifier of a church’s existence. This missional emphasis in ecclesiology has five implications. The first implication is that the church must always enter fully into the context in which it happens to find itself. Second, in reaching a particular people group the church will need to identify with them in all ways possible without compromising the truth. Third, the church must have a real and abiding presence among unredeemed people. Fourth, the

church pursues a sending impulse instead of extracting people away from their unredeemed context. Finally, an incarnational ecclesiology enables people to experience Christ inside of their own culture (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 37-41).

Incarnational ecclesiology runs counter to what has been labeled an attractional mode of church. In describing the attractional mode of church Alan Hirsch, a widely read writer and practitioner within the HCM, states,

The church bids people to come and hear the gospel in the holy confines of the church and its community. This seems so natural to us after seventeen centuries of Christendom, but at what price and to what avail have we allowed it to continue? If our actions imply that God is really only present in official church activities- worship, Bible studies, Christian youth meetings, ladies' fellowships- then it follows that mission and evangelism simply involves inviting people to church-related meetings. (Hirsch 2007, 41)

A commitment to an incarnational ecclesiology has caused Hirsch to promote what he terms as *third place* communities. A *third place* community is a setting outside of an individual's work and home by which he or she fosters relationships with unbelievers. This emphasis on incarnating into an unbeliever's culture instead of extracting them out of it through church buildings and programs gives Hirsch a significant degree of influence within the HCM.

Another way of understanding this missional ecclesiology is through the writings of Neil Cole. Cole is a church planter and Executive Director of Church Multiplication Associates out of Signal Hill, California, which exists "to facilitate church multiplication movements by focusing resources on reproducing healthy disciples, leaders, churches and movements" (Cole [2010], [mission&values.html](#)). Cole is critical of what he perceives as a theological propensity toward an emphasis on the Pauline epistles for understanding the nature of the church. This is done, according to Cole, at a virtual exclusion of the Gospels to inform individuals on the missional nature of the

church. In his book *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*, Cole discusses three consecutive parables located in Mark 4 provide principles that are foundational for understanding what he calls the organic nature of the church.

Cole's treatment of the parables of the sower (Mark 4:3-20), the growing seed (Mark 4:26-29), and the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32) led him to see the kingdom as simple, small, and spontaneous:

Trying to multiply churches is starting at the wrong place. A church is a complex entity with multiple cells. We must go further down microscopically, to the smallest unit of Kingdom life if we want to start the multiplication process. If we cannot multiply churches, we will never see a movement. If we cannot multiply leaders we will never multiply churches. If we cannot multiply disciples, we will never multiply leaders. The way to see a church multiplication movement is to multiply healthy disciples, then leaders, then churches, and finally movements- in that order. (Cole 2005, 98)

As Cole distilled attributes from this organic nature of the church he synthesized them with principles derived from the widely read book *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* by Roland Allen. The theological result is an argument that movements of church planting must be incarnational (Phil 3:17), viral (1 Tim 2:2), transformational (Rom 6:17), and universal (1 Cor 4:16-17) (Allen 1962, 147-50). It is these principles that help us understand how the church's story "begins in Jerusalem, ends in Rome, and along the way visits nearly every commercial and political center around the Mediterranean: Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus and Athens" (Crouch 2008, 147).

The result for Cole is what he terms as the DNA that is needed in every part of church, from its smallest unit to its largest. This DNA within Cole's theological framework stands for Divine truth, Nurturing relationships, and Apostolic mission. Divine truth is rooted in the great commandment to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37-38). Nurturing

relationships obey the second greatest commandment: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39-40).

Apostolic mission seeks to obey the great commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20). Though Cole does not deem himself as a leader in the HCM, it is these principles that make him widely read and a person of reference in the HCM.

These house church attributes: *ekklesia*, *koinonia*, authority, and mission place a high premium on developing leaders. Wolfgang Simson contends that multiplying ministries, especially the five-fold giftings mentioned earlier, are “the most important aspect of house churches” (Simson 1998, 111). It is Simson’s hope that a process of developing others for the work of ministry would lead, “to the empowerment of exponentially more people to the work of God. It is to find, nurture, and release talented and supernaturally gifted people into their God-given calling in order to bring out God’s best in them, and to do this systematically and strategically” (Simson 1998, 111). This issue of leadership development is the focus of the following section of this research.

Leadership Development

Jay Conger, a researcher of a dozen successful U.S. corporations came to a simple conclusion from his findings. Leaders who were capable of effecting large-scale change were clearly in short supply (Conger 1999, 5). The truthfulness of this leadership dilemma is also apparent within Christian organizations, especially the church. James Means, Professor of Pastoral Ministries at Denver Seminary bluntly states, “the church needs better leaders. Little growth, dissension, brief pastorates, leader burnout, spectator religion, and non-ministering churches are facts in modern Christianity that both reveal

deficiency in leadership and call for greater excellence in leadership” (Means 1989, 30).

Eddie Gibbs, author of *LeadershipNext*, believes that a new breed of leader is needed in order to reach a postmodern culture. He states,

Assuming that today’s world needs a new kind of leader, we must develop different ways of identifying, selecting and training prospective candidates. Moreover, those who are already in a formal ministerial training process need to be prepared more adequately for the challenges that await them. This means training leaders as missionaries who are able to operate in a cross-cultural setting, frequently from the margins of society. (Gibbs 2005, 196-97)

Christian organizations, in contrast to secular, strive for God’s glory and the spiritual redemption of human beings (1 Cor 10:31). It is therefore difficult to over communicate the importance of developing leaders in light of the gospel mandate instituted by the Lord Jesus (Matt 28:18-20). Leadership development is an extension of discipleship (Hirsch 2007, 101) and deficiency in leadership is an indictment for a lack of presenting everyone *perfect in Christ* (Col 1:28).

Aubrey Malphurs, in his book *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church*, promotes five reasons why leadership development is important (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, 24-28): First, Jesus modeled the priority of leadership development by accomplishing His ministry goals primarily through human means (Luke 9:10-17; Acts 1:8). Second, the quality of leadership affects the quality of the ministry. The health of followers is inseparably connected to effective leadership (1 and 2 Kings; Matt 9:35-36).

Third, leaders expand ministry by making more leaders. Effective leadership development ensures ever-widening fields of godly leadership influence (2 Tim 2:2). Fourth, leadership development recognizes the value of people. Leadership development cannot be relegated to accomplishing organizational tasks but must also consider the value and dignity of human beings (Gen 1:27). Fifth, godly protégés are the leader’s

ministry legacy. The ongoing influence of a leader is dependent on that leader's ability to develop others. This influence can be effective long after a leader is gone (2 Tim 4:6-8).

The purpose of this review is to provide an overview of leadership development. The first section will be a biblical and theological examination of leadership development that focuses exclusively on Jesus and the Apostle Paul. The Bible contains many accounts of other leader developers that God used as human means to accomplish His goals (e.g., Noah, Moses, David, Esther, John the Baptist, Peter etc.). A biblical examination of every instance of a leader developing another person(s) would go beyond the scope of this overall research.

There are two reasons why this researcher has chosen Jesus and Paul to elucidate principles and practices of biblical leadership development. First, Jesus is in supremacy over everyone and everything. Paul writes, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him" (Col 1:15-16). Christ is the head of the church (Eph 1:9; 22-23; 4:15; 5:23), the one who plants the church (Heb 3:1), the leader who builds the church (Matt 16:18), and the Chief Shepherd who rules the church (1 Pet 5:4; Driscoll and Breshears 2008, 64).

The Apostle Paul was chosen because of his deliberate method in developing other leaders for the express purpose of expanding Gospel influence throughout the Greco-Roman world. The mode of this expanding Gospel influence was church planting in areas where the Gospel had not yet been made known. Paul also communicated explicit standards for leaders among the apostolic house church movement. These standards will be discussed later in this research.

Jesus and Leadership Development

Leighton Ford, President of Leighton Ford Ministries that focuses on raising up young leaders to spread the message of Christ worldwide, cites important reasons why Jesus should be the model for leader development (Ford 1991, 30-32). First, Jesus said plainly his model is for us. Near the end of His earthly ministry Jesus washed His disciples' feet and said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15). Of course, He is far more than our example, but He is no less than that.

Second, the kingdom that he proclaimed and embodied is for now as well as for the future. He himself said that the kingdom had drawn near (Mark 1:15). Once, when being asked when the kingdom of God would come, he replied, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:20-21).

Third, Jesus' leadership was both culturally relevant to His time (he was born and brought up in a Jewish home under Roman occupation in Palestine) and transcultural (all authority, in heaven and on earth, being given to Him). So to follow Him there is no need to be either literalists (assuming that we too, for example, must make our living as carpenters) nor idealists (making Jesus into a larger-than-life figure above the world). Fourth, the leadership of Jesus was not value-neutral, a set of tools to be used for any cause at all. Rather His leadership was kingdom leadership, which is value-driven. The leadership of Jesus is uniquely suited for the achievement of His kingdom purposes. Lastly, Jesus not only gave His followers responsibilities but He has now gifted His followers with the gift and leadership of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-22).

The task of deducing a leadership development process of Jesus (and later, the Apostle Paul) can be difficult. Discussions of leadership lean toward ministry application rather than straight theology and exegesis (Miller 2010). This researcher does however propose six facets of leadership development that were embodied by Jesus and located in the Gospels: A servant posture, personal investment, appeals to a kingdom orientation, purposeful delegation, deliberate withdrawal, and continual teaching.

A servant posture. The guiding metaphor that provides meaning for all the ways Jesus developed leaders is servanthood and the servant nature of Jesus can only be understood in reference to Christ's incarnation. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, in their book *The Missional Leader*, assert that early Christian leaders, "centered their understanding, framing, and practices of Christian formation (and therefore the nature of leadership) on the fact of the Incarnation as the place where God's intentions and purposes are made known" (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 122).

In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi he encourages them to pursue unity on the basis of Christ's incarnation. Paul exhorts them,

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:5-11)

In verse 7 Paul uses the phrase "made himself nothing" to describe the purposeful condescension of Christ in relationship to the Father. The phrase is better interpreted as "but emptied himself" (εαυτον εκενωσεν). This "kenosis" does not connote Christ losing any degree of His Deity. Ralph Martin, in his commentary on

Philippians, says that “the present verse says nothing about such things, but rather teaches that ‘kenosis’ or self-emptying was his taking the servant’s form, and this involved the necessary limitation of his glory which he laid aside in order that he might be born *in human likeness*” (Martin 1994, 104). Furthermore, the kenosis was “this act of self-abnegation in which his native glory which he had enjoyed from all eternity (Jn 17:5, 24) was laid aside in his becoming man” (Martin 1994, 105). Gordon Fee remarks, “The concern is with divine selflessness: God is not an acquisitive being, grasping and seizing, but self-giving for the sake of others” (Fee 1995, 211).

The servant posture of Jesus is not only His form of ministry to humanity but is also the expected form of His disciples to others. This is evident from the historical narrative of Matthew 20:20-28:

²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹ And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” ²² Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” ²³ He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” ²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus uses the context of a mother’s entreaty for her sons’ roles in the ensuing kingdom to define true greatness. The indignant attitude of the disciples’ response toward the mother’s request probably betrays a prevailing view of authority and leadership familiar to them (Howell 2003, 204). Jesus redefines that view by asserting that kingdom leadership will not follow the pattern of Gentile (Roman) leadership (vs. 26).

Donald Hagner, Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, asserts that οι αρχοντες “the rulers” and μεγαλοι “great ones” relished power that is derived from their political position but “greatness, honor, and prestige in the kingdom of God are reckoned by a completely different standard in the community of Jesus’ disciples” (Hagner 1993, 581). D. A. Carson comments on the stark difference and command of His leadership greatness:

Greatness among Jesus disciples is based on service. Anyone who wants to be great must become the *diakonos* (‘servant,’ v.26) of all. Here *diakonos* does not mean ‘deacon’ or ‘minister’ (KJV) in the modern church use. One of the ironies of language is that a word like ‘minister,’ which in its roots refers to a helper, one who ‘ministers,’ has become a badge of honor and power in religion and politics. But lest the full force of his teaching be lost, Jesus repeats it in v.27 with the stronger word *doulos* (‘slave’; cf. 1 Cor 9:19; 2 Cor 4:5; 1 Pet 1:22; 5:1-3). In the pagan world humility was regarded, not so much as a virtue, but as a vice. Imagine a slave being given leadership! Jesus’ ethics of the leadership and power in his community of disciples are revolutionary. (Carson 1984, 432)

Personal investment. Jesus did more than provide a plan for the development of His disciples. He gave them Himself. A compelling text that describes this facet of development is Mark 3:13-15, “And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.”

There are three important parts of this text that shed insight on the selection and investment process. First, there is the occasion of Jesus going up to a mountain to summon His disciples. James Edwards comments that “mountains in Mark are sites of revelation or significant junctures in Jesus’ ministry (3:13; 6:46; 9:2; 11:1; 13:3; 14:26), as they are sites of revelation in the OT. Jesus ascent of a mountain to call the Twelve

has the significance of Moses' ascent of Mt. Sinai to receive and transmit the Ten Commandments (Ex 19:1-25; 20:18-20)" (Edwards 2002, 111).

Second, Jesus called to those "whom he desired." This call is not simply a verbal activity to get the Twelve's attention. The verb "called" (προσκαλειται) occurs nine times in Mark, eight of which connote a simple summons toward His disciples, crowds, or a centurion for teaching and instruction (3:23; 6:7; 7:14; 8:1, 34; 10:42; 12:43; 15:44). Robert Guelich, in his commentary on Mark states that

The usage here, however, has more the sense of "to call" or "to select" as used in Acts 2:39; 13:2; 16:10 (cf. Luke 6:13). This too points to the traditional character of 3:13. The object and basis of this calling follow in the relative clause, "whom he himself wanted." The use of the intensive pronoun αυτος clearly accents that the choice was Jesus' alone based on his own desire. One cannot help but hear the faint echo of the OT references to God's sovereign call or selection of his own. (Guelich 1989, 157)

That call of Jesus came out of His "desire" for His disciples. The Greek is more emphatic and communicates the sense the Jesus summoned those whom he *willed*. Edwards exclaims, "Disciples do not decide to follow Jesus and do him a favor in so doing; rather, his call supersedes their wills, summoning one who does not intend to follow (10:21) and debarring one who would (5:19). The society into which he calls them is determined not by their preferences but by his summons" (Edwards 2002, 111).

Third, the calling of Jesus upon the disciples was to "be with Him" (ωσιν μετ αυτου) before being on mission for Him. This expression always includes being in the physical presence or in the company of someone or something (Guelich 1989, 158). Discipleship is a relationship before it is a task, a "who" before a "what" (Edwards 2002, 113). David Garland, Professor of Christian Scriptures at Truett Theological Seminary, profoundly states,

The task of being with Jesus is one that is harder than it might first appear. The Twelve will have to learn that there is a difference between hanging around Jesus

and truly being *with* him. The latter means that they must follow wherever he leads and share the toil of the ministry, the harassment of the crowds (3:20; 6:31-33), and the same bitter draught of suffering (10:39). (Garland 1996, 129)

It is apparent from this particular text in Mark that Jesus' initial steps toward developing disciples was to deliberately choose his disciples and call them into relationship with Himself. Leadership development does not occur haphazardly but requires a great amount of intentionality (Logan and Miller 2002, 20). Gene Wilkes, in his book *Jesus On Leadership*, says, "You will never be an effective leader until you include those you lead in what you do" (Wilkes 1998, 211). A researcher on biblical leadership development has noted,

In Jesus' three years with his disciples, he provided them an immersion experience in leadership development. Everything he did, in word or deeds had a teaching or training aspect to it. God desires to transform those who will lead the church into the image of Christ- to be like Christ and to lead as Christ would lead. This life-on-life context reveals powerful dynamics for life transformation and learning leadership. (Leyda 2005, 307)

Appeals to a kingdom orientation. Gordon Fee, renowned New Testament scholar, has said, "The universal witness of the synoptic tradition is that the absolutely central theme of Jesus' mission and message was the 'good news of the kingdom of God'" (Fee 1992, 8). The kingdom is not only inaugurated by John the Baptist through the appearance of Christ (Matt 3:2), but is also not of this world (John 18:36). It is this kingdom of the Gospel of Christ that is to be proclaimed to all the nations (Matthew 24:14). The value system of that kingdom of God stands in contrast to the kingdom of this world (Matt 6:33). It is the confusion of those value systems that created bickering among the disciples as to future positions in that kingdom.

Naturally, the disciples understood the kingdom not in messianic but political ways. Jesus appeals to the disciple's self interest in the kingdom but virtually redefined

the nature of that kingdom. The reign of God, “is not a spatial category but a dynamic event in which God intervenes powerfully in human affairs to achieve his unfading purposes (Garland 1996, 59). This combats the widely held assumption in the first century that the Roman yoke would be shattered and there would be political peace and mounting prosperity. D. A. Carson provides a corrective definition by stating that the kingdom is “the manifest exercise of God’s sovereignty, his ‘reign’ on earth and among men” (Carson 1984, 100). Furthermore, the kingdom came with Jesus and his preaching and miracles, it came with His death and resurrection, and it will come at the end of the age.

After the disciples became solidified, they were then commissioned as heralds of the kingdom of heaven and were sent forth with authority to proclaim its arrival. Jesus’ view of the kingdom imbued the ministry task of the disciples. Don Howell, professor of New Testament at Columbia Biblical Seminary, has outlined six stages of that disciples’ initial ministry task (Matt 10:1-16):

1. The apostles’ initial sphere of ministry was not to Gentiles or even to Samaritans, but only to the Jewish villagers and townspeople who were like lost sheep (10:5-6)
2. Their message was the same as that of John (Matt 3:2) and of Jesus (Matt 4:17): “The kingdom of heaven has drawn near” (10:7)
3. Four representative miracles provided attestation of the arrival of the kingdom and demonstrated the delegated authority of the heralds (10:8a)
4. They were to serve with mercenary motives (10:8b). The apostles were to be unencumbered by material possessions and dependent on God to supply their needs through his people (Matt 10:9-10)
5. Confidence in God’s sovereignty must govern their attitudes to those who were receptive and to those who were hostile to their message. The Christological core of their message must be undiluted, for people’s eternal destiny depends on their response to Jesus. The apostles were learning that the promotion of the kingdom is divisive and meets with violent opposition (10:11-15)

6. Their mental posture is described as “wise as serpents, innocent as doves” (10:16). Prudence and caution toward determined opponents was combined with pure motivation free from guile. To be realistic without becoming cynical or suspicious would be the delicate balance. (Howell 2003, 141)

This section shows that Christ displayed a kingdom orientation that defined His whole mission. Consequently, that orientation was modeled and transmitted to His disciples as servants of that kingdom. But is there evidence of reign of Christ over modern-day humans? Millard Erickson answers,

Indeed there is. The kingdom of God, over which Christ reigns, is present in the church. He is the head of the body, the church (Col 1:18). When he was on earth, his kingdom was present in the hearts of his disciples. And wherever believers today are following the lordship of Christ, the Savior is exercising his ruling or kingly function. (Erickson 1992, 249)

Continual teaching. An individual can be a teacher but not a leader.

Conversely, a leader is always teacher. The teaching ministry of Jesus is the preeminent example of how important and powerful knowledge can be in cultivating not only the hearts of leaders but also their heads as well. The New Testament describes the way Jesus taught as one who had authority in His teaching that surpassed their teachers of the day (Matt 7:28-29). Inherent authority is the authority of Jesus since He is the first born over all creation (Col 1:15), the very wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24), and is in essence, God Himself (John 14:9).

Mark 6:6b says that Jesus “went about among the villages teaching” (περιεγενησ κωμασ κυκλο διδασκων). This active verbal form connotes a continual lifestyle of teaching in Jesus’ ministry. James Edwards remarks, “The defining element of his ministry is teaching. Jesus is popularly conceived of as undertaking a ministry of ‘presence’ or of compassion and healing. These were indeed important elements of his

ministry, but they do not identify the dominant purpose of his ministry, which according to Mark, was *teaching*” (Edwards 2002, 177).

Jesus also taught with a developmental view of adult learning. In His intensive training of the disciples, Jesus did not deluge them with all of his knowledge but instead unfolded the revelation of Himself in a somewhat slow but deliberate fashion. It is interesting to note that the teaching ministry of Jesus was a display of constructing knowledge upon His hearers’ prior knowledge. For example, when Jesus consistently used the phrase, “you have heard it said, but I tell you . . .” (Matt 5:27) He was building upon previous knowledge of the Law and its implications. With that knowledge as a base, Jesus would then move his hearers into the deeper implications of the law, namely Himself.

Jesus engineered a learning environment by using multiple means to keep vision in front of his disciples. It is true that He sometimes used a straight forward lecture methodology but the Scriptures show Jesus using other methods such as strategic questions (Matt 16:15), clarifying ambiguity (Mark 4:13-20), the use of real life examples (Matt 18:2-3), challenging presuppositions (Mark 2:8-9), allowing the tension of mystery and dissonance (Matt 26:62-63), and blunt warnings about the cost of being a student (Luke 9:57-62). Gary Bredfeldt, in his book *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, says these words about Jesus’ leadership:

His method of leadership was to draw disciples or students around Him and then teach them. He taught using parables and metaphors. He taught with proverbs and questions. He taught using objects and demonstrations. He taught formally in the synagogues and informally in the marketplace, by a well, at a lake, on a hillside. The most common designation for Jesus was *rabbi*- teacher. Clearly, Jesus did not come as leader of an enterprise but as the teacher of the words that bring life. It was His teaching and His sacrifice that marked His leadership. (Bredfeldt 2006, 55)

Purposeful delegation of meaningful tasks. Richard Leyda, associate professor of Christian Education at Talbot Theological Seminary, made this observation concerning internship programs:

We have discovered that one essential component of a successful internship experience is the opportunity for the intern to take on increasingly challenging projects and responsibilities, with an enhanced probability of success and a safety net in the form of a knowledgeable site supervisor or trainer. Through actual attempts to lead, the emerging leader experiences risk taking, failure, success, and the weight of responsibility. The person is stretched and learns valuable personal lessons concerning the self, others, and the practice of being in charge. (Leyda 2005, 308)

These words echo in principle one method of leadership development utilized by Jesus among His disciples, the purposeful delegation of meaningful tasks. A clear example of this occurs in Matthew 10:1-23, which narrates Jesus delegating the task of casting out unclean spirits, “and to heal every disease and affliction” (Matt 10:1). Some points in this narrative may only be historically applicable to the Twelve (i.e. only going to fellow Jews) (Hagner 2008, 184) but there are three principles found in this account that are significant in regards to delegating.

First, Jesus gave the disciples His authority (*εδοκεν αυτοις εχουσιαν*). The aorist form of this phrase means that the giving of this authority is a point in time action with ongoing effects. Jesus reiterates this truth as He commissions His disciples at the end of Matthew's Gospel (Matt 28:18-20). Second, Jesus provides clear objectives by instructing them (*παραγειλασ αυτοις*) (vv. 8-21). Third, Jesus gives meaning to this mission by warning His disciples of impending persecution and reminding them that this mission is for His name's sake (v. 22) (Carson 1984, 249-50).

Comprehensive vision. Jesus also placed in front of His disciples a vision that would be far reaching in scope and would require their whole being. The

comprehensive nature of His vision is geographical as well as ontological. Three of the four canonical Gospels contain a charge from Jesus to bring His good news to the nations. He proclaims from a mountain by Galilee,

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)

He charges the disciples in a post resurrection appearance,

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:44-49)

His charge as found in the Gospel of John states,

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.(John 20:20)

Before His ascension Jesus provided His disciples with further detail as to the method of reaching the nations:

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:6-8)

Darrel Bock, New Testament scholar at Dallas Theological Seminary, comments on the radical nature of this comprehensive vision, “This message of salvation extends to all the nations, though the disciples will take ten chapters of Acts before they

see that “the nations” means more than Diaspora Jews. They must preach to every tribe and nation- a fact we take for granted today but was revolutionary at the time, since religions had a stronger ethnic character to them” (Bock 1996, 621). The universalizing scope of Christ’s commission, which includes both Jews and Gentiles, is reiterated by D.A. Carson by in his commentary on Matthew 28:18-20: “A good case can be made for saying that the full expression, *panta ta ethne*, used four times in Matthew (24:9, 14; 25:32; here), uses *ethne* in its basic sense of ‘tribes,’ ‘nations,’ or ‘peoples’ and means ‘all peoples [without distinction]’ or ‘all nations [without distinction],’ thereby including Jews” (Carson 1984, 596).

The role of the disciples in pursuing this vision will be as “witnesses (*μαρτυρες*) in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The idea of witness has OT roots (Num 35:30; Deut 17:6-7; Isa 43:10-12; 44:8-9). Jesus also spoke of witness in a legal sense (Matt 18:16), as do passages discussing activity or potential activity in the church (2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19) (Polhill 1992, 85). A witness in this sense is someone who helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation rather than subjective and personal impressions (Bock 2007, 64).

This concept of a comprehensive vision shows that Jesus developed His disciples toward a vision that was dramatically beyond their cognitive and physical abilities. Their success in that vision would have to occur with their unconditional commitment combined with Christ’s authority and the enablement of His Spirit. One researcher has said that “Jesus was a vision caster, a resource provider, and a character and skill developer. His disciples must give due attention to both the evangelistic and pastoral dimensions of the mandate, for the spiritual quality of the kingdom communities would determine their effectiveness in impacting the world” (Howell 2003, 161).

The Apostle Paul and Leadership Development

The disciples' pursuit of Jesus' vision as found in Acts provides an appropriate transition to this researcher's examination of leadership development as modeled by the Apostle Paul. Is there division or congruency between concepts of Jesus' approach to leadership development and Paul's (Horrell 1997, 324)? Fortunately, a recent and scholarly approach to that very issue has been achieved by Steve Walton. Walton, Lecturer in Greek and New Testament Studies at the London Bible College, has written *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians*, which asserts significant congruency between Jesus' and Paul's approach to leadership.

The thesis of this book is to look at Paul's Miletus speech (Acts 20:18b-35) and identify and compare themes in Luke and Paul's views of Christian leadership (Walton 2000, 1-5). His research has revealed the following themes: faithful fulfillment of leadership responsibility; suffering; attitudes toward wealth and work; and the death of Jesus. It is these themes that this researcher will utilize in addressing Paul's view of leadership development. Substantial weight will be given to the first theme (faithful fulfillment of leadership responsibility) as its conceptual breadth covers more areas pertaining to this overall research. Research from others will be incorporated to achieve this goal.

Faithful fulfillment of leadership responsibility. Paul, in this farewell discourse, brings to the Ephesian elders' attention how he has modeled faithfulness. He achieves this in three ways. First, Paul's numerous uses of the word *πας* (all) in the passage of Acts 20:13-38. He has been consistent the whole time (vs. 18); his work has

been thoroughly humble (vs. 19); he has proclaimed the whole purpose of God (vs. 27); his message produces an inheritance amongst all sanctified (vs. 32); therefore he is innocent of the blood of them all (vs. 26); and in everything he has given an example to follow (vs. 35).

Walton also points out that

the fulfillment of Paul's responsibilities can also be seen through seven of the negatives in the passage. In three cases Paul is denying that he has omitted anything that he should have covered in this teaching (verses 20, 27 (two negatives in the Greek reinforce each other here), 31). Paul also asserts that his life is not reckoned as valuable to him compared to the future obedience to God's will (verse 24). Paul's warning about the wolves who will not spare the flock (verse 29) implies that, by contrast, he has spared the flock from the pain and punishment which the wolves will bring. Paul also emphasises [sic] that he has not coveted *αργυριου η χρυσιου η ματισμου ουδενος* (verse 33), again using a negative statement to make a positive point, which is then applied to the elders. (Walton 2000, 85)

Furthermore, the result of his words will result in all the elders not seeing him again (vs. 25) and therefore they (elders) are to keep watch *παντι τω ποιμνω* (the whole flock). Their ministry is to be as unstinting and as complete as Paul's (Walton 2000, 84-85). Paul is not merely reminding the elders of his message but rather his way of life.

Witherington remarks that Paul, in this farewell speech, is insisting on the consistency of his behavior. It was the same from the very first day he set foot in the province of Asia until now when he is leaving it (Witherington 1998, 616).

Paul also echoed this appeal to his life in his letter to the church at Corinth. In his desire to send them Timothy, Paul writes,

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. (1 Cor 4:15-17)

Paul urges the Corinthians church to be "imitators of me" (*μεμεται μου*) and that

Timothy will remind them of "my ways" (*τας οδους μου*) (Johnson 1992, 360). This

imitation refers most likely to both the example and teaching of Christ (Fee 1987, 187; Clarke 2006, 124-25).

It is important for Paul to remind the Ephesian elders and the church at Corinth of his life but other Epistles also give insight into Paul's faithful leadership through his correspondence with Timothy and Titus. These two men had insight into Paul's life since they were his traveling companions throughout the Apostle's ministry. Paul had initiated Timothy into ministry (2 Tim 1:6), challenged Timothy to take what he had taught, and to entrust it to others (2 Tim 2:2) by adopting his pattern of teaching (2 Tim 1:13-14; 3:10-11). He had Timothy accompany him in ministry (Acts 17-20) but also gave him opportunities to preach (1 Thess 1:2-10; 1 Cor 1:19). When Timothy needed to be challenged (2 Tim 2:3-7) or encouraged (1 Tim 4:12) Paul was seemingly ready to provide it (Houston 2004, 229). Titus, who Paul called "my true son" (Titus 1:4) had accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Antioch and to the Jerusalem council (Gal 2:1-3).

Paul, nearing the end of his life, uses his influence with Timothy to exhort him to develop other leaders (Towner 2006, 392), "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). William Mounce, in his commentary on 2 Timothy, writes,

In order to continue the work that Timothy began, it is essential that men of character continue to teach the true gospel, the same gospel Timothy learned from Paul. Timothy is to identify these men and entrust the gospel to them before he leaves, helping to ensure the integrity of the gospel message. Because teaching is the responsibility of elders (cf. 1 Tim 3:2), the faithful are probably elders. (Mounce 2000, 504)

The qualities of these "faithful men" (elders and deacons) are described in more detail in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 8-13 and Titus 1:5-9:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard,

not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1-7)

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim 3:8-13)

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9)

The detail of these character traits put forth by Paul should not be construed as excluding divine guidance. It rather aims to increase the value of such leadership in the eyes of the community (Towner 2006, 249). The overall concern is that church leaders be above reproach in their daily lives. Mounce has commented, “There are several qualities repeated in all three lists: above reproach, ‘one woman’ man, dignified (using different words), not addicted to wine, not greedy for money, and good manager of family. These positive qualities contrast with their negative counterparts, which characterize the opponents” (Mounce 2000, 155).

Paul understands that the essential barrier to faithfulness in ministry is weaknesses in one’s character. Kenneth Gangel warns that issues of character can never be ignored because a “breakdown in spiritual maturity stands as the single most important

damaging factor to leadership in the body of Christ” (Gangel 1989, 135). Leaders within the field of Christian coaching point out that unrepentant sin in a leader’s life undermines that leader’s intimacy with God and participation in authentic Christian community. Character weaknesses also increase the difficulty of ministering to a culture without getting caught up in the sinful behavior of that culture (Ogne and Roehl 2008, 48). Character is the ultimate determiner of the nature of leadership (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 1999, 1).

This section of research has shown that Paul appeals to his lifestyle as proof of faith and ministry and to exhort leaders to imitate him. He also emphasizes his lifestyle to influence Timothy and Titus in developing other leaders. This will require a deliberate approach in discerning desirable character qualities in future leaders.

Suffering. A second theme located within Paul’s speech at Miletus is the suffering that will be inevitable for one who faithfully proclaims the Christian Gospel. Luke presents Paul as referring back to his own past suffering (vs. 19b) and suffering that awaits him in the future (vs. 23). Walton comments,

Paul’s attitude to suffering is twofold: there is an implied patience and fortitude in his description in verse 19, and he is utterly committed to seeing through the path of witness-through-imprisonment which awaits him as the Lord’s purpose (vs. 24). By implication the elders are to regard suffering similarly when they meet it, as Paul hints that they will (verses 29-30). That is why they need to keep watch and stay alert. (Walton 2000, 89)

Paul wants to edify the Ephesian elders in order to prepare them for the suffering that will come their way (Bock 2007, 627). New Testament scholar Joseph Fitzmyer observes that in this speech Paul, “places a martyr’s crown on the head in advance, and sings a victory song over the sufferings to come. In Acts as a whole the speech foreshadows the end of Paul’s missionary activity” (Fitzmyer 1998, 675).

One researcher has noted,

From the time of his conversion Paul was appointed to suffer for the sake of the name of Jesus (Acts 9:16). Paul takes on the posture of Isaiah's suffering servant, not like the messianic Servant whose vicarious sacrifice is unique and unrepeatable, but in the sense of a witness whose sufferings bear the image of the Servant-Lord whose person and work he proclaims to the Gentiles (Isa 42:1; 6-7; 49:6b; Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:15-18). Paul's sacrifices are representative and testimonial. The epistles of Paul are replete with the language of hardship. One of the great interpretative hurdles for the 21st century commentator (less of a hurdle for those who write out of a contemporary setting of persecution) is to capture the full force of language written to churches whose normal life setting was one of personal harassment, societal marginalization, and material loss. The key to Paul's resilience, and that of the churches he planted, was a confidence in the divine purposes being worked out through their sufferings. (Howell 2003, 280)

The sufferings of Paul include two dimensions of significance. His sufferings are endured for the *edification* of the church, the body of Christ (Col 1:24) and authenticates his *identification* with the sufferings of Christ (Howell 2003, 280-81).

Darrell Bock, in commenting on verse 23, states that "Paul could lose his life, but it would not matter if it were done for God as the gospel is preached. His only desire is to accomplish the course to which the Lord Jesus called him as he testifies to the content of God's grace and the gospel" (Bock 2007, 628). By implication the Ephesian elders are to regard suffering similarly when they meet it. That is why they need to keep watch and alert (Walton 2000, 89). This faithful and at times brutal commitment of Paul toward his ministry also imbued his attitude toward his day to day concerns.

Attitudes toward wealth and work. A third theme in Paul's farewell speech addresses his own frugal lifestyle and his expectation of the Ephesian elders. It is seen in verses 33 through 35:

³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:33-35)

Paul coveted nothing (vs. 33), provided his own financial support (34), and actually provided financial help to those he serves (35). Walton asserts, “Part of the elders’ ‘feeding’ task (vs. 28) is to be literal feeding, on the basis of verses 33-35” (Walton 2000, 91). Richard Longnecker, a prominent New Testament scholar, comments that “Paul often related to his ethical exhortations to the teachings of Jesus (cf. Rom 12-14; 1 Thess 4:1-12) and the personal example of Jesus (cf. Phil 2:5-11). So he does that here” (Longnecker 1981, 514).

Witherington makes an insightful observation:

The Greco-Roman world was honeycombed by social networks grounded in the principle of reciprocity, of ‘giving and receiving.’ Paul’s exhortation here is to break the cycle and serve and help those who can give nothing in return. This is the practical expression of what being gracious means- freely they had received the good news, and they should freely give with no thought of return. (Witherington 1998, 626)

The death of Jesus. The last theme in Walton’s research of Paul’s Miletus speech concerns the crucified Savior: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Although it is mentioned only once in the speech it is highly significant because the topic is mentioned little in Luke-Acts (Walton 2000, 91). Luke’s intent in mentioning the death of Christ is more pastoral than deeply theological (Walton 2000, 93). The act of Christ’s crucifixion was to serve as the supreme motivation for the Ephesian elders to “pay careful attention” to themselves and for them “to care” for the church of God.

The verb *περιεποιησατο* is stronger than “obtain” and should be rendered “procure” or “purchased.” Walton comments, “The meaning here should be seen as derived from the world of thought: through the price of the blood of his own one, God

has come into possession of the church (cf. 1 Pet 2:9)” (Walton 2000, 92). Bock states profoundly, “the picture is like what Abraham had been willing to do with Isaac (Gen 22), only here God does carry out the offering so that others could benefit from the sacrifice” (Bock 2007, 630) Such a sacred form of sacrifice for the church makes the responsibility of the elders sacred.

Clowney contends,

While chosen and recognized by the people, church elders receive their authority through the Holy Spirit who called them, endowed them, and appointed them for service (Acts 20:28). Service, not power or prestige, is the purpose of church officers, as of all believers. The Christian follows his Lord in the way of the cross. Jesus repeatedly reversed the disciples’ thinking. They sought worldly greatness—places of honor in his kingdom; but he asked if they could drink his cup of suffering, and told them that he came, not to be served, but ‘to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many’ (Matt 20:25:28). (Clowney 1995, 206)

Summary

This study has focused on implicit and explicit principles of leadership development as deduced from the biblical data on Jesus and the Apostle Paul. A synthesis of material contained in this research shows seven themes of leadership development. First, the task of developing leaders is infinitely important. The Gospel commission cannot occur without the means of growing and reproducing leaders. The stark requirements of discipleship as communicated by Jesus underscore the seriousness of this endeavor. Paul reiterated this by reminding the elders of Ephesus of the brutal price that was paid for the church.

Second, developing leaders is an act of servanthood. Jesus and Paul both exhibited and taught servanthood that was counter-cultural. The effect of Christ-centered servanthood will inevitably involve a degree of suffering. There is struggle and hurt in developing leaders. Third, leadership development is a relationship of personal

investment that is initiated by a deliberate choice and is lived out through life on life interaction. Jesus and Paul were not only intentional in investing their lives into leaders but placed significant importance on the their character.

Fourth, Jesus and Paul exhibited a kingdom orientation. The Gospels and Epistles are replete with references to the kingdom of God or heaven. The disciples and Paul's churches were consistently challenged to have a deeper view of the kingdom than their own cultural or political situation. Fifth, leadership development involves a continual cycle of teaching. This research has shown that Jesus and Paul used multiple methods and venues to teach and preach the Good News of the Gospel.

Sixth, delegation is important in developing leaders. Paul delegated his message to Timothy so that it would continue for multiple generations. Jesus delegated tasks to his disciples in such a way to give them room to make mistakes and to give them a sense of accomplishment. More importantly, Jesus gave His disciples His authority to accomplish those ministry tasks. Jesus and Paul, in their own words, encouraged a lifestyle of simplicity in the pursuit of those tasks. Lastly, leadership development requires the giving of a comprehensive mission, which is a mission that requires more than one's ability or intellect to accomplish. It can only happen with the empowerment of the Spirit.

House Church Practices of Leadership Development

Abraham Malherbe, in his book *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, regarded the New Testament house churches as the, "training ground for the Christian leaders who were to build the church after the loss of 'apostolic' guidance" (Malherbe 1977, 61). The ministry philosophy of house churches creates a continual need for emerging leaders

(Lawson 1993, 70; Gehring 2004, 305). This concluding section will survey literature from within the HCM that addresses this important issue.

Apprenticeship

Robert Fitts, who wrote *The Church in the House: A Return to Simplicity*, advocates a one-on-one hands-on training between a house church leader and an emerging leader. The term “apprenticeship,” in the opinion of this researcher is describes the overall philosophy leadership development within the HCM. Fitts writes, “House churches will enable us to train pastors to actually do the work of pastoring while they are under the supervision of a more experienced pastor. They will grow as the church grows under their leadership. Some will pastor more than one house church since they will not all meet on Sunday morning” (Fitts 2001, 19).

This apprenticeship model is essentially a discipleship relationship. When there is no discipleship, the potentiality of the church is buried and the prospective leaders are unidentified, unmotivated and thus ignored. Stephen David, a house church practitioner, believes, “The growth of the small communities through discipleship often results in the growth of more leaders. Leaders are born and developed, not often out of public preaching but out of personal discipleship” (David 2008, 107).

Phases of Leadership Development

Kirk Hadaway, Francis DuBose, and Stuart Wright wrote one of the first North American glimpses of house church networks in their popular treatment *Home Cell Groups and House Churches*. The authors provided a cursory example of a leadership development process in a single house church network in Milwaukee. This particular process occurs through eight phases:

- Phase 1: A member who demonstrates faithfulness toward responsibilities given by leader.
- Phase 2: The member shows continued responsibility and may be asked to lead the group if leader needs to be away.
- Phase 3: The member is invited by leader to Leadership Training Class held quarterly for all from Phase 2.
- Phase 4: An interview is conducted with members who complete Phase 3 to determine desires and qualifications.
- Phase 5: If qualified, members undergo thirteen weeks of one-to-one training on Christian life and leadership.
- Phase 6: The new leader begins a new house church and delegating responsibilities.
- Phase 7: The leader must attend ongoing training three times a year.
- Phase 8: An exceptional leader may be promoted to a Regional Shepherd who oversees a cluster of house churches. (Hadaway, DuBose, and Wright 1987, 125-26)

Hadaway's research is one example of how a network of house churches trains its leaders. In respect to the authors, their work was confined to one network and almost twenty-five years old. Research also does not exist that employs multiple case studies of house church networks and their leadership development process. Furthermore, no research exists that describes house church leaders and their self-perception of their development process.

Conclusion

The intent of this research is to study a growing house church movement in North America. The specific aspect of this movement as it pertains to this research is leadership development among house church networks. This chapter has explained important biblical/theological foundations of house church networks and addressed themes of leadership development through the lives of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. The

last section has shown brevity in describing leadership development within North America house church networks. J. D. Payne, author of *Missional House Churches*, wrote as his conclusion,

At the time of this writing, this research project is the first of its kind on the North American house church. I am unaware of any extensive research being conducted on house churches in general or missional house churches in particular. Because of the great dearth of information, it is my hope that the strengths and limitations of my work in this book will challenge and motivate others to conduct better future studies. (Payne 2007, 167)

The research findings in chapter 4 will bring qualitative and quantitative form to the purpose of this research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The goal of house churches to multiply themselves requires a deliberate and consistent process of leadership development (Kreider and McClung 2007, 145). A process of leadership development can use formal means such as lecture, evaluation forms, and rewards for performance or informal means such as relational dialogue and modeling. A research design must be utilized that enables the discovery of these formal and informal means of developing leaders. This chapter provides the methodology that was implemented for the research task of determining the leadership development processes of select house church networks in North America.

Research Question Synopsis

The purpose of this research is to offer a descriptive analysis of the leadership development process in select house church networks in North America. The research questions are as follows:

The research into this topic was guided by the following questions:

1. What process is utilized by house church networks for the selection of potential house church leaders?
2. What are the methods utilized by house church networks to develop potential house church leaders?
3. What are the methods utilized by house church networks to provide ongoing leadership support to the house church leaders?

4. What are the self-perceptions of house church leaders regarding the effectiveness of their leadership development process as related to network goals?
5. What are the self-perceptions of house church leaders regarding the inadequacies of their training?

Research Design Overview

The approach to research that was utilized by this researcher was fundamentally qualitative. Qualitative research focuses on a certain phenomenon in natural settings and takes into account all the complexity that is endemic to that setting (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, 133). The primary method to achieve this qualitative research occurred in the form of a *multiple case study*. The setting of this research design occurred within the geographical setting of all four house church networks. This enabled the researcher to watch people in their own environment, interact with them in their own ways of communicating, and on their own terms (Gall, Gall, and Borg 2005, 309).

A significant strength of case study research is its potential to “contain a substantial element of narrative. Good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life. Accordingly, such narratives may be difficult or impossible to summarize into neat scientific formulae, general propositions, and theories” (Flyvbjerg 2004, 429-30).

Interviews were conducted with leader/trainers and house church leaders from each network. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in order to answer the research questions, which undergird this proposed study. The interviews involved semi-structured and generally open-ended questions that were few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell 2003, 188).

The interviewees were chosen through a strategy of *purposeful sampling* of house church leaders and trainers within each house church network. These networks are Vineyard Central of Cincinnati; MetroSoul of New York City; Christ Fellowship of Kansas City; and the Denver House Church Network in Denver, Colorado. It was the leaders among these particular networks that provided the necessary data points that will drive this research.

A multiple case study design provided the researcher a framework “to make comparisons, build theory, or propose generalizations” (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, 135; Creswell 2003, 14). These house church networks were congruent in their overall house church philosophy but yet divergent from each other in their points of emphasis. There was one quantitative component of this research which evaluated the self-perceptions of house church leaders in regard to their leadership development.

It was contingent upon this researcher to present both a summary and content analysis. A summary analysis was attempted to identify broad themes of commonality among each case study. A content analysis was attempted to research all printed or virtual materials that each house church network utilizes for the sake of advertisement, information sharing, training purposes, and doctrinal parameters. This aided the researcher as he described, interpreted, and evaluated each network separately and then offered a summation of all the networks. Multiple case studies were utilized to make comparisons, build theory, or propose generalizations. It is the intent of this researcher that information derived from multiple case studies converge to offer precepts and strategies of leadership development that could apply to varied contexts of biblical leadership development (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, 135-36).

Population

The research population consists of all network leaders within all North American house church networks that develop other leaders for the expansion of the network. Within this population, the researcher employed a purposeful sampling method.

Sample

The research sample within the population was network leader/trainers and house church leaders within four North American house church networks. The networks are: Vineyard Central in Cincinnati, Ohio; The MetroSoul house church network in New York City, New York; Christ Fellowship of Kansas City, Missouri; and the Denver house church network in Denver, Colorado. The networks were chosen through a basic search of the Internet and conversation with prominent proponents of house church philosophy. This researcher then proceeded to run these particular networks through the sieve of criteria that emerged from precedent research.

These four house church networks were chosen in particular because of their alignment with certain principles that reflect the definitions of house church and house church networks. The inclusion criteria were:

1. A commitment to house church network philosophy
2. A commitment to birth other house churches
3. A commitment to maintain a house church network in their geographical areas
4. A commitment to have minimal if any financial overhead such as buildings designated for worship and full time staff
5. A commitment to intentionally develop leaders

6. The house church network has at least one person who is a leader/trainer within that particular network

This research was limited to four house church networks in North America. These house church networks met the criteria stated previously from the precedent literature. The sample within this research population were network leaders within each network who train other leaders and leaders of house churches who have been leading their house churches for at least one year. This minimum of one year was used to address the time that is needed to fully immerse the leader in the ministry context of their house churches. Leadership effectiveness and assessment are difficult to gauge during the initial days of house church leadership, therefore the minimum requirement of one year.

The four house church networks, though all meet the inclusion criterion, were also chosen for their distinctives. Vineyard Central has roots in servant evangelism and emphasizes the importance of personal salvation as well as being good stewards of creation. This house church network utilizes a monthly gathering called a Leadership Community that comprises network and house church leaders. The ongoing purpose of that community is for worship, prayer, and training.

MetroSoul is influenced by the Christian denomination and exists in an area whereby many individuals take cabs or use the subway system to attend house churches. MetroSoul uses an intensive internship program to aid in planting new house churches within the New York City area. The Christ Fellowship house church network places a significant emphasis on doctrine and is highly Calvinistic. The last house church network, the Denver house church network, is heavily influenced by LK10, a community of practice for church planters.

Limits of Generalization

The research findings may not be applicable to traditional church forms. There are many leadership development strategies that run across varied leadership contexts but the findings of this research may not apply to church forms that are not influenced by house church philosophy. The findings may not generalize to all leadership structures in house church networks in North America.

The research findings may not apply to non-western house church networks. House church networks outside of North America may benefit from the principles uncovered in this research but significant cultural differences could hamper the implementation of these principles. The findings may not generalize to house church networks that are located outside of a city context. As mentioned in chapter 1, the sample grouping of house church networks are located in cities. House churches or house church networks in remote or highly suburban geographical areas will need to contextualize the research findings, which are beyond the purpose of this research. The findings of this research generalize to the four house church networks involved in this study.

Research Method

A thorough interview was conducted with leaders from each house church network. An expert consultation was convened to evaluate the validity of the interview protocol. This consultation comprised of two professors who have research experience in qualitative research design.

The interview protocol was field-tested to help the researcher discern potential problems that could impede the preparation, implementation, and analysis of the interviews. This field-test involved a house church network in this researcher's state of residence, Ohio. These individuals met the population and sample criteria established from the precedent literature.

Research Procedures

This study strived to uncover particular patterns of leadership development within North American house church networks. In order to accomplish the research purpose this researcher engaged in a six stage process to gather, categorize, and analyze the researching findings. Those six stages are clearly proposed in the following paragraphs.

The *initial phase* in accomplishing the purpose of this research is to search for North American house church networks that have leadership in place to fulfill the inclusion criterion set forth in this study. This task will be achieved by communication with published leaders within the house church movement as to their knowledge of house church networks that could meet the research criteria. Second, this researcher examined each network's web site to discern the research viability of each network. Third, this researcher placed phone calls to each network in order to converse with the planter or key leader of that particular network. The questions put forth by this researcher during these phone calls covered each principle of the inclusion criteria.

The *second phase* of this research method required the researcher to experience each house church network in its own setting. A strong value on watching and listening is extremely important to grasp the perspective of leaders within the house church

networks. This researcher spent two to three days within each house church network in order to investigate the culture of each network's geographical setting.

The *third phase* utilized a questionnaire to obtain initial objective data from the leader/trainers as well as the house church leaders. The questionnaire asked for the self-perceptions of leader/trainers and house church leaders in regards to their overall leadership development from the leader/trainer of their respective networks. The survey instrumentation enabled the researcher to see aspects of congruence and divergence with the intentions of the stated leadership development process that was explained by the leader/trainer.

This quantitative approach employed a research instrument that used Likert scales to assess the attitudes of house church leaders in regards to their training. This quantitative step enabled the researcher to see congruence or dissimilarity between what the house church trainers sought to accomplish in developing leaders and the perception of those leaders themselves. The Likert scale instrument reflected the research questions that guided this research and equipped this researcher with questions that ask for elaboration during the interview process.

The *fourth phase* will involved face to face interviews with each network leader separately and each house church leader separately. The personal exposure provided this researcher the venues for the multiple interviews and the opportunity to attend a house church within each network. The task of interviewing is the core competence of qualitative research and is also buttressed by documents, past records, audiovisual materials and online material of the phenomenon being researched (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, 135).

The numbers of interviews differed according to the amount of leader/trainers in each network and the number of house church leaders within each network. For the purpose of this research there was a minimum of two leader/trainer and three house church leaders within each network. The interview settings were casual and relaxed to enable a free flowing dialogue between the new house church leaders and this researcher (see interview protocol in Appendix 1).

The interview format gave the researcher insight into each leader's specialized knowledge and their emic perspective, that is perspective that can only come from an individual within a certain culture such as a particular house church network (Gall, Gall, and Borg 2005, 310). The technology utilized for the recording was a Blue Snowflake ® USB microphone from and transcription of these interviews will be the Dragon Speaking Naturally© software from Nuance Communications© out of Burlington, Massachusetts.

The *fifth phase* analyzed the data derived from the interviews. The software utilized for the purpose of analysis was the NVivo© software produced by QSR International© out of Melbourne, Australia. The indexing program of NVivo© is uniquely designed to perform qualitative analysis on non-numerical and unstructured data, such as the proposed interview transcripts (Parker 2008, 97). This program assisted the researcher in identifying words or phrases, coding the results of each transcript, searching for coding patterns, and producing reports of the analysis performed and the ensuing results (Richards 1998, 14-15).

In the natural process of organizing the data, this researcher reached preliminary conclusions during the data collection process. It was therefore important for this researcher to triangulate the research findings (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, 136). This was accomplished with special attention toward theoretical and practical patterns that

evolved out of the various inputs of information from the house church networks. Patterns emerged through this qualitative research to inductively arrive at emerging leadership constructs. The analysis examined each network as well as provided an overall summation of inquiry from all house church leaders combined.

The *sixth phase* was a content analysis of all materials utilized by each house church network to promote their existence, purpose, and leadership development process. These materials will involved the networks' virtual presence on the internet, print materials, and any material that is utilized in leadership development. The purpose of this aspect of analysis will provide the researcher insight into the stated intentions of their leadership development process and the actual results of that leadership development process. Doctrinal foundations and applicable statements (vision, philosophical, or practical) were also gathered so this researcher could reflect and understand each network's theological and philosophical worldview.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership development process of select house church networks in North America. Case study methodology enabled this researcher to study the aspect of leadership development within four North American house church networks. These case studies provided in-depth study of each network in their natural context and provide perspectives of both this researcher and the research participants (Gall, Gall, and Borg 2005, 308-09).

In the following chapter the researcher describes the data that was gathered from the four selected house church networks. The data that is presented and analyzed pertains to the selection, development, and sustainability of house church leaders within these four networks. Data is also presented that addresses the personal perception of house church leaders in reference to the effectiveness and inadequacies of their development toward network goals.

Compilation Protocol

The researcher collected data in seven phases. Phase 1 cultivated a population sample of North American house church networks, leader/trainers and house church leaders that met the standards of the inclusion criteria outlined in chapter 3. Phase 2 involved traveling to all of the selected house church networks for contextual exposure and for interviews with house church network leader/trainers and house church leaders

(see Appendix 1 for initial interview protocol). This gave the researcher the opportunity to provide a thick description of each network (Creswell 2007, 75).

Phase 3 involved the providing of questions that elicited the initial self perceptions from leader/trainers and house church leaders from each network. The questions utilized in the quantitative instrument were the research questions that were disclosed in chapter 3. Each interview respondent completed the instrument before each interview to provide the researcher with a concise view of the respondents' reaction toward the research questions. Phase 4 entailed interpersonal interviews between this researcher and each network's leader/trainer and house church leaders.

The format of the interviews involved a method of semi-structured inquiry and lasted over an hour with leader/trainers while interviews with house church leaders lasted approximately twenty minutes each. The research questions provided the researcher with starting points for further probing within that subject matter (Maxwell 2005, 81). Phase 5 analyzed all the raw data derived from the multiple interviews and from attending a house church meeting within each network.

Phase 6 consisted of a content analysis of each house church network. This analysis involved all internet presence, printed advertisements, and materials utilized by the house church networks to train their leaders. Phase 7 analyzed the cultivated data through categorizing, coding, and observing recurring themes and terms (Bordens and Abbott 2008, 239).

Findings and Displays

In the following pages, the researcher will introduce each house church network, analyzes the data from each network, and summarizes the collective findings from each network. The analysis of the data is displayed by tables with responses by sample respondents that were provided during the recording and transcribing of the interview protocol. Tables are also used to display results that were collected through the means of surveys.

The surveys provided a quantifiable method to measure the perceptions of leader/trainers and house church leaders within each network. A basic statistical analysis was performed to measure the statistical mean of each network and for possible responses that measured outside the standard deviations from the mean. The mean is used to gain insight into the overall results for each house church network and the standard deviation will give insight into how consistent the answers were. A larger value for the standard deviation is a measure of a larger variation in the respondent answers.

This research begins by presenting each case study followed by an integrated summary. The findings of each house church network are presented systematically to provide the reader a view of emerging patterns that inform the researcher's conclusions in chapter 5. These questions address the selection, development, and sustainment of house church leaders by the leader/trainers of each house church network.

Attributes and Coding Description

A fundamental step in presenting the findings of this study is clearly identifying the distinguishing attributes of each case. There are two attributes and four

cases. The two attributes are Leader Trainers and House Church Leaders. The four cases include the four house church networks that comprise the selected network samples for this research. The emphasis of this study was to derive the perceptions of network Leader Trainers toward their respective leadership development process. The perceptions of House Church Leaders are revealed in the resultant quantitative analysis. Table 1 demonstrates the attributes utilized in this study which designate the attributes and cases of Leader Trainers and House Church Leaders of each network.

Table 3. Coding for leader trainers

Cases	Attributes	#	Coding
Vineyard Central	Leader Trainers	2	VC-LTR1, VC-LTR2
MetroSoul	Leader Trainers	3	MS-LTR1, MS-LTR2, MS-LTR3
Christ Fellowship	Leader Trainers	2	CF-LTR1, CF-LTR2
Denver House Church Network	Leader Trainers	4	DN-LTR1, DN-LTR2, DN-LTR3, DN-LTR4

Table 2 demonstrates the attributes utilized within the analysis that defines the each network's House Church Leaders.

Table 4. Coding for house church leaders

Cases	Attributes	#	Coding
Vineyard Central	House Church Leaders	4	VC-HCL1, VC-HCL2, VC-HCL3, VC-HCL4
MetroSoul	House Church Leaders	5	MS-HCL1, MS-HCL2, MS-HCL3, MS-HCL4, MS-HCL-5
Christ Fellowship	House Church Leaders	3	CF-HCL1, CF-HCL2, CF-HCL3,
Denver House Church Network	House Church Leaders	5	DN-HCL1, DN-HCL2, DN-HCL3, DN-HCL4, DN-HCL5

The coding process that was utilized in this research involved the organization, classifying, and assessing the data derived from the interviews. All the transcriptions from each interview were organized into cases and attributes. Each house church network was its own case with attributes of leader/trainers and house church leaders. The researcher studied every interview in every case and designated pertinent data that was congruent with the research purpose. The researcher made decisions that were informed by the precedent research as to the conceptual designations of the data. During this phase of classification, terminology that each respondent gave during the interviews was not always identical but *conceptually* belonged together.

The coded transcripts were then imported into the NVivo© software. The coding that was developed by the researcher manually became *nodes* within the software. These nodes provided easy retrieval of concepts, themes, and patterns that emerged in the interview transcripts. The software also provided the number of occurrences of any given concept found in the transcripts. To measure the emphasis of a particular concept, the researcher counted each item that was repeated within each interview. This provides an explanation for findings that show a number that is higher than the actual number of respondents.

The next section of this study offers the analysis of the four house church networks: Vineyard Central, MetroSoul, Christ Fellowship, and the Denver house church network. Each network will be presented with contextual information such as geographical context, beliefs and values, and a narrative of a house church experience within each respective network. Three of the four house church networks did not present explicit theological beliefs with only Christ Fellowship having a systematic display of

their respective doctrine. Research findings from each network that pertain to leadership selection, development, and sustainment will conclude with an integrated analysis of all four networks.

Vineyard Central

Norwood, Ohio, on the west side of Cincinnati, is the location of Vineyard Central. Vineyard Central was planted in 1993 by Dave Nixon and a core planting team from Vineyard Community Church (VCC), which is located in an area called Tri-County. Their initial form of church was a miniature copy of VCC but by August of 1994 it was apparent to the planter, Dave Nixon, that the way Vineyard Central was to do church would be significantly different than their mother church. It was in that season that Vineyard Central “decentralized” and became what is now five house churches spread throughout west Cincinnati.

Vineyard Central’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The mission of Vineyard Central is to

Love God through the rhythms of prayer, worship, work, and rest. We love one another by living out the vision of Jesus for a new kind of family: we live simply, pursue peace, offer forgiveness, share means and resources, have conversations of consequence, and promote one another’s gifts. We love our neighbors by serving them: we restore and beautify homes and land, plant urban gardens, foster local economic development, and create opportunities for conversation and celebration (Vineyard Central [2010], mission.html).

The vision of Vineyard Central is “practicing resurrection in west Norwood, encouraging it everywhere” (Vineyard Central [2010], mission.html). The values of Vineyard Central are as follows: “We aspire to be Jesus-centered and kingdom-oriented, to honor the legacy of spirituality and live today expectantly, to express faith holistically,

to offer hospitality radically, to nurture relationships through community, and to cultivate beauty” (Vineyard Central [2010], mission.html).

Contextual Narrative

The researcher engaged in six interviews with leaders within Vineyard Central, two interviews with VC-LTR’s (Vineyard Central Leader/Trainers) and four with VC-HCL’s (Vineyard Central House Church Leaders). The interviews with each VC-LTR ranged between an hour and an hour and twenty minutes. The interviews with each VC-HCL ranged between fifteen and thirty minutes. Before each interview the respondent was provided with the quantitative instrument and given time to provide the appropriate data. Information was also provided on the instrument that informed the respondent of the nature of the study as well as their freedom to engage or disengage further with the research (Appendix 1). The interviews took place in a café and a home located in the area where most of the individuals of Vineyard Central live.

Vineyard Central is an intentional community so most members are within walking distance of each other. The café as well as an old Catholic church building are owned Vineyard Central. The purpose of these buildings is to be a service to the surrounding community as well as gathering places for meetings and social events of the network. Like all networks that are part of this study, the main avenue of ecclesiastical life in Vineyard Central is found in homes.

The Vineyard Central house church visited by this researcher occurred on a Sunday evening at 5pm. Typically a house church of seventeen, only nine were in attendance due to illness among some of the house church members. The evening began

with a meal that the VC-HCL termed as “table fellowship.” The meal lasted for close to an hour as members shared with each other various topics such as organic gardening, one member’s experience in India, and a recent visit from a member’s family. After the meal, members proceeded into the living room to begin a time of prayer, confession, and Bible study.

As members settled in their seats the VC-HCL asked the members to get out copies of the book *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* by Shane Clairborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro. This researcher was informed by the VC-HCL that this particular house church had been using this book as guide for prayer and confession. For close to twenty five minutes the house church engaged in reading excerpts out of this book, which included prayers, liturgy, public confession of sin, and the Lord’s Prayer. A section of this time was spent with everyone on their knees.

Bible study followed the time of guided prayer and confession. The particular passage that was studied this particular night was Matthew chapter three. The VC-HCL had a female read the whole chapter followed by a male who did the same. The question was then proposed by the VC-HCL, “Were there any striking passages that you would like to discuss?” This invited an extended discussion about the nature of the Kingdom of God and John the Baptist’s connection with Old Testament prophecy.

The discussion did not involve deep exegesis of the text but rather specific ways members could apply the text to their lives. After an hour of discussion, the VC-HCL challenged the members of the house church to think about how they can live with a

daily awareness of God’s presence. The night ended with various announcements that were pertinent to the whole network.

Leadership Selection: Leaders’ Response

Leadership Selection within Vineyard Central is marked by informality. One Leader Trainer remarked that “there is no formal process that everybody understands, that every house church leader could recite, ‘here’s how we select leaders.’ We tend to do this in a looser, organic fashion” (VC-LTR1 Response, 8). This particular Leader Trainer is also a House Church Leader who looks for potential leaders within his house church, a process that he hopes “will become a process that others can follow too” (VC-LTR1 Response, 18-20). Another VC-LTR added, “Usually, it will take place in another type of a meeting where someone is perhaps a little more outspoken about a particular item, or they articulate themselves better. So, they separate themselves out from the group. Then we’ll get together” (VC-LTR2 Response, 11-14).

What traits are Leader Trainers within Vineyard Central wanting to observe in emerging leaders? The Leader Trainers provided the following responses to that question:

Table 5. Vineyard Central: Important traits needed in emerging leaders

Characteristics	Occurrences
Display initiative	4
Visible Sanctification	2
Humility	2
Social Competency	2
Love for others	1

Table 5 demonstrates that Leader Trainers within Vineyard Central place value on emerging leaders *displaying initiative* as a factor in recognizing them as potential leaders of house churches. One VC-LTR explained that a future “house church leader will make the first move. They will indicate to us that this is something they desire. So, instead of the group of us randomly using our own powers of deduction, instead of picking from the masses, we allow the masses to self-identify” (VC-LTR2 Response, 4-7).

The display of initiative is not just communicating one’s own availability for house church leadership but also how one leads a house church. A VC-LTR explained, “You serve the community by taking responsibility, by standing up, being willing to be the point person not just facilitate a meeting because facilitating a meeting is fairly simple, but to play the politics within all of those relationships, to help people grow, to view yourself really as a pastor of this group of people to me demands a much higher standard” (VC-LTR2 Response, 54-58).

The knowledge of positive attributes of potential house church leaders is important. It is also important to understand leadership attributes that could be attractive to an organization but actually overrated in their effectiveness. Table 6 demonstrates what VC-LTR’s within the network of Vineyard Central believed were overrated attributes in their experience of leadership selection.

Table 6. Vineyard Central: Overrated attributes in leadership selection

Overrated Attributes	Occurrences
Positional Leadership	2
Charisma	1
Good communicator	1
Formal education	1
Well organized	1

In Table 6 VC-LTR's demonstrated a significantly level grouping of traits they believe are overrated in selecting potential house church leaders. The trait that incrementally stands apart is an overemphasis on *positional leadership*. Positional leadership is leadership that exudes power through the obtainment of titles or categories. One VC-LTR within Vineyard Central elaborates on this view of leadership by exclaiming that if one emerging leader is "a Proctor and Gamble executive and the other guy is a trash guy, you are going to go with the Proctor and Gamble executive before either of them walk through the door because we make presumptions about quality of character based on employment" (VC-LTR2 Response, 142-47).

As Table 6 reveals, *formal education* is one quality that is overrated according to one VC-LTR at Vineyard Central. This particular VC-LTR provided this extended explanation on why he believes formal education is overrated:

You know the church, our church included and the church in general puts way too much weight, no offense to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, on formal education. That pool is ever shallowing and extremely muddy. If we're only going to pull emerging house church leaders from people with "M-this", then God help the church. Because, to me, our next house church leader probably woke up this morning slightly hung over. Now, does that individual have a long way to go? No doubt. But, our community attracts a ton of transplants, and as of late we are gathering kind of educational heroes, people who have come from Gordon Conwell, you know all over the place. We've got someone with a MDiv from Princeton who just arrived on the scene and, that's all well and good. But, a lot of times they cannot transfer that book knowledge into street relationships with urban Appalachian poor who never graduated from high school. To me, there's a radical

disconnect between your ability to draw from a text and your ability to draw somebody's story out of them, what God is already doing in their life, and what He could be doing in this community. And we have placed, I have placed, extreme amount of weight on someone's formal education, partly because I want to justify what it is that I did. (VC-LTR2 Response, 80-97)

**Leadership Development:
Leaders' Response**

The main mechanism of leadership development within Vineyard Central is what the network calls the "leadership community." On their website Vineyard Central describes the leadership community as those "who are actively leading home churches and ministries within Vineyard Central. This group meets regularly for worship, prayer, and training." This two to three hour meeting would also involve a vision casting component and reiteration of Vineyard Central's values (VC-LTR Response, 93-100). The commitment to this meeting at the time of the interview was languishing and consequently, the meeting was in process of being reevaluated and retooled (VC-LTR Response, 107-10).

This meeting does not negate the overall network's commitment to ongoing relationships being the continual avenue for leadership development. The fact that most of the members of Vineyard Central live within two to three blocks of each other make this easier to accomplish. Table 7 demonstrates this commitment and shows other attributes of Vineyard Central's method of leadership development. These attributes were mentioned during interviews with two leader/trainers.

Table 7. Vineyard Central: Attributes of leadership development

Attributes	Occurrences
Interpersonal relationships	3
Training meeting	3
Mutual prayer	2
Practical skills	2
Appropriate literature	1

Table 7 demonstrates the dual focus of Vineyard Central in having a *focused monthly meeting* for leadership development as well as a continued emphasis on *interpersonal relationships*. Vineyard Central is an intentional community which enables conversations to continue from the monthly meetings. One Leader Trainer said,

It's a fairly tight geographical area. There are usually more opportunities to pick up that conversation. So, if everything does not get fleshed out there, though most of the time I think that people have kind of resolution there; we do not have to wait until the next month to say, "How is that going?" "How is that one thing in your house church that seemed to be sore spot doing?" "How are you doing in this one area particular area?" So, I feel like we know how to do the camaraderie thing, that we are close together. (VC-LTR1 Response, 195-202)

Listed in Table 8 are the responses of the VC-LTR's to the researcher's question, "What are the essential theological or practical competencies you wish to instill in emerging leaders during the development process?"

Table 8. Vineyard Central: Essential theological and practical competencies

Essential Competencies	Occurrences
Centrality of Christ	2
Devotion to each other	2
Being a missional community	2
Relational Discernment	1

Table 8 demonstrates that Vineyard Central has a triadic emphasis on the *centrality of Christ, devotion to one another, and being a community that exists for others*. The commitment to the centrality of Christ elicits strong words from one Leader Trainer who states,

There are things that we teach on a regular basis that we feel are the non-negotiables of discipleship. One, allegiance to Jesus is given and allegiance to Jesus trumps all others allegiances. So, we are not Democrats. We are not Republicans, because if you claim to be one or the other, at some point, you will bump up against the agenda of Jesus and be in conflict with it. So we say that we give our highest allegiance to Jesus and that trumps all others. We say that we have embarked upon not an engineered life, but a led life. (VC-LTR1 Response, 129-36)

One of the Leader Trainers communicated in his interview that the centrality of Christ should foster a missional community:

You also need to understand that the church is an organization that exists for everyone else, not for you, not for itself. That one has been ignored for a long time. We've been huddled up, licking each other's wounds, kind of came out of the game plan. Well, we've had enough time to establish the game plan, so now it's time to turn it out. Because in my experience, if you wait to do mission until your theology is all lined up in a row we may not ever leave this room. Instead, let mission be the mother of your theology. Get out amongst the people and ask them questions, only to find out that God is already there. The Spirit is already at work among those that you thought that you came to save. (VC-LTR2 Response, 339-49)

Leadership Sustainment: Leaders' Response

Another issue germane to this research are the methods that are utilized by house church networks to help sustain house church leaders once they are serving in that capacity. VC-LTR's provided the following responses to the question, "What are methods that are used to sustain house church leaders?" The responses are demonstrated in Table 9.

Table 9. Vineyard Central: Important methods in sustaining leaders

Methods of Sustainment	Occurrences
Continual relationship	2
Monthly meetings	1
Leader training	1
Affirm the good	1
Prayer	1
Geographical Proximity	1

As Table 9 shows, the VC-LTR's continue to invest relationally with their house church leaders once those leaders are leading house churches. According to one of the interviews with a Leader Trainer, the *continual relationship* with the house church leader should take on a committed servant posture. This is evident by how this particular Lead Trainer asks house church leaders if they need any help, "The sky is the limit. Nothing is off. Nothing is out of bounds. What do you need? Do you need space? Do you need food? Do you need childcare? Do you need time? Do you need training? Do you need...and it's all available. We will be whatever it is that you need us to be for as long as you need us to be" (VC-LTR2 Response, 428-32).

The Leader Trainers also emphasized the importance of the *monthly meetings* as important in sustaining house church leaders. One Leader Trainer offers a description of what occurs in those meetings:

In that monthly meeting, house church leaders are given a few minutes to give their status quo, like what's been going on, but not just with the house church but with you. So, they get to speak about their own joys and struggles there. And, then there is a time to affirm, as a community, the good that we see. We're more group questioners. We're not really prescriptive. Often times the answer lies within the person, and if you just ask the right questions they'll figure it out. (Interview LT1, 185)

The significant responsibility that is endemic to house church leadership is not without struggle. The weight of responsibility that comes with a ministry philosophy that values individual house church autonomy and pastoral care of individuals can be significant. Table 10 demonstrates what Leader/Trainers within Vineyard Central observe as common struggles of house church leaders within the Vineyard Central.

Table 10. Vineyard Central: Common struggles of house church leaders

Common struggles	Occurrences
Lack of mission	3
Lack of network mentality	1
Over emphasis on relationships	1
Time fatigue	1

Table 10 demonstrates that a *lack of mission* is a significant struggle among VC-HCL's according to the network Leader Trainers. The other three struggles; *a lack of network mentality*, *an over emphasis on relationships*, and *time fatigue* could be symptomatic of a lack of mission. This cycle is born out according to one VC-LTR who states,

So the struggle of the house church leader that I've definitely heard the most the first six months of this year is, "What are we doing? Why are we doing this?" And, the reason why they're asking that question is because they're not giving themselves something to do. Something they gave themselves to do was to get to know each other, worship...fantastic, share a meal...great, pray for each other...excellent, but there's no missional component. (VC-LTR2 Response, 489-95)

The struggles of house church leaders can be prevalent given the autonomous nature of house churches. This is one reason why there is a continual cycle of selecting, developing, and sustaining house church leaders by network leaders. What is it that

motivates network leaders to stay committed to the task of developing others? Are there specific results that provide leader trainers a sense of satisfaction in developing house church leaders? Table 11 displays what VC-LTR's within Vineyard Central identify as significant satisfactions in regards to developing leaders.

Table 11. Vineyard Central: Significant satisfactions of leader trainers in training others

Significant satisfactions	Occurrences
Self initiative	2
Experiencing the presence of Jesus	1
Ecclesiastical recovery	1
Getting on mission	1

Table 11 demonstrates that a significant satisfaction of VC-LTR's is when the individuals they train begin to take what they have experienced and extend it to others.

One response from a Leader Trainer explains,

When I see in particular people who are gifted to lead step into that role and grow into it and experience a joy in seeing others flourish, probably more than anything that's the thing that brings me the greatest joy. It's not the multiplication of house churches. I like that because to me numbers represent people, so I think it's a victory when a house church is formed, and when another is birthed. But, I just love people. I love to see them connect to God, come alive in their spirits, and feel like they have a greater purpose, a greater mission. That's the thing that brings me the greatest joy. (VC-LTR1 Response, 277-85)

Leading within the church can be very difficult and the damage that can be afflicted upon ministry leaders and their families can be extensive. Another interview response of a VC-LTR cited in his interview what this researcher terms as "ecclesiastical recovery" as a significant satisfaction in developing leaders:

You take somebody, who is wounded, confused, or occasionally just completely lost, and you expose them to a healthy leadership model and its like, 'This is what

they were supposed to do. This is who they were long before they screwed everything up or before the church kicked them in the teeth for the fiftieth time and they finally had enough. And, when people come to that place, and I'm there, sometimes you just see it like it's all in one moment. Something just washes over them; you mean leadership doesn't mean that I've got to bare all of this myself? You mean everybody else is here; we're all sharing this together? You mean that I don't have to have all these things lined up? (VC-LTR2 Response, 526-35)

Quantitative Self-Perceptions of LTR's and HCL's

House church leaders were asked to reflect on their leadership development and their perceptions of that development pertaining to the overall network's goals. The protocol to obtain this data from HCL's was a Likert scale instrumentation that measured their perceptions toward their selection, development, and sustainment as HCL's (Appendix 2). Table 12 demonstrates the statistical analysis of VC-HCL'S juxtaposed with statistical analysis received from VC-LTR's.

Table 12. Statistical analysis of VC-HCL's and VC-LTR's

House Church Leaders				
HCL	S1	S2	S3	
1	5	4	4	
2	5	5	4	
3	5	4	4	
4	4	5	2	total average
Average	4.75	4.50	3.50	4.25
Std Dev	0.50	0.58	1.00	
Leader Trainers				
LTR	S1	S2	S3	
1	2	3	5	
2	4	4	6	total average
Average	3.00	3.50	5.50	4.00
Std Dev	1.41	0.71	0.71	

The statements that were measured by house church leaders were: (S1) I am satisfied with how I was selected as a house church leader; (S2) I am satisfied with my development process in becoming a house church leader; and (S3) I am satisfied with the ongoing support/training that I receive now that I am a house church leader. The statement measured by leader trainers were: (S1) I am satisfied with our network's overall selection process for house church leaders; (S2) I am satisfied with our network's overall development process of our house church leaders; and (S3) I am satisfied with our network's ongoing support of our house church leaders.

Vineyard Central had the lowest scores overall in terms of their self-perceptions of their selection, development, and sustainment of house church leaders. The variation between rankings was not extreme, leading to the conclusion that they were "somewhat" satisfied with their processes, with the exception of how the VC-HCL's rated their selection (satisfied) and how the VC-LTR's rated the ongoing processes (satisfied and very satisfied). The variation between the VC-HCL's and VC-LTR's for Vineyard Central was the largest of any of the house church networks, however the VC-HCL's were much more satisfied with selection process than VC-LTR's, whereas the VC-LTR's were much more satisfied in the area of ongoing support of leaders.

The variation between VC-LTR's and VC-HCL's in the areas of selection (where VC-HCL's were more satisfied) and sustainment (where VC-LTR's were more satisfied) could be a corollary of existing in an intentional community. The selection of VC-HCL's could be easier when the potential grouping of leaders is geographically close to each other. Selection would seem natural when emerging leaders are easily observed. Conversely, VC-HCL's may desire and assume more intentionality from VC-LTR's once

they are actively leading house churches. A possible assumption of VC-LTR's is that VC-HCL's have access to them if they need them. A network wide understanding of whom initiates within the area of sustainment, the VC-LTR or the VC-HCL or both, could be effective at mitigating the variation between VC-LTR's and VC-HCL's.

One house church leader from Vineyard Central provided more detail for being "somewhat satisfied" with the development process,

I think this is really an overarching thing about Vineyard Central. We have so many different traditions under one umbrella, so it's really difficult for us to agree on any one way to do something. And so, I don't know if I will ever be satisfied with training because I don't know if we're ever going to figure out one pattern for all of the house churches to follow. (VC-HCL1, 125-30)

Another house church leader with Vineyard Central commended the monthly meetings as being very helpful but desired more intentionality for emerging house church leaders:

I think there could be a whole lot more intentional hands-on. We could do things like...some people just need experience. They need to get up the courage to lead a small group. Maybe they've not had leadership roles before but they love God, they love people. We could create role plays. We could provide...if you don't already have your own favorite resource material...we could do a better job by saying, "Well, here's a book or here's a better way to set up your house church." We could be more intentional about the leadership materials that we provide, curriculum, how-to manuals. There's a lot of great material out there. Maybe not so much 3 years ago, but there certainly is now. (VC-HCL3, 62-71)

The statistical analysis shows that the leader trainers of Vineyard Central have a more favorable perception of their sustainment of house church leaders (5.50) than the house church leaders themselves (3.50). One house church leader that was interviewed provided this response as to what is needed for Vineyard Central to improve in the area of sustaining house church leaders,

Consistency. There's been a tendency in Vineyard Central's past and I've experienced it in a deep way of starting lots of things and just leaving them to the wind, loving to kick around ideas and not necessarily loving to process. It's all messy of how that training takes place, how you raise up leaders from within. As a result of that consistency there can be a real struggle there. I would love to see a more concerted effort with follow-up with the pastors of really meeting one on one with people who are leaders in the house churches, and a mixture of the relationship aspect, but also really going over the tenants of what we stand for as a network. We have a house church guidebook go over some of those core practices that are laid out in the house church guidebook. I think it would go a long ways in when you empower your leaders of house churches to understand how house churches really function, and they begin to practice those in context of their relationships within the house church. (VC-HCL4, 53-66)

Vineyard Central Summary

The leader trainers within Vineyard Central develop leaders primarily through ongoing interpersonal relationships. The relational nature of this development process is made easier because many members of Vineyard Central live intentionally within blocks of each other. Aside from being a highly relational process, Vineyard Central employs a monthly meeting where house church leaders gather for the purpose of updates, affirming the good, and any necessary coaching.

Qualities the Leader Trainers desire in an emerging house church leader is the displaying of initiative, visible sanctification, a humble attitude, competency with social skills, and a genuine love for other people. Individuals who display these traits are instilled with the theological precepts of the Centrality of Christ, the importance of devotion toward others, and being a missional community. Conversely, qualities that Leader Trainers consider overrated are positional authority, charisma, being a good communicator, and formal education.

Vineyard Central also values the ongoing support of house church leaders. The essential practice of Vineyard Central in sustaining house church leaders is an intentional, continual relationship with house church leaders that takes on a servant orientation. This relationship, which house church leaders desire to be more intentional, is coupled with monthly network wide meetings. These meetings are important because common struggles of house church leaders within Vineyard Central are a lack of mission and network mentality. Leader Trainers of Vineyard Central also cited house churches acting on their own initiative as their greatest satisfaction in developing leaders.

MetroSoul

In the heart of New York City is a house church network that goes by the name of MetroSoul. MetroSoul describes itself as a group of friends who dream together about changing NYC with the good news of Jesus. The specific strategy for this undertaking is to saturate the metro area with simple churches. The mission statement of MetroSoul is to facilitate the planting of a vibrant family of Jesus Christ within close reach geographically and culturally of every person in the New York Metro Area (MLA [2011], [missleadappr.html](#)).

Contextual Narrative

New York City is one of the largest cities in the world containing a population of over 8 million people. Consequently, travel in NYC is very complex and is comprised of taxis, commuter trains, and the renowned NYC subway. The subway was this researcher's primary mode of transportation, which required careful planning, a detailed transit map, and at least a forty-five minute to an hour lead time on traveling. It was

evident that environmental factors like these play a significant role in a ministry context such as New York City.

The interviews for this research took place over a four day period in such diverse places as diners, a Starbucks®, enormous apartment buildings, hotel rooms, and the library at Columbia University. Interviews were conducted with three individuals who were previously identified by this researcher as Leader Trainers (MS-LTR's) as well as five interviews with House Church Leaders (MS-LTR's) within the network of MetroSoul. All of the respondents received the appropriate protocols before engaging with the measurement instruments and ensuing interviews.

MetroSoul serves as a connector of individual house churches as well as other networks or to put simply, a network of networks. One of the MS-LTR's leads a small network of house churches whose vision is to reach international students and professors at local undergraduate and graduate institutions like Columbia University. Many international students and professors who attend Columbia come from a country in which a very small percentage would ever have the opportunity to study and teach abroad in the United States. They are from elite strata of their own culture and very influential to their own culture.

This researcher spent three hours with the Leader Trainer (MS-LTR3) on the campus of Columbia University. One hour interviewing him and two hours observing him lead an encounter bible study with three international students. Two of them were unbelievers who were hearing for the first time ever the account of Judas' betrayal of Jesus. The hope of the Leader Trainer is for these unbelieving students and professors to

come to the faith in Jesus, grow through one of the network's house churches and eventually establish their own house churches in their own country.

That night this researcher observed a house church meeting within the network. It was located on the seventh floor of an apartment building in the area of Washington Heights, just north of Harlem. The meeting began in the early evening and was attended by twelve adults and three children. Five of those adults were internationals and two of which were unbelievers.

The evening began with a meal and conversation about happenings at work or school. The meal time ended with a taking of the Lord's Supper in which people could choose wine or juice to represent the shed blood of Jesus. An international student followed this time by leading the house church in musical praise and worship. In the midst of praise and worship, one of the co-leaders of the house church asked everyone to share what Christ had been teaching them recently. Most everyone shared and with a significant level of transparency.

The last section of the house church meeting ended with a forty-five minute teaching within Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Though one of the co-leaders led this teaching section, he involved the whole house church by inviting input and questions. The night ended with dessert and then this researcher rode the nearby subway to travel back to his hotel room.

Leadership Selection: Leaders' Response

The process of selecting leaders in MetroSoul occurs within the context of relationships. It is within those relationships where MS-LTR's look for responsiveness in

emerging leaders. An MS-LTR gave this explanation for how he selects leaders from recalling past mistakes:

I gave them position, but they did not really lead or have a following. So I began to really change the way I looked at things. I said let's look for who already have followings, let's look for who really demonstrates practice rather than position. Who are trying to lead, who is actively reaching out, who is responding to the teaching we are giving rather than just simply who describes themselves, but who is doing it, who is demonstrating outreach and initiative. (MS-LTR2, 14-19)

Leader Trainers within the network of MetroSoul provided these responses during interviews for desired traits in emerging leaders within the network. Those answers are recorded in Table 13.

Table 13. MetroSoul: Important traits needed in emerging leaders

Characteristics	Occurrences
Display initiative	6
Love for others	3
Spiritual authority	3
Visible sanctification	3
Values the gospel	1

Table 13 demonstrates that MS-LTR's highly value an emerging leader's *displaying of initiative* over other important characteristics. One MS-LTR stated succinctly "people who are faithful and respond we invest in" (MS-LTR3 Response, 50-51). Another MS-LTR shared that one value that he rated highly was "an entrepreneur initiative" that he believed is an "invitation from God to try something, even a small thing. And if you catch that you will always be trying something" (MS-LTR1 Response, 112-13).

It is also important for leaders to know what they are *not* looking for in emerging leaders. Leader trainers within the network of MetroSoul provided these answers during the interviews concerning overrated attributes in their experience of leadership selection.

Table 14. MetroSoul: Overrated attributes in leadership selection

Overrated Attributes	Occurrences
Positional leadership	3
Charisma	2
Intelligence	1
Formal education	1

Table 14 demonstrates that positional leadership is an overrated quality in effective leadership according to Leader Trainers within MetroSoul. One MS-LTR gave this extended explanation:

People are just very used to the paradigm of a leader is chosen, they think of leadership organizationally. They think of titles and positions. We try to deemphasize titles and positions so just to give a quick answer, if you have a degree you can be a leader. Even in a house church or even in speaking, we have this same issue in house church on various levels, I have heard people say, when they are encouraged to participate or get involved in ministry in a certain way they think, well they say it in two different ways, one is they say I'm not ready, and really what they mean is I'm not qualified, a lot of the people that I am working with are from the academy, they are PhD students, they are professors, so they have been engrained in this get a degree and you qualified mentality so yeah I would say we have been fighting in this. I would say that's probably the biggest paradigm we have against us. (MS-LTR3 Response, 144-55)

Another MS-LTR provided this measured response to the issue of positional leadership:

Titles are pretty over rated. I think position is pretty over rated. Who's leading? You can have someone in positional leadership but they're not really a leader so it just

seems like what a waste of time and energy that is. Why don't we get it right to start with? I think position is helpful but it's not completely useless. I think people view me with some position of some kind so we don't really call it anything. Some people say there's that leader guy. It's helpful when you hit confrontations, you get some different issues but at the same time I think it becomes a little over rated. We put entirely too much weight on it. (MS-LT2 Response, 82-89)

Leadership Development: Leaders' Response

The primary mechanism of leadership development within MetroSoul is their Missional Leadership Apprenticeship. This apprenticeship involves “incarnational living, spiritual development, theological reflection, and missional action.” The nature of this apprenticeship is not a hierarchical give and take but rather an intentional relationship that is contextualized toward each individual emerging leader.

Table 15 displays the answers that MS-LTR's within MetroSoul provided that describe the attributes of MetroSoul's leadership development process.

Table 15. MetroSoul: Attributes of leadership development

Attributes	Occurrences
Relational process	9
Personally contextualized	3
Bible study	2
Use of technology	2
Prayer	1
Provide opportunities	1
Teach practical skills	1

Table 15 demonstrates that there is not a rigid or sequential process in how Leader Trainers within MetroSoul develop house church leaders. Development will

normally occur within an *interpersonal relationship that will differ between each emerging leader*. One Leader Trainer provided an example of this relational dynamic:

Most of them would just consider me a friend. So how is it you lead people while you're a friend? Some of them are older Hispanic males. I'm a kid, especially when I started I didn't have kids and in Hispanic culture you're not even a man until you have kids. So here's this kid and how can he have influence? How can his advice be valued in a culture like that? I had to be very sneaky about it. My role was never to position myself as their intellectual leader, but to be their leader in behavior. Really show them what a friend looked like, show them what a relationship looked like, and show them what love looked like. (MS-LTR1, 191-99)

This particular Leader Trainer elaborated further on this relational philosophy of leadership development by juxtaposing it with what he believes is a common philosophy of leadership development:

I didn't use a western philosophy of education of people change when you make a profile of what they are supposed to end up as then you reduce down to components. Then you run that through a machine to have the right components added. You plant the seed, you nurture the seed. Once you plant the seed you don't add any components to it. You water it, you keep the weeds away, you watch it grow, you try to protect it from threats. There is much more hanging around and watching what is happening. There is a showing up and saying this is what we are doing today. That's kind of a narrative. It's different for every person. It involved a lot of riding around in cars with people, drinking coffee with people, eating with people, listening to what they are going through. (MS-LTR1 Response, 206-16)

The researcher sought answers from the leader/trainers within MetroSoul about specific doctrinal or practical precepts that must be taught in the highly complex ministry context of New York City. Table 16 displays the answers that Leader Trainers within MetroSoul gave in interviews when this researcher asked for essential theological or practical competencies they wish to instill in developing leaders.

Table 16. MetroSoul: Essential theological and practical competencies

Essential Competencies	Occurrences
Being a missional community	2
Devotion to each other	2
Study of scriptures	2
Priesthood of all believers	2
A gospel orientation	1
Centrality of Christ	1
Understanding of kingdom	1

Table 16 demonstrates the desire of Leader Trainers to instill core theological and practical competencies of being a *missional community*, *being devoted to each other*, *study of scriptures*, and *priesthood of believers*. One MS-LTR provided this description of a “missional community:”

We are a missional community. Not everybody actively reaches out to others. But to understand this is the type of community. Even if you’re not practicing that yourself as an individual, obviously I would prefer that, I’m not kicking anybody out. Even if not every person is missionally engaged, they understand that’s the community they are part of so that’s their identity. This means at the very least they are going to be regularly meeting new people. And that’s okay. (MS-LTR2, 333-39)

In reference to the study of scriptures, one Leader Trainer clarifies,

We’re very genuine with wrestling with scripture in our community. Our churches are very much hermeneutical communities that are trying to figure it out. Some of those have a little more maturity than others in their ability to figure it out as a community. They are very much hermeneutical communities so we wrestle with scripture but we recognize that scripture shapes us, wrestling with the scripture, authenticity with it and at the same time authority with scripture and at the same time everyone trying their best to read it in context. Not everyone will have the tools to do that like you and I would have but to try their best to read in context. Without reading in context you get all kinds of weird stuff. We are at least recognizing you need to try. I think that kinda read in context even if you don’t have all the tools. It nurtures humility. Not that I expect anyone to have all the answers, or we all become Bible scholars. But that people can handle the word OK on their own. It happens best in community. (MS-LTR2, 304-17)

Leadership Sustainment: Leaders' Response

The pace of life in living in New York City places importance on strategies in sustaining house church leaders. What are methods utilized by leader/trainers within MetroSoul that help house church leaders once they are leading house churches? MS-LTR's within MetroSoul provided these answers during interviews about important methods in sustaining house church leaders.

Table 17. MetroSoul: Important methods in sustaining leaders

Factors in Sustaining Leaders	Occurrences
Strategic Meetings	4
Continual servanthood	1
Continual relationship	1
Celebration	1
Encouragement	1
Network elders	1
Protect against isolation	1

Table 17 displays the various means utilized by MS-LTR's to sustain individuals once they are leading house churches. *Strategic meetings with house church leaders* were an especially prevalent response from MS-LTR's. The importance of connecting leaders with other leaders is amplified in a ministry context such as New York City. One Leader Trainer explains that the city is

fragmented, hard and sucks up your time. Environment is a factor. We won't look like other communities and ministries in other cities. Environment plays a big part. We have the longest commutes, the longest work hours of anywhere else in America so that matters. That's what we are up against. So I think what it is, is trying to strengthen and diversify the relational connections so there is a strong support. Network. (MS-LTR2 Response, 499-504)

A Leader Trainer within MetroSoul provided a synopsis of what typically occurs at one of these meetings:

Once a month all the house church leaders get together and we discuss issues related to leading a house church. We cast vision; we discuss issues such as who is being developed in your house church. Who could you see as someone who people would follow if you were not there tomorrow? Who are being developed, how is the priesthood of all believers playing its self out? We talk about how different things play out. So people who are house church leaders in NYC have support because they come to, they are part of a gathering of other leaders and they benefit from that. (MS-LTR3 Response, 404-11)

Table 18 are the answers that Leader Trainers within MetroSoul provided during interviews to show the common struggles that house church leaders face within the network.

Table 18. MetroSoul: Common struggles of house church leaders

Common Struggles	Occurrences
Time fatigue	2
Ego	1
Idolatry	1
Isolation	1
Not seeing themselves as priests	1

Table 18 has displayed different but common struggles that are observed by MS-LTR's. The occurrences of these struggles mean that each struggle was mentioned by one or more MS-LTR's. In this case, *time fatigue* was mentioned twice in the scope of the interviews with the three Leader Trainers.

The amount of time that is devoted to leading a house church can be daunting. One MS-LTR remarked, "It is real easy to do everything yourself, to have a miniature version of the exhausted pastor. We are really working on that not happening. I think it is

easy to fall into I have this group of people I will just do everything. So a lot of my coaching has been a lot of how do you get others involved” (MS-LTR2 Response, 528-32).

During one interview a MS-LTR offered this explanation on how the struggle of busy lives is connected with a weakness of individuals not seeing themselves as the priesthood of believers:

People are passive and people in NYC are busy. People in NYC are real busy because they work late. Getting people to see community throughout the week instead of an event on the weekend. Most people come from the traditional church paradigm which is actually the world religion paradigm, which is you have a holy building, a holy priest and they are a professional clergy. So you really have to work hard to get people engaged at a level where they are using their gifts and participating. So I would say in general that is the biggest struggle. (MS-LTR3 Response, 433-40)

Table 19 displays what MS-LTR’s provided these responses during interviews as to their greatest satisfactions in developing leaders.

Table 19. MetroSoul: Significant satisfactions of leader trainers in training others

Significant satisfactions	Occurrences
When leaders are developing other leaders	3
Self initiative	1

Table 19 demonstrates that MS-LTR’s cite leaders *developing other leaders* as giving them a significant sense of satisfaction. The act of leaders developing others is distinct from self-initiative in that an individual can be proactive in doing activities and volunteering but not necessarily developing other leaders. One Leader Trainer blurs the line between leadership development and discipleship by saying,

My greatest joy is only one thing, I get mild joy other times but my greatest joy is to see them reproduce. That's it. I mean if they lead others to Christ man I have joy. If they start a house church, all starting a house church means to me is they are leading people to Christ, so that's our ultimate. The bible never tells us to start churches, it tells us to make disciples. As we are engaged in that new communities are born. So my greatest joy is when people reproduce. When people don't reproduce I am discouraged, I feel I have done something wrong. I can disciple someone, but if I don't teach them to reproduce I have done a poor job. (MS-LTR Response, 444-52)

Quantitative Self-Perceptions

MC-HCL's were asked to reflect on their leadership development and their perceptions of that development pertaining to the overall network's goals. The protocol to obtain this data from HCL's was a Likert scale instrumentation that measured their quantitative responses toward their selection, development, and sustainment as HCL's (Appendix page #). This instrument was provided before the interview to provide the researcher initial insight to respondents' attitudes toward MetroSoul's overall leadership development process.

The following table displays the combined results from both leader trainers and house church leaders. Displaying the results in a single table aids the reader in observing areas of congruency or divergence between leader trainer and house church leader attitudes. A significant degree of statistical correlation can be indicative of clear communication and effectiveness between MS-LTR's and MS-HCL's. Statistical data outside of the standard deviation from the mean can be indicative of unclear communication or untrue assumptions between MS-LTR's and MS-HCL's.

Table 20. Statistical analysis of MS-HCL's and MS-LTR's

House Church Leaders				
HCL	S1	S2	S3	
1	6	5	6	
2	4	3	4	
3	6	6	6	
4	4	5	4	
5	5	5	6	total average
Average	5.00	4.80	5.20	5.00
Std Dev	1.00	1.10	1.10	
Leader Trainers				
LTR	S1	S2	S3	
1	4	4	5	
2	4	4	5	
3	3	4	3	total average
Average	3.67	4.00	4.33	4.00
Std Dev	0.58	0.00	1.15	

MetroSoul had a fair amount of variation in the responses, particularly from the MS-HCL's. This variation of responses between the MS-HCL's and the MS-LTR's was the largest of any of the networks surveyed. The MS-LTR's rated themselves less satisfied than the MS-HCL's results demonstrated they should have. This could point to an overall network dissatisfaction between the MS-LTR's that was not being communicated to the MS-HCL's. It is important to note that shortly after the researcher visited MetroSoul the official website was taken down and the network's non-profit status was discontinued. MetroSoul still exists as a philosophy but not as an official entity.

The statistical analysis reveals that house church leaders within MetroSoul have a more favorable perception over their selection, development, and sustainment

(5.00) than the leader trainers (4.00). One house church leader, whose house church met in one of the tallest condominiums in the Bronx, provided this response in the interview about the role of the leader trainer in his development process,

He has given us the foundation to our church, to my group. He has related to me, given me advice, and mentored me. He gives me kind of an outline of what I should do when there are situations that I don't understand. Because of the fact that my group is so premature there are a lot of things I don't know. So on questions and situations I don't understand he breaks it down and helps me understand it. He gives me advice on different situations and scenarios I should try with my group. In a lot of ways he is a lot of the backbone of it. Because a lot of things I would not know about he gives me advice and gives me a lot of challenges I should try. He printed out a lot of passages that maybe I should start using for the guys in my church since they are so . . . they don't really have a lot of religion in their background. So what he did was he printed out a lot of passages that I should start using and we should start discussing to I guess slowly get the people involved with God. (MS-HCL3, 20-32)

One MetroSoul house church leader, whose quantitative perception was lower than the other house church leaders, gave this explanation during the interview of how MetroSoul needs to improve in developing leaders,

I think it is a natural human desire to have results tied back to themselves. That introduces all sorts of influences and motivations that maybe distract from the actual pastoring. I would say one of the best things we can do in leadership development is seek God on where he's leading - who He is wanting to develop more so than looking at somebody and thinking that that person can advance my agenda. I think all of that is at a subconscious level. But I think that's a huge influence throughout any movement, but this movement also. So it would be a lot more of seeking God, 'Who are you looking to develop? What do I have to add? Where should I engage? Where should I disengage with this person?' Rather than perhaps thinking we have it all nailed down and we have the specific ability ourselves to nail down who these people are and what they need. It's a fuzzy thing. It's a fuzzy thing because obviously leadership development is important, but I feel like we keep God out of the process sometimes. (MS-HCL2, 71-98)

MetroSoul Summary

The leader development process employed by Leader Trainers within MetroSoul involves an intentional relationship that is contextualized to the needs of each emerging and the overall goals of the network. Components of Bible study and the use of technology are also used within the development process. Traits that Leader Trainers desire emerging house church leaders who are individuals who display initiative, have a love for others, convey spiritual authority, and show visible sanctification. Traits that MS-LTR's deem as overrated are positional leadership, charisma, intelligence, and formal education.

Essential theological and practical precepts that MS-LTR's sought to instill in emerging house church leaders are cultivating a missional community, communicating the importance of devotion to one another, becoming a community that works through Scripture together, and the priesthood of all believers. Besides the commitment to be in an ongoing servant relationship, the use of strategic meetings is the essential practice of MetroSoul in sustaining individuals once they are leading house churches. Sustainment is important because MS-LTR's cite common struggles among house church leaders such as time fatigue, ego, idolatry, isolation, and not viewing themselves as priests. House church leaders who develop other leaders and taking leadership initiative were expressed by MS-LTR's as giving them the greatest satisfactions in developing house church leaders.

Christ Fellowship of Kansas City

Located in the midst of the North American plains is the house church network of Christ Fellowship of Kansas City. This house church network meets among five locations in the Northland, Parkville, Kearney, Weston, and South Kansas City municipalities. Jim Elliff, who is president of Christian Communicators Worldwide, started this house church network. He explained to me that he and the other leader trainer see themselves as equals among the other house church leaders because every house church within Christ Fellowship has an elder that oversees it.

The Purpose and Distinctives of Christ Fellowship

The purpose of Christ Fellowship is three-fold: to love God with our warmest affection and highest devotion, to love one another as Christ has loved us, and to love others as we desire to be loved ourselves. Christ Fellowship also enumerates no less than the following twenty-one distinctives (Statement of Faith [2010],[ChristFellowship.html](#)),

Joy in Christ

Joy is the birthright of every believer. We hope our joy is contagious. We sincerely love being Christians and being in this church, where we receive so much encouragement to live out what we believe. Our joy comes from our belief in the goodness of God toward His own children.

Christian intimacy and affection

Our purpose statement says this clearly. One of the reasons for our use of homes for our meeting place is tied to this idea that smaller groups make for better intimacy. Love is the highest mark of Christian maturity, so we place a huge emphasis on hospitality, good deeds, open relationships, listening, and sharing life together.

The centrality of Bible teaching

The Bible is at the heart of all we do. We are always talking about its truths. Not only do the elders lead their congregations through consecutive Bible passages weekly, but almost every meeting of the church is characterized by seriousness about the Word of God.

The value of life in the church

We all think of our church life as integral to life itself. In other words, our lives center around God, our families, and our church. Following Christ is all about the Body of Christ and is not to be done individualistically. Our meetings are not just tacked on to our lives, but explain who we are. Being together is worth any sacrifice.

The use of homes for church life

We do not believe that we are commanded by God to meet in homes, but we do believe that it has huge benefits for our individualistic, isolated culture. We also see benefits in reproducing the early church way of meeting because the Bible's "one another's" are more easily practiced in such a context.

Church purity

It is important to us to know that our church is regenerate and that each member is walking in obedience and faith toward God. Church discipline is essential for biblical purity to be maintained. We also sign our Membership Agreement in front of the home congregation in order to demonstrate our desire to help the church remain as pure as possible.

Leadership by men

The men are aware of their unique position among the body as leaders, both in the home and in the church. We are complementarian (i.e., men and women are equal before God, but have differing, complementary roles) in our view of the relationship of men and women, not egalitarian (i.e. men and women have no differences in roles either in the home or church). Therefore the men are mentored by elders in a special way for this leadership role.

Exemplary womanhood

In many ways, the women of Christ Fellowship are like the circulatory system in our church, bringing life to every part. They hope to demonstrate biblical womanhood by their faith and good deeds. Our girls look up to the women of our church as models of godliness and tender care. Though no woman carries out her responsibilities perfectly, and each woman is in need of God's daily help, the church is abundantly strengthened by them.

Active attendance by every member

To us, there is no such thing as a non-active member. Each person who signs our membership agreement commits to active involvement in the life of the church. When we meet, everyone is present. If a person or family cannot be there because of extenuating circumstances, they keep the rest informed. We are a true body.

Multiplication of home congregations

The church is growing and hopefully will continue to grow through the multiplication of home congregations throughout our city and its outskirts. Growth through home congregations is exponential and somewhat unpredictable. The

demand for new leadership is one of our major concerns as the congregations grow and divide.

Weekly Lord's Supper for members

Every week each congregation takes the Lord's Supper. We think of the Lord's Supper as a meal with the addition of special symbols (the bread and the cup). Though guests are invited to eat with us, they do not take the special symbols reserved for those in fellowship with the church. This is done in such a way that it is not embarrassing to guests. We believe the early church took the Lord's supper weekly as a precedent, although weekly observance is not commanded.

Participatory meetings

Our meetings are for the purpose of both edifying others and being edified. Worship is also a purpose of our meeting. The church members are encouraged to attend with a participatory mindset. The meetings are successful largely due to the gifts and love shared among us while gathered together. Even the exposition of Scripture is designed to be somewhat dialogical in order to encourage participation.

Church Life that is organic rather than programmatic

So many churches busy themselves with many programs. Our view is different. We work hard not to be programmatic. This does not mean that we do not plan or that we never have organized meetings. When programs reign, however, the emphasis soon is on methods and people are sometimes forgotten; when we "de-institutionalize," we are more concerned for relationships, God-given authority structure, and the dynamic leadership of Christ, the Head of His church.

A Permanence view of marriage

The church has settled on what we call "the permanence view" of marriage. Although not every person joining our church must agree fully with our position, he or she must realize that this is the view of the church and that any divorce or remarriage following membership will be dealt with according to this understanding. We are interested in helping those associated with us to view marriage and divorce from God's viewpoint. The elders have written a book on this subject after two years of study.

Multi-cultural mindset

Our church pursues multi-culturality in our membership. We hope to enjoy fellowship among the believers from a variety of cultural backgrounds, which, to us, is more glorious and heaven-like. We are not yet where we want to be, but we have the goal in mind and are making significant progress.

An appreciation for God's sovereignty

The members of Christ Fellowship value God's sovereignty over all things. Our doctrinal statement reflects our beliefs. We believe that God has revealed much about His Divine supervision of the world, but there is also much that remains a

mystery. We intend to teach "the whole counsel of God" by addressing issues of His sovereignty in a balanced way whenever it is found in our preaching and teaching texts.

Meaningful membership

We believe that membership means something in terms of mutual commitment. It opens a door to certain ministry possibilities, to the weekly Lord's Supper observance, to corporate decision-making, to loving accountability, and to a new level of Christian fellowship. Therefore, we encourage guests not to go longer than three to four months trying out our congregations before joining unless more time is worked out with an elder. We don't believe it is healthy for a true Christian to wait longer than this.

Growing kids with Bible truths

We work hard at training our children to understand the gospel and to live as believers. This takes place mainly at home. Though it is not required of our members to homeschool, most of our members do. All of us, however, labor to make sure the negative influences of the secular culture are countered by good Christian teaching. We also teach children basic Bible truths and help them memorize Scripture in our congregational meetings. Children are an integral part of the church meetings, even though they sometimes are distracting.

Mentoring through relationships

In our view, training men and women and youth is best done through loving, mentoring relationships. We have other methods, such as weekly Bible studies, conferences, and personal studies, but the heart of all of our training is small group mentoring relationships.

Concerned evangelism

When you love someone, you will do anything to help them. Our evangelism is based on love for God and love for others. Our church is vigorously involved in evangelism that is primarily relationship-based. In our congregational meetings we often share about our evangelistic encounters, which provides ongoing stimulus to evangelize.

Equality among elders

Our elders are equal in authority. We realize that experience, gifting, and years of service may play a part in how the elders work within the team, but this does not affect the equality of the team. There is no senior pastor of Christ Fellowship. Each of our leadership team may be called an "elder" or "pastor" or "overseer" since these are used interchangeably in the Scriptures for the same person.

Christ Fellowship's Statement of Faith

Christ Fellowship's *Statement of Faith* undergirds their distinctives and ministry practice. The supporting texts are found at their website.

1. The Holy Scripture

God has revealed all that is necessary for life and salvation in the sixty-six books of the Bible, which is the Word of God. All Scripture is inerrant and infallible, transmitted through human authors by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Scripture *alone* is the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. The authority of Scripture is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men.

2. God and the Trinity

There is one true and living God who exists in three eternally distinct persons : the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one in being, united in purpose, and equally worthy of glory and adoration. God is invisible, eternal, omnipresent, almighty, all-knowing, unchanging, dependent upon none, sovereign, righteous, holy, just, gracious, loving, merciful, patient, and good.

3. Creation

God created all that now exists in six days and from nothing, and it was all very good. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit acted together in the work of creation. Out of all living things, only man was created in God's image. God granted him dominion over all lesser forms of life and over the earth itself.

4. Providence

God orders and directs His universe in every detail. Every event in nature and every human action and decision is according to His decree and purpose. In God's infinite wisdom and power, all things work together for the benefit of His people, and for His glory.

5. The Fall and Its Effects

God made Adam perfect, holy, and upright, appointing him representative and head of the human race. He fell from his original righteousness into sin when he disobeyed God's command. By his sinful act, Adam brought all people into a state of death and condemnation, passing to each one of them a corrupt sinful nature.

6. Man's Inability

The Fall brought every man into a state of utter depravity, meaning every dimension of his being is distorted by sin . Apart from the grace of God, fallen man treats sin as his master, God as an enemy, and the message of the cross as foolishness. Until he is born again, he possesses neither the desire nor the ability to love God, to keep His laws, to understand the gospel, to repent of sin, or to trust in Christ.

7. The Birth and Life of Christ

God sent His Son into the world to save His people from their sins. Conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, Jesus was and is both God and man. He was tempted in all things yet without sin, living the perfect life of righteousness on behalf of His people.

8. The Death of Christ

Christ died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin, forever finishing the substitutionary work of atonement for His people.

9. The Resurrection of Christ

On the third day, Jesus rose bodily from the grave. The resurrection affirms the deity and authority of Christ and assures believers of their future bodily resurrection.

10. The Ascension of Christ

Jesus ascended into heaven to appear in the presence of God as our perpetual High Priest, presenting Himself as the only acceptable sacrifice for sin. He is the one and only Mediator between God and men,³ and Head of His church. He intercedes forever on behalf of His people and rules over all things for their sake.

11. Election and Responsibility

Before the foundation of the world, God elected a great multitude of men and women to eternal life as an act of His free grace *alone*. This election was in no way dependent upon His foresight of human faith, decision, works, or merit. In the unsearchable realm of God's sovereign will, all men remain responsible beings, subject to God's commands to repent and believe, and accountable to God for their rebellion, impenitence, and rejection of Christ.

12. Calling and Regeneration

To accomplish God's redemptive purpose, the Holy Spirit works effectively through the gospel of Christ, regenerating elect sinners and drawing them irresistibly to repentance and saving faith.

13. Justification

The elect are declared righteous in the sight of God because of Christ's perfect life, His substitutionary death, and the imputation of His righteousness. Justification can never be the reward or result of human works or merit, nor does it grow out of an infusion of Christ's righteousness. It is granted through faith *alone* in the person and work of Christ *alone*.

14. Sanctification

According to God's purpose in predestination, the justified are progressively conformed to the image of Christ. All true believers direct their will and affections toward this purpose, putting to death the desires and deeds of the flesh by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit as God's Word is more fully understood and

applied. While sinless perfection will never be attained in this life, it is a certainty in heaven.

15. Perseverance

All who are chosen, called, regenerated, and justified shall persevere in faith and never finally fall away. Perseverance is not a human accomplishment but a work of God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who creates, sustains, and nourishes a living, growing, transforming, and enduring faith in all true believers.

16. The Church

A local church is a body of baptized believers gathering regularly to share life with Christ and each other, to affirm and proclaim His gospel, and to submit to His headship in doctrine and practice according to His written Word. Though Christ shepherds and rules over His church as Head, qualified elders are appointed to shepherd and rule as His subordinates. Qualified deacons may be chosen to assist the elders in serving the body as needed. Each member of the church is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to edify the body. A local church must recognize and fellowship with the universal body of Christ as represented in other true churches.

17. Baptism

Baptism is the first act of Christian obedience. True baptism is immersion in water, symbolizing both the believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection to new life, and his cleansing from sin. Baptism may only be administered to those who demonstrate repentance from sin and make a credible profession of faith in Christ.

18. The Lord's Supper

Following their baptism, Christians may, and indeed, must regularly partake of the Lord's Supper. By breaking and eating the bread and drinking the cup, believers commemorate the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. Through the Lord's Supper, they affirm and celebrate their oneness, their separation from the world, and their fellowship with Christ in the New Covenant.

19. Evangelism

It is the calling of every local church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded. It is a priority in evangelism to unite new believers with local churches.

20. The Return of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ shall come again to raise the dead bodily, both righteous and unrighteous. The justified shall enjoy everlasting life in the presence of God in heaven, while the unjustified shall eternally endure God's wrath in hell.

21. The Old Covenant

The Old Covenant, with the Law of Moses as its core, was revealed to the nation of Israel, promising earthly blessings for obedience, and threatening curses for disobedience. The purpose of the Old Covenant was never to offer eternal life, but rather to govern the life and worship of the Old Testament nation of Israel, to reveal the extent of man's depravity, and to foreshadow Christ and the New Covenant.

22. The New Covenant

The New Covenant, established through the person and redemptive work of Christ, provides eternal blessings which are acquired by grace through faith. The Old Covenant was fulfilled in Christ, thus becoming obsolete. God's final words of revelation, given through Christ and His New Testament apostles and prophets, have become the authority concerning Christian conduct, and the interpretive lens through which the Old Testament must be understood and applied.

23. The Glory of God

Christians must live for God's glory alone through their awareness and enjoyment of His Person, submission to His authority, and reliance upon His goodness. In truth, all things that have or will transpire, serve to glorify God as their highest purpose.

Contextual Narrative

In contrast to the other three networks, Christ Fellowship is located in an area that is widespread and with minimal congestion. Over the span of four days interviews were conducted in places such as a Barnes and Noble© and local restaurants. The respondents that were interviewed were two CF-LTR's and three CF-HCL's. The interviews ranged in length from thirty minutes to an hour and a half with the CF-LTR's. Interviews with the CF-HCL's would range in length from twenty minutes to forty-five minutes. All respondents were informed of the appropriate protocols that accompany the nature of this study and given the pertinent instrumentation for the quantitative analysis.

The researcher attended one of Christ Fellowship's house churches that occurred on a Sunday night. On arrival the House Church Leader provided a quick tour

of the house, which culminated in showing the basement area. It was full of children who were sitting at a table engaged in activities that contributed to their spiritual formation. Some of those children would later join the adults upstairs for bible study.

When everyone had arrived there were seventeen adults and eight children. The formal part of the house church meeting began with announcements that pertained to both the individual house church and the whole Christ Fellowship Network. After the announcements, a member of the house church read aloud Romans 8:9-17. That scripture served as an introduction into the evening and as preparation for a brief period of singing that involved everyone standing.

Various individuals offered public prayers, which provided a focus for the house church members. After prayer, house church members took time to share praise reports or struggles that had been ongoing or had occurred recently. It was evident to this researcher that an environment had been created within this house church where individuals felt safe to share struggles and to receive encouragement and support.

The House Church Leader then proceeded to facilitate a time where individuals could read and then briefly expound biblical passages that had been significant to them. On this particular night three different men took close to ten minutes each expounding Acts 19:14-20, 17:24-32, and Rom 8:1-11 respectively. The House Church leader then proceeded to move into the main time of teaching. His teaching time was a thirty minute exposition of Lk 6:27-36.

Though he was the primary teacher, the House Church Leader did invite questions and comments near the conclusion of his lesson. After the teaching time and a closing prayer, the house church arranged tables and chairs for a time of sharing a meal

together. Near the beginning of the meal the believing house church members participated in a closed communion, which meant that a participant in the Lord's Supper had to be a member of Christ Fellowship and not a member of another local church or denomination.

Leadership Selection: Leaders' Response

House church leaders are selected through a process that relies on a relationship of trust that is built on observing potential house church leaders by established elders of Christ Fellowship. One CF-LTR said,

I'd say our recognition process is just observation. We know as pastors...we're always concerned about men speaking out in the congregation, so we're watching how they lead. So, it's just sort of a natural, regular process of observance of the church as a whole. For instance, we've got one intern right now that we've just decided to talk to him this week. He will move into a designated leader for a congregation. We moved him down south to a congregation. He's been there for a few months, just to participate; now we're going to make him a leader in that congregation. And, down the line, Lord willing, he'll become an elder. (CF-LTR1 Response, 49-58)

Leader trainers within the network of Christ Fellowship provided in interviews these answers for traits they look for in emerging leaders.

Table 21. Christ Fellowship: Important traits needed in emerging leaders

Attributes	Occurrences
Visible sanctification	5
Display initiative	4
Biblical competency	4
Love for others	2
Faithful	2
Social Competency	2
Philosophical unity	1
Same values	1

Table 21 demonstrates that the concept of *visible sanctification* was mentioned five times between the two interviews with the CF-LTR's. In one interview with a CF-LTR, he provided the following attributes of what this visible sanctification would involve:

We're looking for character, knowledge, skills, love, faith, and enthusiasm. We recognize that those are not the only criteria for mission people, but they summarize the kind of men we want to build. So, we think that nobody has arrived at any one of those, but in our development of these men we try to be aware of these areas and bring them up together in a man's life. So, if a man has a great deal of knowledge but he has no skills to deliver it, in effect if he has knowledge but no character, he's dangerous. So, we try to bring these things up together in the individual. We're not always talking about them, but they're underlying sort of our whole view of training people, what we're expecting out of people. (CF-LTR1 Response, 76-86)

Table 22 displays the following attributes that CF-LTR's within Christ Fellowship stated as overrated attributes of leadership in relationship to house church leaders.

Table 22. Christ Fellowship: Overrated attributes in Christ leadership selection

Attributes	Occurrences
Formal education	2
Charisma	2
Articulate	1

Table 22 demonstrates that there are three attributes that CF-LTR's believe are overrated in house church leadership: *formal education*, *charisma*, and *being articulate*. Formal education and charisma were addressed with equal emphasis. One CF-LTR addressed charisma in a way that is instructive but not pejorative:

I see a huge strata of men who believe God wants them to do something with their lives in a significant way, that may not have the charisma that we think is required

for a large church, a house church or in some cases even a typical sanctuary style church. Who, might nonetheless, be very faithful men in dispensing the Word in a house church setting. So, perhaps we don't see that sort of charisma attraction element...it's there...I mean we all have some of that, but we're not as enamored as getting somebody slick, somebody in that typical sanctuary church...you better get that kind of guy. He better really be able to kind of impress people in a way that we don't see so much of that as a Biblical requirement for this kind of leadership. It's not say we don't like it totally, but it's just to say we don't overrate it. (CF-LTR Response, 118-29)

Leadership Development: Leaders' Response

The main mechanism of leadership development within Christ Fellowship is to invest in every man that is involved in Christ Fellowship. This leadership development philosophy involves intensive interpersonal investment and theological training. Table 23 displays the attributes of Christ Fellowship's leadership development process.

Table 23. Christ Fellowship: Attributes of leadership development

Attributes	Occurrences
Relational process	10
Discern gifting	2
Provide opportunities	1
Simplicity	1

Table 23 reveals that leadership development is viewed primarily through the method of *relationships*. A CF-LTR stated succinctly "We have a commitment to come along side every man in our church. We make it a priority to make a commitment to every man in the church, in addition to the time we spend with him in the main meeting" (CF-LTR2 Response, 34-36).

Another CF-LTR provided more detail as to the philosophy of coming alongside men through mentoring relationships:

If you're mentoring every man, we've got this idea in our mind that a warm, intimate, mentoring relationship plus opportunity to exercise the gifts that you have, that combination stirs up guys and brings them forward as leaders. So, the whole thing is just an organic thing that we're going to recognize leaders by giving them ample opportunities to step forward and express themselves. So, that combination of warm relationships, mentoring, natural care in a relationship and plenty of opportunities to step forward and show that you're advancing, your progress in the Gospel. (CF-LTR1 Response, 159-67)

Table 24 displays occurrences of answers that CF-LTR's provided for essential theological and practical competencies that are fostered within Christ Fellowship's leadership development process.

Table 24. Christ Fellowship: Essential theological and practical competencies

Essential Competencies	Occurrences
Doctrinal unity	3
Philosophical unity	2

Table 24 demonstrates *that doctrinal and philosophical unity* are essential competencies that Leaders Trainers wish to instill in emerging house church leaders. Doctrinal unity for Christ Fellowship is an adherence to their statement of faith. A Leader Trainer said, "We expect conformity to some things that we don't expect on the whole church level. So, even in coming in, and in the process of coming in, we're going to be aware of any diversions from our Statement of Faith. So, our Statement of Faith provides the baseline for our leaders" (CF-LTR1 Response, 267-70).

The adherence to a certain ministry philosophy is also important to the leadership within Christ Fellowship. One CF-LTR exclaimed, “We wouldn’t want somebody to come into our church and be a leader who was ambivalent about house churches. It’s not that we think it’s the only way to do it, but we don’t want somebody in here who’s going to argue later, ‘Hey, we ought to try and get everybody together and do traditional church.’ We want somebody committed to the philosophy” (CF-LTR1 Response, 276-81).

Another CF-LTR provided further details about that ministry philosophy:

We have no intention of building a church building, but rather our intent is to multiply home congregations. We want to instill that in a man. Most people are on board with that when they join our church. We also work hard to instill the philosophy of the church meetings being a participation of all members. We have an exposition time one of the leaders does. We also have sharing times where anyone is free to participate. We try to sit in circles rather than rows, as much as possible, because we don’t want to establish the model of a stage/audience meeting. We want to instill that in any man who is a leader to be committed to that aspect of church life. Encouraging participation in the group. The mindset of being helpful and investing in others lives. Having people over for meals and things like that. They are all components of leadership. (CF-LTR2 Response, 53-63)

Leadership Sustainment: Leaders’ Response

The significant amount of time that leader trainers and house church leaders spend with each other provides a unified strength that sustains leadership within Christ Fellowship. The leader/trainers of Christ Fellowship understand the value of time investment for present and future leaders. The time investment between leader/trainers and house church leaders within Christ Fellowship derives from their commitment to mentor every man within their network. CF-LTR’s provided these answers during interviews about other key practices in sustaining house church leaders.

Table 25. Christ Fellowship: Important methods in sustaining leaders

Factors in Sustaining Leaders	Occurrences
Strategic meetings	2
Situational dialogue	2
Encouragement	1
Available leader training	1
Studying Scripture together	1
Prayer	1

Table 25 shows that *strategic meetings* and *situational dialogue* are important practices that CF-LTR's within Christ Fellowship deem as important for the development of house church leaders. In the context of Christ Fellowship, this strategic meeting is typically a weekly four hour meeting in one of the elders' homes (CF-LTR1 Response, 433-34). The content of these meetings will be wide ranging and involve aspects of encouragement, praying together, and studying Scripture (CF-LTR2 Response, 98-101).

A component of these meeting involve the dynamic of *situational dialogue*.

One of the CF-LTR's provided this brief narrative as an example of this type of dialogue:

The sustainment happens, again, informally because when our elders meet...when we're meeting together the first thing we're doing is sitting there eating pizza together, is we're saying, "Here's what's happening in my group." And, we're going almost name by name about problems that are being dealt with, how the meeting felt last week. We got together how are our men being mentored, what's going on, and what happens is we begin to communicate with each other about our ideas all the things. Our recent study about baptism came out of the study of one of the pastors saying, "What do I do about this situation we're going to baptize so and so next week." He tells us what he wants to do where are we on this? You know, we had to spend the time that was necessary. So, you can see how we're learning. Nothing gets missed too much that way. We're really bringing everything to the table. A good portion of our time is spent just talking about our groups. (CF-LTR1 Response, 453-66)

Table 26 displays answers that were provided during interviews about common struggles of house church leaders with Christ Fellowship.

Table 26. Christ Fellowship: Common struggles of house church leaders

Common Struggles	Occurrences
Pastoral issues	2
Time fatigue	1
Dominating the meeting	1
Handling children	1

Table 26 demonstrates that *pastoral issues* were emphasized as common struggles of CF-HCL's within Christ Fellowship. One example of a pastoral issue that both CF-LTR's recognized is CF-HCL's working with individuals who are vulnerable to financial mismanagement. One Leader Trainers said, "We give counsel in finances. That's a common area. Meaning someone in the group is having problems, what do we do? This situation of debt or whatever it may be" (CF-LTR2 Response, 104).

The other Leader Trainer concurred by offering this example:

So and so is deeply in debt. We're helping him pay his bills but he's taking these vacations in such a way that it's given a bad taste to What do you guys think? Should I talk with about this? Let it ride because he's good-hearted? What should I do? In one issue we had a man leave his wife. What should I do here? She discovers \$2000 in her bank account for both of them. Is it right for her to tell him? That pastor is bouncing his ideas off us and getting this group to think about it, to help make a more solid decision. It's really heavy pastoring. (CF-LTR1 Response, 497-504)

Leadership development can be a difficult process but it does not come without fruit that provides a leader with significant satisfaction. Leader trainers within Christ Fellowship were very satisfied with their work of developing leaders. Table 27 displays the responses of CF-LTR's during interviews about their greatest satisfactions in developing other leaders.

Table 27. Significant satisfactions of leader trainers in training others

Significant satisfactions	Occurrences
Self initiative	3
When leaders are developing other leaders	1

Table 27 demonstrates that leaders *taking initiative* is what brings a significant satisfaction to CF-LTR's. One CF-LTR explains, "My greatest joy is to see them step out and really allow me as a leader to just watch and see them take the roll of shepherding and giving teaching to their group" (CF-LTR2 Response, 112-13). The other CF-LTR agreed:

I love the stage when they are self initiating. They have really gotten the picture. They consciously know what I like, if I am the one mentoring them, that I like to see them taking initiation about things and not looking over to see if I am looking. You know what I mean; they're just doing it themselves. I love to see that stage of development. I've spent a whole lot in the mentoring field. It's probably the most important thing I've done. One day I said that I'm just going to write down the names of people and I just wrote down a whole page of people who would say that I've mentored/discipled, whatever the term you use, and I've always realized that this is probably the most important thing I'll do to influence others to lead out. So, I take great joy in that. (CF-LTR1 Response, 517-28)

Quantitative Self-Perceptions

CF-HCL's were asked to reflect on their leadership development and their perceptions of that development pertaining to the overall network's goals. The protocol to obtain this data from HCL's was a Likert scale instrumentation that measured their quantitative responses toward their selection, development, and sustainment as HCL's (Appendix 2). The following two tables reflect what the house church leaders said about the strengths and weaknesses of their training. Table 28 demonstrates the statistical analysis of CF-HCL'S juxtaposed with statistical analysis received from CF-LTR's.

Table 28. Statistical analysis of CF-HCL's and CF-LTR's

House Church Leaders				
HCL	S1	S2	S3	
1	6	6	6	
2	6	6	6	
3	6	6	6	total average
Average	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
Std Dev	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Leader Trainers				
LTR	S1	S2	S3	
1	6	6	6	
2	6	5	5	total average
Average	6.00	5.50	5.50	5.67
Std Dev	0.00	0.71	0.71	

Christ Fellowship had by far the highest rankings of any network surveyed. There were only two of 15 ratings less than very satisfied, and all CF-HCLs consistently responded the highest score possible for their selection, development, and sustainment. Christ Fellowship was at least a full point on the rating scale above any other church in averages for both the HCL's and LTR's. This leads to the conclusion that their program was very well organized, understood and implemented.

It was evident to this researcher during the interviews with house church leaders that significant admiration existed between the leader trainers and house church leaders. During an interview a house church leader shared about the type of committed relationship that exists between house church leaders and leader trainers,

The weekly four hour elders meeting challenged me with the idea that pastoring is not for the weak. Because not only just four hours sitting there but four hours that involves a lot of pastoral discussion and prayer. Trying to spend the last one and a half hours or so studying something together with the congregation in view. When I first got here the elders were working through what the Bible teaches about divorce

and remarriage. So that really helped me to see this is serious. This is, these guys all have outside work as well, they are committing to this every week. So that was challenging. Coming from something else as a sole pastor. It was also the challenge of the Sunday meetings being more interactive and what does a leader do to encourage that. So many people are what they come from. So from my past experiences in other churches there are a few people who do the majority of the work, they lead music, they speak, and the people in the crowd just sit and spectate. Well in a house church environment that shouldn't be the case even though you still have leaders and believe highly in pastors and teachers. How do you as a leader, what happens when you have a flat meeting? We are supposed to be edifying one another and this mutual edification we see in 1 Corinthians 14 for example. How do you lead this because I had never had to think that through, other than some smaller settings like a prayer meeting? So that was challenging to think that thought. It's still a challenge we just discussed that last week. What do you do when you show up and everyone is flat or just tired? (CF-HCL1, 65-84)

In another interview, a house church leader responded similarly about the importance of an informal relationship in his leadership development,

We went through a time of just meeting together and talking a lot about just clarifying and making sure I had the same theological vision, the same philosophical, methodological vision we talked about. We spent a lot of time just talking through my views, my wife's views. Are we comfortable with house church, are we enjoying it, are the kids enjoying it, etc., Our kids adapted to it really well. It was a lot of meeting and talking through the issues. I had done a lot of research on house churches, even though I had not been involved in one before Jim's. I think just mainly just talking through clarifying what Christ Fellowship's view was. So I knew what I was coming into. It was a different model of house church than I had been kind of taught about. I really liked it. This was the kind of house church I wanted to be in. A lot of the preparation was of an informal nature, rather than a formal training program. (VC-HCL2, 59-70)

Christ Fellowship Summary

The leadership development process of Christ Fellowship utilizes a very intentional relationship with all the men of Christ Fellowship. This intentional relationship involves meeting with men interpersonally, corporate men's meeting that occur once every six weeks, and four hour weekly meetings that involve Leader Trainers and emerging house church leaders. Traits that Leader Trainers desire in emerging house

church leaders are visible sanctification, displaying initiative, and competence in teaching the Bible. Traits, according to the Leader Trainers, that are overrated are formal education, charisma, and being articulate.

Essential theological or practical precepts that Leader Trainers of Christ Fellowship instill in emerging house church leaders are doctrinal and philosophical unity. Doctrinal unity means agreement with Christ Fellowship's statement of faith while philosophical unity is agreement with house church methodology being the essential form of ecclesiology. Important practices of sustaining house church leaders within Christ Fellowship are strategic meetings that require a high amount of commitment and situational dialogue where house church leaders can discuss situations that need wisdom from the rest of the house church leaders.

Common struggles that Christ Fellowship's Leader Trainers have observed among house church leaders are pastoral issues such as financial mismanagement, time fatigue, leaders dominating the house church meetings, and the handling of children. The struggle of handling children revolves around the issue of providing substantive care and teaching of the children while the adults are studying Scripture. Leader Trainers within Christ Fellowship cited house church leaders taking initiative and then developing other leaders as significant satisfactions in training other men.

Denver House Church Network

The Denver house church network comprises over twenty-five house churches that exists in the Denver metropolitan area and is a collection of individuals who offer a compendium of resources, stories, and training for network and house church leaders.

The Denver house church network utilizes leader trainers who are connected with an organization called the LK10 Community. The LK10 Community is a “community of church planters driven by one burning question: how can every person in North America and beyond have access to a family of Jesus that embodies the Gospel” (Luke 10 [2010], lk10.html)?

The Five Elements of the LK10 Community

The five elements or distinctives that embody the LK10 Community are located on their website:

WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF CHURCH PLANTERS.

Jesus calls some to join Him in the wonderful process of birthing spiritual families (called simple churches, house churches, organic churches, etc.). These church planters are called and gifted to plant multiple churches. They are identified in the Bible as “sent ones” (apostles). In a sense, we are a community of obstetricians and pediatricians.

WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE.

We are a community of practitioners. Quoting Margaret Wheatley: “We humans learn best when in relationship with others who share a common practice... Communities of practice demonstrate that it is natural for people to seek out those who have knowledge and experience that they need. As people find each other and exchange ideas, good relationships develop and a community forms.”

WE ARE A STARFISH COMMUNITY.

Spider organizations are highly centralized with hierarchal leadership and many clear cut rules. Starfish organizations are significantly decentralized with little hierarchy and great flexibility. It is values (DNA) that attracts people to a starfish organization. Those same values are the glue that holds it together. Our values are reflected in our seven practices.

WE ARE AN OUTGROWTH OF DAWN MINISTRIES.

We are an outgrowth of DAWN Ministries. Many of the articles on this site were written while we were part of DAWN Ministries. (DAWN stands for Discipling A Whole Nation.) While no longer connected organizationally, we continue to be connected relationally with the larger DAWN Family. We affirm the DAWN Vision

which is - a church (a vibrant family of Jesus) within close reach of every person in every region and people group.

WE CALL THE COMMUNITY "LK10"

Consider the progression of Jesus' ministry. In stage one, He trained twelve to live life like He did: that is, He taught them His practices (LK. 6:40). Then, He sent them to help birth small households of faith (simple churches) like He did. They returned and reported what they had done (LK. 9:10). In stage two, He added seventy two more and, no doubt, trained them in the same way and sent them out. When they returned, they reported what they had done (LK. 10:17). In Luke 10 we have the clearest description of the practices that Jesus followed Himself and then taught to his apostles for planting churches. All of this occurred in what we might call a "community of practice". By calling our community "LK10", we are saying that we want to follow these same practices (Luke 10 [2010], lk10values.html).

The Seven Practices of the LK10 Community

The LK10 Community utilizes seven practices in developing leaders and planting house churches. The first three practices pertain to all disciples of Jesus while the last four practices are specifically directed toward house church planting,

LISTENING TO JESUS

This means that, as individuals, we are seeking, on a daily basis, to center our lives on Him. All of the other practices, indeed, all of life flows from this. Jesus Himself modeled this way of living in His relationship with His Father. This is seen in Jn. 5:19, which is the statement that perhaps best explains Jesus' entire life and ministry: "I do nothing on my own initiative. I only do what I see the Father doing." The Holy Spirit enables us to enjoy this same kind of intimate conversational relationship with Jesus. . "He will guide you into all truth... He will speak only what He hears... the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you" Jn. 16:12-15.

LISTENING TO JESUS WITH ONE (OR TWO) OTHERS

Our second foundational practice was very important in the ministry of Jesus but is often overlooked today. It involves two people of the same gender sharing what they are hearing from Jesus as close to daily as possible. We call these two people "listening partners". This practice captures the Lord's value for living life in pairs (See, for instance, Mt. 10:2-4 where all twelve disciples are listed in pairs. Also, LK 10:1 where the 72 are sent out two by two.) This practice also recognizes the importance of daily encouragement (Heb. 3:13).

LISTENING TO JESUS AS A SPIRITUAL FAMILY

Growing out of our first two practices is the third practice of a simple church learning to center itself on Jesus. Church naturally and spontaneously grows out of individuals and pairs of believers hearing God's voice. In a sense, this is the only skill that a church needs to learn. Everything else (study, singing, prayer, mission, etc.) flows out of hearing the Lord's direction together as a church. Jesus, of course, modeled this practice as he spent three years living life with a spiritual family of twelve men. "Jesus called to him those he wanted, and they came to him... He appointed twelve... that they might be with Him..." LK. 3:13-19.

PRAYING LUKE 10:2B

In LK. 10:2, Jesus made a startling statement. In front of Him were 84 (12 + 72) church planters ("sent ones", apostles). That sounds like a lot to us, but His evaluation was that it was only a "few". Apparently, He saw the need for many more. And, in addition to identifying that need, He gave the solution. He commanded them to engage in the practice of "beseeching the Lord of the Harvest for more workers". In this context, workers are both people of peace and more church planters. We engage this practice with our listening partner (as well as others) for the region we are called to as close to daily as possible. This relentless widow lady in LK. 18 is our model for this kind of tenacious praying.

JOINING JESUS IN BIRTHING CHURCHES IN HOUSES OF PEACE

The "person of peace" was central to Jesus' strategy for planting churches. "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house'. If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him" LK. 10:5-6. In fact we believe that when you find a person of peace, God has already done the "heavy lifting" and a church is ready to be birthed. This practice of birthing churches was and is Jesus' primary strategy for the expansion of the Kingdom. Jesus is the one who births churches and he calls apostolic church planters to join Him in that process. The marriage, and then the family, is the first and most foundational expression of church. It is the nucleus or core around which larger expressions of church form. In the New Testament, the ekklesia (church) was birthed in the context of the oikos (household).

A CHURCH PLANTER NURTURING THOSE NEW CHURCHES AND ESPECIALLY THEIR LEADERS

This is the heart of a father/mother longing to see these spiritual families (simple churches) thriving and growing healthy. "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father...it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work" Jn. 14:1-10. "We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children...we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children" 1 Thes. 2:7-12. Often this practice of nurturing is done by a team. "(Jesus) gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers to equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" Eph. 4:11-13.

ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE WITH OTHER CHURCH PLANTERS

Jesus encouraged His “sent ones” to return and talk about what they had experienced in ministry (LK. 9:10). No doubt this practice was continued by apostolic teams throughout Acts. Church planters today can greatly benefit from encouraging and learning from one another. Just as in the community of a house church, this kind of apostolic community requires active participation and intentionality.

Contextual Narrative

Over the span of four days the researcher conducted interviews with individuals who were recognized as Leader Trainers (DN-LTR’s) within the Denver House Church Network and five House Church Leaders (DN-HCL’s). The interviews took place in such places as homes, a church conference room, a picnic shelter, and by phone. The interviews with the Leader Trainers were between an hour and fifteen minutes to an hour and forty-five minutes while interviews with the House Church Leaders ranged from twenty to fifty minutes each. Each respondent was informed of the purpose of the research, the interview protocols, and the quantitative instrument.

The house church within the Denver Network that this researcher attended occurred early on a Sunday Morning. In this particular house church there were nine adults and no children. It was located in a spacious house on an expansive property that was minutes from Columbine High School, location of the 1999 shooting massacre.

The morning of the house church meeting found everyone gathering at the house and making breakfast together. The weather was optimal for eating and gathering outside. After a half hour of eating and engaging in conversation the co-leader of the house church announced that we would be staying outside for the rest of our meeting.

Once everyone was settled around the table the co-leader explained that it was time for everyone to do an activity called “SASHET.” The word “SASHET” is an acronym that stands for six emotions: sad, angry, scared, happy, excited, and tender. There are many house churches within the Denver House Church Network that use this acronym to “check in” when they meet together in order to let everyone know their “heart level.” This is typically done by everyone taking turns in the house church and choosing one or more of those emotions they are feeling at that moment and a brief explanation why. As each person shares the other people within the house church write down on pieces of paper or journals how each person is “checking in.”

When everyone was done with this activity the co-leader directed everyone to take thirty minutes to themselves and listen to the Lord about the different issues that were shared during “check in” time. The check in time was a process that involved four parts: (1) Quieting yourself; (2) Focusing on Christ; (3) Paying attention to any random thought that comes to your mind and; (4) Write it down. After a half hour everyone gathered back and shared with each person anything that came to mind toward a particular person in the house church. The information that was shared was a combination of Scripture, precepts that paralleled principles found in Scripture, and basic advice for each individual’s situation. This was our sole activity for that morning within the house church meeting. It lasted more than four hours. It seemed to this researcher that everyone left that day very encouraged and edified.

Leadership Selection: Leaders' Response

Individuals who are part of the Denver House Church Network are approached about house church leadership through a process that involves observation, a relationship with the DN-LTR, and prayer. Two important traits that DN-LTR's observe for are Godly character and responsiveness. A DN-LTR described this process as looking for a level of "emergence", which is

just recognizing that there is someone within our groups of people that is spiritually mature, demonstrating the Fruits of the Spirit. Through conversation, it's easy to tell if someone is practicing some spiritual discipline of reading the scriptures, of listening to the Lord, maybe some journaling, whatever it is that their spiritual pathway is, but they are doing that regularly. To this point, it's primarily my recognition to someone like that. (DN-LTR3 Response, 4-7)

DN-LTR's within the network of Denver House Church Network provided these answers during interview regarding traits that DN-LTR's look for in emerging leaders.

Table 29. Denver Network: Important traits needed in emerging leaders

Characteristics	Occurrences
Visible sanctification	4
Display initiative	3
Humility	3
Spiritual authority	2
Faithful	2
Social Competency	2

Table 29 demonstrates that *visible sanctification* is a highly favored trait that Leader Trainers desire in emerging house church leaders. A DN-LTR explained that he

looks for emerging leaders who have, “an obvious growing and joyful, peaceful relationship with the Lord” (DN-LTR3 Response, 75-6). Another DN-LTR explained,

I am looking for people who are hungry to learn, I love the old Navigators idea of looking for F.A.T people; faithful, available, and teachable. I think especially of people who are hungry and faithful in the area of their relationship with the Lord. Desiring to listen to God and do what he is telling them to. Give me a person like that and we can go a long way. If those things aren't true I don't care how gifted they are and those kinds of things. By talking about a F.A.T person, we are really describing what is necessary for maturity. These people are well on their way to becoming mature spiritual moms and dads. (DN-LTR1 Response, 93-102)

Table 29 also demonstrates the importance of displaying initiative as a desired trait within emerging house church leaders. One DN-LTR said,

We're praying for people who would be sent forth, thrust out into His harvest. That's people that I don't have to pull along and get them, “You gotta do this, you gotta, you can do it!” I don't want to do that, but we're looking for people that God's already done a work of motivating them and moving them toward what they feel their calling would be. (DN-LTR4 Response, 47-52)

In Table 30 DN-LTR's within the Denver House Church Network provided these answers for overrated attributes of emerging leaders in their experience of leadership selection.

Table 30. Denver Network: Overrated attributes in leadership selection

Overrated Attributes	Occurrences
Charisma	4
Articulate	2
Formal education	2
Idolatry of mission	2
Musically gifted	1

DN-LTR's responded with various attributes that could be overrated in emerging leaders but the most prominent attribute mentioned was *Charisma*. One DN-

LTR defined charisma as “Someone who is demonstrative, just because somebody can draw a crowd because they’re a funny guy, like an attractive personality type, just because they’re a social persona and can get a lot of people to hang out with them, may not mean that they’re going to be a very good influence” (DN-LTR3 Response, 97-101).

Another DN-LTR concurred by providing an explanation of what could be missing if significant attention is paid to charisma:

I think the ones that are most oblivious would be the more personal charisma things. The ability to gather people, to draw people to themselves. It is such a powerful gift it is easy to focus on that and forget the others. I think we have seen in America, in order to be a mega church you have to have the capacity. Often times that’s there but other things are not. We are so impressed with the ability to do bigness we miss the other things. I think that would be a key thing. That’s the main one that comes to my mind. I think any gifting can be in that category, the ability to teach is a wonderful thing but if you are not faithful and follow through on things where does that really take you. The ability to do music and all those things I think have to be secondary to primary heart issues. (DN-LTR1 Response, 109-118)

Leadership Development: Leaders’ Response

The main mechanism of leadership development within the Denver House Church Network is through intentional interpersonal relationships. Within these relationships are simple practices that occur on a continual basis. The conduits of these relationships vary from meeting together, e-mailing each other, or extended conversations by phone. DN-LTR’s also provided during interviews other details that inform their development process. Table 31 displays the responses given by DN-LTR’s that reveal this relational philosophy as well as identifying those simple developmental practices.

Table 31. Denver Network: Attributes of leadership development

Attributes	Occurrences
Relational process	7
Engage in CO2's	4
Prayer	3
Discern Development	2
Discern Gifting	2
Personally Contextualized	2

Table 31 demonstrates that DN-LTR's of the Denver Network view their leadership development process as essentially a *relational process*. One DN-LTR commented,

I'll go to them and say, "What I want to do is to be in a very intentional relationship with you that facilitates your spiritual growth and the development of your house church. And then, the practicality of that is that we end up meeting about once a month, one on one. We have that over arching focus of our relationship, but if anything else is more important that day, 'Hey, yesterday me and my wife got in this huge fight'. 'Well, let's deal with that first.' We've got to deal with the heart first. But, if there's nothing pressing, nothing that the Holy Spirit leads us to talk about other than that, then what I do other than that is ask intentional questions about their spiritual development and the development of their house church, whatever stage they're in. (DN-LTR3 Response, 121-31)

One Leader Trainer used the relationship metaphor of parenting and gave this extended explanation:

Leaders are parents. I think you can almost unpack everything you need to unpack if you think about what goes into being a good father or mother. So what are some of those characteristics? One is you recognize that you have four children and each child is different. They came out of the same gene pool but they are each unique. I want to understand the uniqueness of everyone I work with, their personality, their gifting, all of those things. The second element of parenting is developmental. So you have four kids and one is ten and one is a little one, at each stage there are developmental tasks they will go through. As a father, my type of fathering has to be dynamic not static. What I mean is that how you parent changes depending on the needs and maturity and personality of each child. It's the same with leadership. The way you parent a two year old is different from how you parent a ten year old and that is different than how you parent a sixteen year old and on down the line. In

a very simple way of talking about that, when the kids are younger you do more telling. As they get older you do more asking. You ask more questions. I love the old proverb that says give a man a fish he feeds for a day, teach him to fish he feeds for a life time. So by asking questions what I am trying to do it teach them to think not just give them the answers or solve that problem, but how to process information and come to conclusions. My best book on leadership development has nothing to do with leadership. It's called *Parenting with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fey. They have several books but this is their core book. I believe what they say has a lot to do with leadership. They suggest there are three kinds of parents: helicopters, drill sergeants, and consultants. The helicopter is one that hovers and rescues. They are always bailing their kids out of things. Little Johnny in second grade forgot his lunch so mom has to run it to the school so he doesn't go hungry. The implied message of a helicopter parent is, you can't get along in life without me. You will always need me to bail you out. The drill sergeant, on the other hand, directs everything and tells the kid what to do. The implied message there is, you're not smart enough to figure out life on your own. You need me to tell you what to do. The third type of parent is the consultant. The basic message of the consultant is, you're a pretty smart kid and most things in life you will be able to figure out. But if there are things you need help with I am here, we can sit down and talk about those things. The underlying principle is never do anything for your kids that they are capable of doing themselves. The question that comes up is can my kid handle this. So the eight year old is able to do a lot more than the two year old. I have to adapt my parenting style for that. The same thing is true in developing leaders. I have to know where they are in the process. I have to learn to shut my mouth and ask questions rather than give answers. I feel good giving answers, but if my goal is to feel good I keep doing that. If my goal is to train leaders who are independently dependent on Jesus, then that's the style I have to approach. (DN-LTR1 Response, 139-79)

A practice called a CO2 is also mentioned as an important method in developing DN-HCL's (DN-LTR4 Response, 198). The CO2 involves two people doing two spiritual practices as many days of the week as possible (DN-LTR1 Response, 187-88). The first practice is both individuals listening to the Lord and communicating what each person is hearing. The second practice is connecting with each other at a heart level. Both individuals utilize the acronym SASHET in order to achieve this goal. One DN-LTR remarked,

We believe that emotions are a window into the heart. So, every day for some period I share with my disciple what is going on in my heart and he does the same

with me. This offers again a context for significant learning and transformation. It allows us to pay attention to “teachable moments” that occur. These become the basis for conversation and prayer about a wide range of practical and theological issues. The key here is that learning is taking place in the natural context of relationship (family). (DN-LTR1 Response, 195-202)

A descriptive narrative of both of these practices can be found in the previous section of this network’s contextual narrative.

Table 32 displays the responses DN-LTR’s revealed during interviews as essential theological and practical competencies that they hope to instill in emerging house church leaders.

Table 32. Denver Network: Essential theological and practical competencies

Essential Competencies	Occurrences
Devotion to each other	7
Centrality of Christ	5
Presence of Christ	4
A gospel orientation	3
Spiritual parenting	3
Discipling relationships	3
Use of Scripture	2
Doctrinal Unity	2
Theology Proper	2

Table 32 demonstrates that developing HCL’s to instill cultures of *devotion to each other* is an important theological and practical competence. One Leader Trainer said, “I think foundationally we want to think about the attentiveness to one another being a part of the ‘one another’ aspect that we see in the New Testament of God’s heart for us to share communion with one another, love one another, teach one another, and rebuke one another” (DN-LTR2 Response, 298-302). Another DN-LTR within the

Denver Network strove for “mentoring in hospitality, just the ability to open your own home to people and have them feel warm and welcome and comfortable around you, that sense of peace that people get around you that they are loved and accepted (DN-LTR3 Response, 202-05).

A theological precept that was unique to this particular network was its emphasis on the *real presence of Jesus*. One DN-LTR gave this explanation:

I think that we want to think that Christ is present and I think in terms of these listening approaches that He’s the leader, and so we’re wanting to learn to pay attention to Him and let Him lead. We want to discern that in the community of people who know us well. Does the thing that we’re hearing sound like it’s from God or sound like it’s my idol that I’m forming for myself? We also want to measure it with Scripture and just kind of look and say, ‘Does it look like it’s consistent with who that is in Scripture?’ Those are all fairly subjective things, but I think that at the foundation we really want to learn that Jesus is King and that He’s present with us and that we’re trying to yield to Him. (DN-LTR2 Response, 278-87)

Leadership Sustainment: Leaders’ Response

Leader trainers provided these answers in their interviews regarding important methods in sustaining house church leaders.

Table 33. Denver Network: Important methods in sustaining leaders

Factors in Sustaining Leaders	Occurrences
Continual relationships	3
Encouragement	2
Strategic meetings	2
Providing a resource team	1

Table 33 demonstrates that *continual relationships* are what DN-LTR's deemed as important in the sustainment of house church leaders. Here is a brief description from one Leader Trainer of how he pursues this principle:

I would spend one day a week with him and one of his key leaders as well, we'd do it as a triad, saying "What's going on? What do you see happening? What kind of questions do you have?" Praying with him in a regular way. And it's more than just facilitation, we live life together, we have fun together, we share a lot of different things. But, in a really specific way, at least once a week, trying to be with him and ask him some specific questions, "What's going on with him? Is there anything that you need?" I do that with leaders. I hope to keep doing it. (DN-LTR2 Response, 370-79)

As with previous networks involved in this research, DN-LTR's communicated the importance of network wide meetings as an important part of sustaining house church leaders. One Leader Trainer said, "Another part of what we're creating right now is trying to create a leadership culture where we can draw some of the leaders together to be paying attention together and say, "What's the Lord saying to us about our city? What's He want to say to us about our house churches? What's the vision that He has for our church planting" (DN-LTR2 Response, 379-83)?

Another DN-LTR concurred about the importance of network wide meetings in sustaining house church leaders, "With our urban network, we get together about once a month on Sundays. So that's great for seeing everybody. That would be like all different house churches coming together and having a celebration" (DN-LTR4 Response, 435-37).

Table 34 displays responses that DN-LTR's provided during interviews to underscore the common struggles of house church leaders within the Denver Network.

Table 34. Denver Network: Common struggles of house church leaders

Common Struggles	Occurrences
Dysfunctional family relationships	2
Lack of mission	1
Overemphasis on relationships	1
Isolation	1
Social mobility	1
Minimal growth	1
Wrong expectations	1

Table 34 demonstrates that *dysfunctional family relationships* can be a common struggle among HCL's within the Denver Network. As one DN-LTR explains, this struggle is connected to the essential paradigm of parenting as leadership development:

A family is about as healthy as its parents. So, if you have some dysfunctional people leading a house church, the house church is probably going to be dysfunctional. On the other hand, if you give me a couple or a group of people who are pretty healthy, the church is probably going to do pretty well. Almost always, that is the key issue. So, what I'm after is healthy, maturity, growth in the leader. If I can get that every house is easy. (DN-LTR1 Response, 351-57)

One Leader Trainer cited an *overemphasis on relationships* as a common struggle among house church leaders. This may seem counterintuitive in that a perceived strength and advantage of a house church philosophy is for the cultivation of relationships. This particular Leader Trainer explained, "It is easy for them to simply become focused on each other's needs. I don't always hear it as struggle. I hear it as a really good thing from certain leaders. How is the neighborhood being changed through these?" (DN-LTR4 Response, 445-48).

Table 35 displays answers that were provided by DN-LTR's as to areas of significant satisfaction in developing house church leaders.

Table 35. Denver Network: Significant satisfactions of leader trainers in training others

Significant satisfactions	Occurrences
When leaders are developing other leaders	2
Experiencing the real presence of Jesus	2

Table 35 demonstrates that DN-LTR's emphasized *leaders developing other leaders* and *leaders experiencing the real presence of Jesus* as areas of significant satisfaction. Leader Trainers watching house church leaders develop others is a theme that has been previously cited by leaders of other networks. Again, what is unique to this network is its emphasis on the real presence of Jesus.

A Denver Network Leader Trainer stated that “watching them learn how to hear God’s voice. There’s nothing better than when they say, ‘Oh, wow, we were told this, we did it and it worked!’ I love that” (DN-LTR1 Response, 471-73). Another Leader Trainer explained,

Listening to people and watching them really discover God’s real true presence, his tangible presence in some way, is so redeeming and restoring to people that there’s just so much life in it. I don’t get sick of that. I feed off of that. I find a life there. So I think that in terms of where we’ve been, in terms of letting Jesus lead, following and seeing how He is facilitating the process where they’re able to encounter Him, that is really powerful to me and brings a lot of joy. (DN-LTR2 Response, 530-36)

Quantitative Self-Perceptions

DN-HCL’s were asked to reflect on their leadership development and their perceptions of that development pertaining to the overall network’s goals. The protocol to obtain this data from HCL’s was a Likert scale instrumentation that measured their quantitative responses toward their selection, development, and sustainment as HCL’s

(Appendix 2). The following table displays the numerical responses of house church leaders and leader trainers toward their respective network's overall leadership development.

The Likert scale instrumentation provided the researcher with an immediate concise view of house church leader and leader trainer attitudes toward their leadership development. The responses were obtained before the recorded interviews to enable the researcher in giving precision or weight to particular questions that were asked of the house church leaders and leader trainers. Table 36 also demonstrates the statistical analysis of DN-HCL'S juxtaposed with statistical analysis received from DN-LTR's.

Table 36. Statistical analysis of DN-HCL's and DN-LTR's

House Church Leaders				
HCL	Q1	Q2	Q3	
1	5	5	5	
2	6	2	2	
3	4	5	5	
4	4	4	6	
5	6	6	6	total average
Average	5.00	4.40	4.80	4.73
Std Dev	1.00	1.52	1.64	
Leader Trainers				
LTR	Q1	Q2	Q3	
1	5	5	5	
2	5	5	5	
3	4	4	4	
4	5	4	5	total average
Average	4.75	4.50	4.75	4.67
Std Dev	0.50	0.58	0.50	

In the Denver House Church Network, there was one respondent (HCL2) who, while strongly satisfied with their selection, was somewhat dissatisfied with the development and ongoing support he was receiving. In looking at the standard deviation and other responses, this network had the highest variation in responses, particularly for the second and third questions. This could be due to processes that are not consistently applied or not well understood by the LTs. This particular network is also the largest network within this study. The size of the network and the larger number of LTR's could produce more variance in satisfaction as LTR's expand and adopt more of a personal philosophy of leadership development.

The leader trainers within the Denver house church network emphasize the importance of consistent relationships as a means of leadership development. For most of the house church leaders within the Denver house church network this relationship was integral in their development process. During an interview one Denver house church leader said,

one of the major things is he has been available all the time. There is not a day; well maybe one day in six years where when I called him and he didn't call me back that day. But he has always been available to me and kind and tender voice, he has been a spiritual father to me for years. So I think that it's almost like the coach to me is like a good father figure. (DN-HCL3, 49-53)

One other Denver house church leader agreed by saying, "He just started investing in me, he started drawing stuff out and it got to a point where we were just talking every day and he would challenge me every day . . . it really had a strong system in place for people to connect via relationships" (DN-HCL, 21-26).

The quantitative analysis does show one Denver house leader who responded with a *disagreed* to both areas of network development and sustainment. The following

statement is the house church leader's explanation for his lack of satisfaction in these two areas,

I'm unsatisfied with the level of training that I received and that others received in that there has just been little, I can't say no, because there has definitely been times where the Lord has put on the hearts of a few, to hold some training sessions, do something's. Again it hasn't been on purpose at all. Whatever the word is I can't seem to think of it. Celebrate. It hasn't been deliberate at all when it comes to training. (DN-HCL2, 55-60)

He elaborates further,

I would love to see the Denver network more deliberate in meeting more consistently as a whole network. We meet very consistently as leaders, but when it comes to what we call all gatherings those end up happening every 6 months or so. That works well for the networks of churches that are part of this greater network of networks, but not so well for the individual house church that's a part of a larger network because they only get that every six months. (DN-HCL2, 70-75)

Denver House Church Network Summary

The leadership development process that is practiced by Leader Trainers in the Denver House Church Network is engaging in relationships with emerging house church leaders. Specific practices within those relationships involve CO2's, listening prayer, discernment of development, discernment of gifts, and are contextualized toward each person. Personal traits that Leader Trainers express as desirable within emerging leaders are visible sanctification, displaying initiative, and humility. Personal traits that Leader Trainers express as overrated within emerging leaders are charisma, being articulate, and formal education.

Devotion to one another, the centrality of Christ, the presence of Christ, having a gospel orientation, and spiritual parenting are essential theological and practical precepts that Leader Trainers instill in emerging house church leaders. Leader trainers

also mentioned the importance of continual relationships, encouragement, and strategic meetings as important in the ongoing support of house church leaders. The ongoing support is important because Leader Trainers observe dysfunctional family relationships, a lack of mission, and an overemphasis on relationships are common struggles of house church leaders. Leader trainers expressed that leaders developing other leaders and individuals experiencing the presence of Jesus as significant satisfactions in developing house church leaders.

Integrated Summary

A synthesis of the data obtained from the LTR's throughout all four house church networks provides areas of correspondence between all four networks while not minimizing the distinctiveness of each network. When necessary, the generic coding of LTR will be utilized within this section of the study. The purpose of this generic coding is to eliminate network distinctions and bolster those facets of leadership development that are generalized through out all the selected house church networks.

Integrated Summary on Leadership Selection

The tables utilized in this section follow the same RQ's that have guided this study through each network. The tables provide the reader with the cumulative responses of all leader trainers within all four networks. What is common among all the networks in regard to philosophy and practice of leadership development took shape at this phase of the research.

Table 37. Important traits needed in emerging leaders

Overall Findings	Occurrences
Display Initiative	14
Visible Sanctification	14
Discernment	7
Love for Others	6
Spiritual Authority	6
Social Competency	5

The qualities of displaying *initiative* and *visible sanctification* are important traits that LTR's mentioned throughout all four networks (see Table 37). LTR's indicated a second tier cluster of important traits that are endemic in house church leader selection. These second tier traits also express an emphasis on the multiple facets and importance of relating to others within a house church ministry philosophy.

Table 38. Five most mentioned overrated attributes in emerging leaders

Overall Findings	Occurrences
Charisma	9
Formal education	6
Positional leadership	5
Articulate communicator	4
Idolatry of mission	2

Charisma was a personality attribute that was mentioned by network LTR's as an overrated quality in emerging leaders. A practical competence that LTR's identified as overrated was *formal education*. The researcher explored the emerging data of a theme of dissonance between emphasizing relational qualities in emerging leaders and perceived condescension towards formal education. One LTR provided more precision

for this low view of formal education by explaining that it is the lack of contextualizing education that produces a diminished attitude toward it (Leader Trainer Response, 121).

Integrated Summary on Leadership Development

Leader trainers among all four networks were in agreement that intentionality is important in developing leaders for house churches. Was there a theme that emerged from the leader trainer responses on the specific nature of that intentionality? The following table is an integrated summation of interview responses from network leader trainers about important attributes of a leadership development process.

Table 39. Attributes of leadership development

Overall Findings	Occurrences
Intentional Relationships	29
Prayer	6
Personally contextualized	5
Training meeting	4
Discern gifting	4
Engage in CO2's	3
Practical Skills	3
Provide opportunities	3

The attribute of *a relationship* is shown as the dominant methodology of leadership development among all selected house church networks. The prominence of this philosophy of leadership development is so pronounced from other cross network data that it has led this researcher to understand that the entire continuum of leadership development within these four networks is through the philosophical and practical conduit of relationships. Intentional relationships provide the basis for the other leader

development attributes of prayer, personal contextualization, training meetings, discernment of giftings, CO2's, practical skills, and providing opportunities.

The four networks varied in how they articulated their values and beliefs. The differences between the four networks did not inhibit a synthesized analysis by the researcher that shows common doctrinal and practical themes among the networks.

Table 40 displays an integrated summation from leader trainers among all four networks about theological and practical competencies instilled in their leadership development.

Table 40. Most mentioned theological and practical competencies

Overall Findings	Occurrences
Devotion to each other	11
Centrality of Christ	8
Doctrinal unity	5
Shaped by Scripture	4
Presence of Christ	4
A Gospel orientation	4
Discipling relationship	4
Being a missional community	4
Spiritual parenting	3

The biblical precept of *devotion to one another* is a cross network emphasis in developing house church leaders. A network LTR provided an explanation for the importance of this precept by saying,

If our goal is to see vibrant families of Jesus in easy access of every person in every country, in every ethnic group on the planet, if that's the goal it's all about family. If it is all about family it's all about leaders. Just as I want to be that kind of father that has a relationship with these folks I am working with, it means that I live life with them. It is not something we can reduce to a class or nice and neat. If we are going to walk together we have to live life together. It means we talk about everything. Everything is part of the growth process. (DN-LTR, 251)

The *Centrality of Christ* was mentioned in close parallel with *devotion to one another* as another important foundational theological precept of network leadership development. This dual emphasis of relational devotion and high Christology contributes to a leadership culture within these select house church networks that is flat and team oriented.

Integrated Summary on Leadership Sustainment

Leader trainers within all the networks expressed serious thoughts and actions in addressing the sustainment of house church leaders. Table 41 provides an integrated summation of responses about important methods in sustaining house church leaders. These responses were derived from interviews with leader trainers from all four house church networks.

Table 41. Most mentioned methods in sustaining leaders

Overall findings	Occurrences
Strategic meetings	9
Continual relationships	6
Encouragement	4
Prayer	2
Situational dialogue	2
Protect against isolation	1
Continual servanthood	1
Celebration	1
Network elders	1
Affirm the good	1
Geographical proximity	1
Study scripture together	1
Provide resource team	1

A key factor mentioned by network LTR's in sustaining leaders is the presence of *strategic meetings*. Each network varied in implementation and regularity but all networks valued strategic meetings that brought all house church leaders together for network purposes. One LTR mentioned the importance of a monthly leadership meeting and semi-annual leadership retreat where leaders can plan and be refreshed for a new season of ministry (Leader Trainer Response, 299).

The act of having a *continual relationship* is also a prominent means of sustaining leaders within all the selected networks. A network LTR gave one description of this type of relationship with house church leaders by saying, "I regularly connect with all of our house church leaders and so I talk with them. We've got a couple of house churches where they have other people who will do coaching for them, so that's great. I chat with them occasionally, but I'm not needed there. But our other ones, I talk with them, usually even if it's just a phone call usually multiple times a week" (Leader Trainer Response, 375).

LTR's note a *lack of mission* and *time fatigue* as common struggles among HCL's within the selected house church networks. It is easy for house church leaders to get occupied by the many pastoral issues that arise among house church members. The unfortunate implication of this is losing perspective on the overall mission of the network.

Losing perspective on the overall mission of a network can easily occur when the pastoral issues create fatigue among house church leaders. One LTR remarked about *time fatigue* by saying, "most of us are bi-vocational. So there is often a struggle of time for personal devotion with studying, or time to get together with everybody who needs

counsel” (CF-LTR2, 96-98). Another LTR believed their network’s weakness in developing leaders is “because it just takes too much time and then we have a model that puts time at a premium. We’ve just got a million things going on.” (VC-LTR2, 519-22)

Table 42. Struggles of house church leaders

Overall Findings	Occurrences
Lack of mission	4
Time fatigue	4
Overemphasis on relationships	2
Dysfunctional family relationships	2
Isolation	2
Pastoral issues	2
Dominating	1
Ego	1
Handling children	1
Idolatry	1
Lack of network mentality	1
Seeing themselves as priesthood	1
Self-perception	1
Social mobility	1
Minimal numerical growth	1
Wrong expectations	1

LTR’s within all selected house church networks cited *house church leaders developing other leaders* and leaders taking *self-initiative* as corollaries of leadership development that provide them with great satisfaction. Though similar, the distinction between these two concepts hinges on reproducibility. The first emphasizes the satisfaction of leaders passing on to other leaders what they learned while the second emphasizes the ability of a house church leader to lead without the constant oversight of the LTR. An LTR stated succinctly, “my greatest joy is getting to help make disciples

and to see God glorified as the One who does, the One who is the God of mission. He's already at work, so seeing some of those ah ha moments are pretty big" (VC-LTR1, 502).

Table 43. Five most mentioned satisfactions of leader trainers in training others

Overall Findings	Occurrences
House church leaders developing others	6
Self-initiative	5
Experiencing the real presence of Jesus	3
Others entering the mission	1
Ecclesiastical recovery	1

Integrated Quantitative Summary

Table 44 displays an integration of all data from the questionnaires that was provided to the LTR's and HCL's from all four networks.

Table 44. Integrated statistical analysis of HCL's and LTR's

	Q1	Q2	Q3	total average
HCL	5.19	4.93	4.88	5.00
LTR	4.35	4.38	5.02	4.58

The overall quantitative results reveal that HCLs were more satisfied with the process used to select them than the LTs were with the selection process, as evidenced by the higher average results for Question 1, almost a full point in the rating scale. This trend was also present in the results from every individual network as well. The higher satisfaction of the HCLs, compared to LTs, continued for the development process (Question 2) in the overall averages and for 3 of the four house church networks. The

one exception, the DN church, had ratings that were very close, with 4.4 average for HCL and 4.5 average for LTR, a small difference.

For the ongoing support functions (Question 3), the overall average results were close (4.88 versus 5.00), especially considering the sample size. However, for 3 of the 4 house church networks, the HCLs were more satisfied than the LTs. Combining the 3 questions into a total average shows that for all churches surveyed, the HCLs were more satisfied (higher averages) than the LTs. This seems to imply that, across the board, LTs were more critical of their church processes than the HCLs who were part of the process.

In looking at all the ranking together, there are only 18% (5 of the 28 respondents) that had any ratings of dissatisfaction, HCLs from DN, VC and MS, and LTs from VC and MS. Thus, from a broader perspective, there was broad satisfaction with processes established at the churches. From the overall averages, the reader can see that the HCLs were satisfied with the overall process (ranking of 5.00) and the LTs were *somewhat satisfied* to *satisfied* with the processes (ranking of 4.58).

This chapter has provided important data from the select house church networks of Vineyard Central, MetroSoul, Christ Fellowship, and the Denver network. The data used came from questionnaires that provided concise quantitative analysis and recorded interviews that provided qualitative analysis. The research included a contextual narrative on each network to enrich the quantitative and qualitative analysis. It is important to move from analysis and the display of tables toward conclusions that could contribute to the field of house church research. Those conclusions are found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to utilize qualitative case studies to gather, organize, and analyze the leadership development process of four North American house church networks. This concluding chapter takes the overall conclusions that were derived from the qualitative data and synthesizes them with the precedent literature that addressed Christological and Pauline leadership development. This chapter also provides implications of this research as well as suggested areas of further research in areas of house church methodology and leadership development.

Each conclusion derived from this study is also integrated with theological and secular approaches to the selection, development, and sustainment of leaders. God's truth is of a universal scope and therefore, all truth is God's truth (Gaebelein 1968, 23). Because everything has been made by, for, and through Christ (Col 1:15-16) then there will be evidence of His wisdom and handiwork in all things. Though that wisdom has been distorted by humanity's sin, there will be levels of integration between what is revealed in Scripture and theories that come from individuals that may not claim a Christian worldview.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership development process of select house church networks in North America. The research questions are as follows:

1. What process is utilized by house church networks for the selection of potential house church leaders?
2. What are the methods utilized by house church networks to develop potential house church leaders?
3. What are the methods utilized by house church networks to provide ongoing leadership support to the house church leaders?
4. What are the self-perceptions of house church leaders regarding the effectiveness of their leadership development process as related to network goals?
5. What are the self-perceptions of house church leaders regarding the inadequacies of their training?

Leadership Selection

The development of others is not a natural byproduct of doing ministry by oneself. It requires being intentional. Often church leaders have so much on their plates, so much pressure, and so many expectations on them, that they are not focused on developing others (Logan and Miller 2007, 20). Researcher Eddie Gibbs maintains that “wise leaders also expect and plan for a high turnover in leadership. They know that, especially when working with a younger leadership team in a new enterprise, a significant percentage of leaders commit for just a period of time, often less than three years. All of this means that leaders are faced with the ongoing burden of recruitment” (Gibbs 2005, 192).

The attribute of *intentionality* was emphasized by the respondents as important for leadership selection for the both the leader trainer and the emerging house church leader. For the leader trainer it is important to continually observe the emergence of house church leaders and for house church leaders to display characteristics that each network deems essential to its vision.

As discussed in chapter 2 of this study, Jesus selected leaders through means of overt intentionality (56-58). His intentionality was marked by prayer, by calling out whom He desired, and providing His personal investment (46-48). It has also been shown that Paul exhorted leaders to be intentional about looking for men who “aspire” to lead (1 Tim 3:1) and that these men show themselves to be “faithful” (2 Tim 2:2).

The importance of leadership selection pervades all organizations, biblically based or not. *Harvard Business Review* devoted an entire chapter specifically on corporate leadership selection. The editors asserted that companies pay too much attention to the leadership development process and not enough on leadership selection. As stated in their words,

Unfortunately, though, many companies tend to focus their energies on developing leaders rather than on accurately identifying them in the first place. We believe that corporate leadership development programs can certainly produce an abundance of better managers: They do a fine job of communicating standards, establishing expectations, and setting direction. But they are not effective corporate assembly lines for manufacturing leadership skills. (Sorcher and Brant 2004, 15)

Jim Collins, in his popular book *From Good to Great*, offers a corresponding principle. Collins found in his research that companies who experienced a transformation from being good to great in a relatively short amount of time have what he calls a Level Five Leader. This type of leader is “a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will” (Collins 2001, 20).

Executives who provide Level Five leadership place a high premium on leadership selection. Collins states that Level Five executives do not figure out where to drive the bus and then get people to take it there. Conversely, they first get the right people on the bus and then figure out where to drive it (Collins 2001, 41).

Practitioners within the field of church leadership also assert that leadership selection is contingent on observing the individual within a leader's sphere of influence:

As we try to help our church cultures make the transition to be more leadership development-friendly we must first change something within ourselves. If we are going to make the transition from *acquiring* great leaders to *developing* great leaders, then we must adopt a different view of the people in our churches. Ultimately, leadership development is as simple and organic as one person believing in another and building into his or her life. To do so, one must have the heart of a developer. We have to view people much differently from the way we naturally would. We must put on the eyeglasses of *potential*. (Forman, Jones, and Miller 2004, 31)

This *continual observation* of certain traits was endemic to leadership selection within the select house church networks for this study. The specific traits that were identified from this study that were desired by LT's throughout all selected networks were *visible sanctification* and *responsiveness*. Semantically, the researcher discerned no difference between the concept of *Christian character* and *visible sanctification*. The choice to use the latter term was in response to the lack of a unified term from respondents over the actual mention of character but the consistent response of observing or "looking for" certain character attributes in emerging leaders. The term *visible sanctification* parallels the meaning of character but also honors the action of observation.

The importance of integrity and trustworthiness are values among all types of organizations. In their book *The Leadership Challenge*, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner address the importance of character in developing other leaders. The authors state, "To step out into the unknown, begin with the exploration of the inner territory. With that as a base, you can then discover and unleash the leader within everyone" (Kouzes and Posner 2002, 304). Henry Cloud, in his book *Integrity: the courage to meet the demands of reality* writes,

In business and in all of life, reality demands come across one's path. And just as the 'character' of the metal determines whether that airplane is going to succeed in the kind of heat or torque, a person's character determines whether he or she will succeed in that situation. Their makeup, their integrity, will either be able to deliver or not. They will meet the demand, and succeed, leaving a wake of goals being reached and people being fulfilled only if their character can meet that demand. (Cloud 2006, 24)

John Gardner, who served six presidents in various leadership capacities, alluded to the importance of character and morality in his book *On Leadership*. Gardner believed that followers want their leaders to enable them to pursue values that are not easy to embed in laws. Examples of this are "our feelings about individual moral responsibility, about caring for others, about honor and integrity, about tolerance and mutual respect, and about individual fulfillment within a framework of values" (Gardner 1990, 77). Management expert Peter Drucker understood the value of character as well as the continued cultivation of it. Drucker wrote about the importance of self-development and its role in the overall success of an organization (Drucker 1990, 1989).

Leadership Development

It has been shown in this study that a Christological approach to leadership development involves personal investment, appeals to a kingdom orientation, continual teaching, purposeful delegation, and communicating a comprehensive vision (45-53). A Pauline approach to leadership development will be congruent and involve the modeling of faithfulness, suffering, frugal attitudes toward wealth and work, and recalling of the death of Jesus (55-61).

The respondents for this study responded strongly that personal investment was the essential method of developing leaders within the selected house church networks. Formal leadership development such as classes or network wide leadership

curriculum were noticeably absent from the interview respondents. Within this informal and relational process of leadership development were acts of modeling, teaching, and delegation.

A philosophy of informal and relational leadership development is gaining prominence through recently published books on the subject of Christian leadership development (Forman, Jones, and Miller 2004, 55; 1999, 58). The following sections address the integration of Christological and Pauline leadership development and secular approaches to leadership development. There is no absolute symmetry with these principles of secular leadership development theory but particular areas of congruence are possible.

Transformational Leadership

Many of the biblical attributes of leadership development that were taught and lived out by Jesus and Paul are congruent with the leadership theory called *transformational leadership*. Transformational leadership occurs when, “Leaders encourage followers to rise above narrow interests and work together for transcending goals, leaders can come into conflict with followers’ rising sense of efficacy and purpose. Followers might outstrip leaders. They might become leaders themselves. That is what makes transforming leadership participatory and democratic” (Burns 2003, 26).

Transformational leadership is different from transactional leadership. Transactional leadership emphasizes the transaction or exchange that takes place among leaders, colleagues, and followers. This exchange is based on the leader discussing with others what is required and specifying the conditions and rewards these others will receive if they fulfill those requirements.

Transformational leadership moves beyond exchanges to employing one or more of the “Four I’s.” The first is *Idealized influence*. Transformational leaders behave in ways that result in their being role models for their followers. Second, is *Inspirational motivation*. Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers work (Sample 2002, 122).

Third, is *Intellectual stimulation*. Transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Lastly, is *Individualized consideration*. Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor (Bass and Avolio 1994, 2-3).

House church networks can be described as what authors Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom call “Starfish” organizations. This type of organization does not have a sole person who is in charge, no physical headquarters, highly democratic, and decentralized (Brafman and Beckstrom 2006, 31-47). The style of leadership that imbues a highly decentralized organization is a Catalyst, who acts in congruence with transformational leadership.

This style of leadership is distinctive from what Brafman and Beckstrom define as a “CEO” style of leadership that is common among many organizations and companies. Table 45 displays those differences between a Catalyst and a CEO (Brafman and Beckstrom 2006, 130):

Table 45. Differences between a catalyst and a CEO

CEO	Catalyst
The boss	A peer
Command and control	Trust
Rational	Emotionally intelligent
Powerful	Inspirational
Directive	Collaborative
In the spotlight	Behind the scenes
Order	Ambiguity
Organizing	Connecting

The catalyst uses a strong ideology to keep an organization going instead of command and control. The catalyst may also start an organization but eventually takes on the role of the constant cheerleader (Brafman and Beckstrom 2006, 124).

Coaching

Coaching is another approach to leadership development that describes the relationship of leader trainers and emerging house church leaders within the selected house church networks. Coaching can be defined, “as a practice in which the coachee and coach collaborate to assess and understand the coachee and his or her developmental task, to challenge current constraints while exploring new possibilities, and to ensure accountability and support for reaching goals and sustaining development” (Ting and Hart 2004, 116).

A theme that was present in the findings of this study was the amount of time that LT’s would spend with HCL’s interpersonally. Respondents attested to the many moments of just talking with HCL’s. Robert Hargrove, author of *Masterful Coaching*, writes that

Masterful Coaching is based on being completely committed to the person(s) you are coaching and engaging with them in conversations (or, actually, a network of conversations) that leave them inspired, empowered, and enabled with respect to their concerns. The acid test is that when you leave the presence of a Masterful Coach, you have “freedom to be” and you have new openings for possibility and action in areas where you were stuck and ineffective. (Hargrove 2003, 15)

Action Learning

It was evident in the Christological focus for this study that Jesus utilized purposeful delegation of meaningful tasks as part His development of the disciples (51-52). This study also revealed that leadership development among the four selected house church networks occurred in the midst of participating in a house church. No LT mentioned any training for house church leadership that totally extracted an individual from a house church environment.

That principle of leadership development is known in the secular field as *action learning*. Action learning “describes educational approaches where managers learn using issues from their own companies. These formats involve a continuous process of learning and reflection built around working groups of colleagues, more often with the aim of getting work-related initiatives accomplished” (Conger and Benjamin 1999, 212). Action learning also uses “deliberate experiments coupled with reflection to facilitate moving from ‘where we are’ to ‘where we are going’ (Palus and Horth 2004, 461). Many organizations now realize that traditional, lecture-based, manual driven training found in most formal leadership development programs is at best only partially effective at preparing leaders for twenty-first century problems.

Lessons learned from long-term retention of traditional training programs wanes and individuals typically slip back into previous behavioral patterns. One researcher has stated, “As a result, the sponsors of traditional programs became

justifiably frustrated. For these reasons, a number of organizations have embraced the action learning process, which can be described as a continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with a corresponding emphasis on getting things done” (Day 2001, 601).

Delegation of Authority

Closely related to action learning is the delegating of authority to others. Action learning delegates tasks but may not necessarily delegate authority. Christ not only engaged His apostles in doing tasks but also gave them authority (Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7; 2 Cor 13:10; 1 Thess 4:2). The Apostle Paul also delegated the derived authority he had from Christ and gave it to others like Timothy and Titus (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5-9). Leader Trainers within the selected house church networks developed leaders in such a way that provided those leaders with wide latitude of leadership and authority. This philosophy of leadership development is corollary to the significant autonomy within each house church of each respective network.

Leaders outside of a biblical perspective have also emphasized the importance of delegation and distributed power. Margaret Wheatley, a leadership consultant has strong words for organizations that do not encourage a participatory environment of leadership: “We have sought prediction and control, and have also charged leaders with providing everything that was absent from the machine: vision, inspiration, intelligence, and courage” (Wheatley 1999, 151). Prediction and control creates weight on an organization that resides on a very few and can treat the individuals in an organization as parts of a machine and not reflectors of the image of God.

Researchers have noted that the sense of overall ownership and investment increases as each person with the organization feels a sense of real influence within the organization. Mutual influence contributes to the increase of everyone's collective influence. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner state, "When leaders share power with others, they're demonstrating profound trust in and respect for other's abilities. When leaders help others to grow and develop, that help is reciprocated" (Kouzes and Posner 2002, 287).

Leadership Sustainment

There is not a stark distinction between the developing of leaders and the act of sustaining them. The relationship between a leader and a follower continues but two themes do seem to emerge: continual teaching and a servant orientation toward the individuals a leader has developed. Christ sustains His followers by empowering them with His Spirit, recalling them to His Word, and this was accomplished through His sacrifice on the cross and victory of the empty tomb. The Apostle Paul desired for the Ephesian elders to be faithful by remembering his life, suffering, his faithful fulfillment of leadership responsibility, and the death of Jesus (54-62).

Each house church network selected for this study maintained a consistent meeting with all their house church leaders for the sake of providing network vision and continual teaching. The type of consistency of these network meetings varied between each network but all networks acknowledged their importance. These strategic meetings also provided a level of network solidity so isolation of house church leaders can be mitigated.

Continual Teaching

Teaching was the essential method of Jesus and Paul for the transmission of the Gospel to many generations of disciples. The modern day church may have many functions but its essential function is to exhibit the manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:10). Gary Bredfeldt asserts that the church, by nature, “must be a teaching-learning organization. But the church is even more than that. It is a living organism, and as such, it can both grow and learn” (Bredfeldt 2006, 17).

A concept within the field of business that parallels the principle of continual learning is the Virtuous Teaching Cycle (VTC). The VTC has been developed by Noel Tichy through his book *The Cycle of Leadership: How Great Leaders Teach Their Companies To Win*. Tichy describes an organization with a VTC in these words, “Throughout the organization, “teachers” and the “students” at all levels teach and learn from each other, and their interactions create a Virtuous Teaching Cycle that keeps generating more learning, more teaching and the creation of new knowledge. Virtuous teaching cycles are what keep people in winning companies getting smarter, more aligned and more energized every day. Teaching Organizations make them possible” (Tichy 2002b, 4).

A Servant Orientation

The metaphor of a servant within corporate America came into vogue largely because of the contribution of Robert Greenleaf. A former executive at AT&T, Greenleaf wrote the influential book *Servant Leadership* in 1977 where he discusses the principle of a leader being a servant first. This stands in opposition to the one who strives to be a leader first. Peter Northouse, in his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice*,

describes the servant leader: “In becoming a servant leader, a leader uses less institutional power and less control while shifting authority to those who are being led. Servant leadership values everyone’s involvement in community life because it is within a community that one fully experiences respect, trust, and individual strength” (Northouse 2010, 385).

The servant leader desires to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. Vital questions in discerning this act of servanthood are the following: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? What is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived (Greenleaf 2002, 27)? Leader trainers within this study overtly or implicitly took on the function of servant as they related to the house church leaders they were developing.

Research Implications

The implications for this research could challenge the way church leaders think about leadership development, not only its importance but also practical steps toward it. This research could also challenge cultural assumptions about church forms. Accepted practices such as having a church building, full time staff, multiple programs, and attractional worship gatherings could be reevaluated in light of this research. This research is not a polemic against those practices but rather an academic view of how a particular ministry philosophy that is not centralized and does not emphasize buildings strives to develop leaders.

As mentioned in chapter 1 there are still widely held assumptions about house church ministry and philosophy (1). This research may contribute to the dispelling of those assumptions. The research has shown that house churches study Scripture, want to operate under biblical authority, and have a desire to spread the message and rule of the gospel. The research could also challenge a strong implicit distinction between clergy and laity. The need for vibrant gospel centered ministry does not necessarily require full time staff and ownership of a building.

The diminished view of formal education from LT's within this study could cause a reevaluation of seminary education. Does seminary education adequately prepare individuals toward varied contexts of ministry such house church networks? Is the dominant expression of seminary education in North America an expression that equips future leaders for ministries that are significantly centralized with an emphasis on paid staff, programs, and buildings?

What about ministries that are decentralized like the research population for this study? If house church ecclesiology is becoming more prevalent throughout North America, should there be more Master's level training that equips future leaders for that paradigm of ministry? This researcher believes the apparent barrier between the house church movement and the academy could be alleviated through a re-imagining of Christian education that honors biblical fidelity, meets accreditation standards, and provides meaningful strategies of contextualization.

A pastoral implication of this study could address the dilemma of pastoral burnout that plagues many pastors in North America (Beebe 2007, 257-73). The decentralized nature of house church networks places a premium on a continual cycle of developing leaders so that the bulk of ministry is not placed on a single person.

Furthermore, the size of a single house church is smaller than many traditional forms of church practice. A corollary of this smaller size and mutual participation of house church members is a diffusion of stress that can be debilitating to any one person.

A concluding implication addresses the issue of the use of curriculum in leadership development. As noted, none of the selected house church networks used curriculum in the development of their respective leaders. The implication of this is two-fold. First, is the use of curriculum that focuses on a transfer of information actually a barrier towards what is essential in developing leaders: a mutual relationship? Second, is the lack of a unifying curriculum a barrier for house church networks in developing leaders more effectively?

Research Applications

The applications for this research could contribute to churches wanting to make a transition from program-centered ministry to a simpler, organic ministry, which has less financial overhead and places a premium on interpersonal discipleship and leadership development. This research could also propose an option to those ministry leaders whose ministries of education are significantly focused toward the cognitive domain. Classroom teaching will always have a place in learning but learning within a house church philosophy could foster an even deeper development of discipleship.

Another possible contribution of this research is to offer emerging house church leaders a theoretical framework in which they can adapt to their context as they begin to plant house church networks. Normally, church plants start simple but become more complex as the church plant grows numerically. The narrative nature of this

qualitative research and its findings could help church planters begin churches that start simple and stay simple.

This study could also apply as emerging research within the field of house church ecclesiology. It is the hope of this researcher for this study to be an academic bridge that enables an understanding between the academy and practitioners within the North American house church movement. As the house church literature base grows, this study can serve as a foundational study.

Research Limitations

This researcher noted in chapter 1 under the delimitations of this research that this research will be may not apply to churches that are located in remote parts of the country. This researcher has not observed in precedent research the existence of missional house church networks that are not located in close proximity to cities and their suburbs. This is not to say that ministry leaders in remote contexts could not benefit from the challenge to develop other leaders within those contexts.

There were commonalities between all four house church networks as well as areas of divergence from each other. All four networks sought to contextualize their ministry practice to the their own cultural context. This research is limited in providing a thorough framework of how to adapt house church ministry and leadership development to one's cultural setting.

This research should not be interpreted as an argument of one type of ministry philosophy over and against another ministry philosophy. Every ministry philosophy will have strengths and weaknesses which is why this researcher included research questions that will ask for self-perceptions of weakness within every network's training model. It

is the hope of this researcher that this research can show the legitimacy and viability of house church networks in North America.

Further Research

As a movement, the presence of house church networks is still a recent phenomenon. Further research that is purely quantitative would be a beneficial contributor to the growing literature base of house church philosophy and practice. A case study design is helpful for exposure but a quantitative design will go further in assessment. The sample of this research was limited to the trainers and leaders within these four select house church networks. A quantitative research design could assess the views of the individuals who take part in these house churches but are not termed as leaders within the movement.

A longitudinal research design, which would immerse a researcher for longer period of time in the field of house church networks, would also be helpful as a contribution to the house church literature base. Leader development rarely occurs over a short amount of time and a longer observation period could provide richer detail of the social dynamics of network leadership development. House church networks may also be vulnerable to a short life span and longer immersion into the continual ministry practice of a house church network could reveal important reason why that exists.

This study has provided a view of leadership development within one form of ecclesiology, house church networks. It would be profitable to see further research that would be a correlational study that addresses leadership development with house church networks and other forms of ecclesiology. Would a traditional, programmed philosophy of ministry develop leaders in a similar or dissimilar way? This study could show

attributes of leadership development that are divergent or significantly similar approaches to leadership development. Future research could use the framework of selection, development, and sustainment as a rubric to measure other ministry contexts. A possible conclusion from this proposed research is that attributes of leadership development are generally constant throughout diverse contexts of ministry.

Another area of suggested research would be a study on leadership development in house church networks in comparison with an established leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory for example, has been mentioned as part of this concluding chapter. Further research could address the relationship or non-relationship between transformational leadership and house church network leadership development. It is the hope of this researcher that as the field of research into house church networks expands and deepens that a grounded theory of leadership development could arise and provide new insight into leadership theory.

Conclusion

It is the hope of this researcher that this study has provided an extensive glimpse into a movement that is growing and could have much to offer towards kingdom work in North America. Toward that end, it is important to demystify the house church movement and correcting potential assumptions. This study has provided that extensive glimpse by exposing the reader to the words of leaders among four North American house church networks. These leaders have responded by explaining how their particular house church network selects, develops, and sustains house church leaders.

There were several precepts that were learned or relearned by this researcher during the process of this study. First, leadership development does not have to utilize a

complex system for development to occur. Individuals are already complex and simple practices, as long as they intentional can be very effective in building into the lives of others. Second, idolatry of education can be two sided. Theological education can be a source of idolatry when the love of education supersedes the point of that education, love and conformity to the person of Jesus Christ. The other side of this idolatry is when blame is placed on theological education as a major culprit of problems within the American church. Whether this idea is valid or not, a fixation on this perceived problem could create movements that are purely reactionary and not Gospel centered.

Third, leadership development without relational investment is inadequate. Leadership development cannot simply be an activity of filling an individual's intellectual capital but must be accompanied by a mutual relationship between the teacher and learner. The researcher was impressed and convicted by how intentional many leader trainers were in fostering deep friendships with the emerging and established house church leaders. Fourth, effective leadership development requires a leader to personally contextualize that development. Individuals are not machines and therefore require one mold of development in leadership. This research showed that leader trainers did not train every house church leader in exactly the same way. Last, the researcher was reminded that the Lord Jesus is building His church using different bricks. House church ministry practice, like any other ministry practice, has its strengths and weaknesses but the Lord is expanding His Kingdom through it.

The prayer of this researcher is that the house church movement will receive the needed theological precision that seminaries can provide but also for seminaries to receive the methods of contextualization that house church networks can provide. These are important words, "The church has a God-given capacity to engage in whole-life

leadership development. It can develop godly character in its leaders, help them forge a strong theological worldview, and build strong relational and leadership skills. The local church is by design the most effective incubator of spiritual leaders on the planet’

(Forman, Jones, and Miller 2004, 25).

APPENDIX 1

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Cultivate names of individuals found in the precedent literature who could provide this researcher names of leader/trainers who meet the inclusion criterion for this study
2. This researcher will make phone contact with individuals referred by the initial contacts
3. This researcher will introduce himself to the leader/trainer to establish trust and explain the academic purpose for the phone call
4. This researcher will proceed step by step through the inclusion criterion located in Chapter 1 to see if the leader/trainer, house church leaders, and their house church network qualify for inclusion in this research
5. If the leader/trainer, house church leaders, and their house church leaders qualify for inclusion the researcher will ask that leader/trainer if this research is approved by the Supervisory Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary could this researcher travel to their location on agreed upon dates
6. The researcher will explain an overview of the interview process once the researcher is in their location
7. The researcher will conclude the phone call with a promise to contact them again to inform them of their inclusion or non-inclusion in this study

APPENDIX 2
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

This research will ask all the appropriate participants in the taking of this instrument to remember the following categories:

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Somewhat Disagree

4= Agreement Somewhat

5= Agree

6= Strongly Agree

The following statements are for leader/trainers:

Statement 1: I am satisfied with our network's overall selection process for house church leaders?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Potential Probing Question: How has your leadership selection process evolved during your time of developing leaders?

Potential Probing Question: Are there particular improvements you would make in your present leadership selection process?

Statement 2: I am satisfied with our network's overall development process of our house church leaders?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Potential Probing Question: What are the essential theological and practical competencies you impart to leaders during their development process?

Potential Probing Question: What are areas of your development process that need improvement in order to achieve the network's overall vision?

Statement 3: I am satisfied with our network's ongoing support of our house church leaders?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Potential Probing Question: Are there common themes of struggle that your house church leaders experience once they are in leadership of their house churches?

Potential Probing Question: What are ways that you come along side your house church leaders to encourage them?

The following statements are for house church leaders:

Statement 1: I am satisfied with how I was selected as a house church leader (only circle one number)?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Potential Probing Question: How did your selection process foster a realistic expectation of your ensuing development process?

Potential Probing Question: What were aspects of your selection process that you feel should have been more precise? What were aspects that could have been more relaxed?

Statement 2: I am satisfied with my development process in becoming a house church leader (only circle one number).

1 2 3 4 5 6

What were aspects of your development process that provided immediate applicability once you were leading a house church?

What were aspects of your development process that challenged you significantly? Why?

Statement 3: I am satisfied with the ongoing support/training that I receive now that I am a house church leader (only circle one number).

1 2 3 4 5 6

Potential Probing Question: What are important leadership issues that need continual training once you are a house church leader?

Potential Probing Questions: What are significant contributions that your network can provide you once you are a house church leader?

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ABSTRACT

THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF SELECT HOUSE CHURCH NETWORKS IN NORTH AMERICA

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This dissertation analyzed the leadership development process among four North American house church networks. The study involved leader/trainers and house church leaders within all four networks. The intent of this study was to reveal the competencies used by leader/trainers to select, develop, and sustain house church leaders. Accompanying the research findings a possible grounded theory of leadership development could emerge from the resultant analysis. This may occur because these four house church networks, though similar in house church philosophy, will also have attributes that differentiate themselves from the other networks

The research design for this study was a multiple case study. This qualitative research design was achieved by engaging in on-site interviews with leader/trainers and house church leaders among the four selected house church networks. The researcher traveled to the location of each house church network and spent a minimum of two days. This aided in providing a thick description of each network's geographical and cultural setting. There was one quantitative component involved in the research which employed

Likert scales to measure objectively the self-perception of house church leaders toward the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of their leadership development.

The findings sought to relay practices of leadership development that are utilized by leader/trainers within the context of selected North American house churches. The findings could reveal a grounded theory or philosophy of leadership development that informs the practices of each network's leadership development process. The goal, therefore, was to expose ministry leaders, existing house church leaders, and potential house church planters of practices and philosophy of network leadership development that may be generalized to their own ministry context.

Key terms: house church, house church leader, house church network, house church theology, house church philosophy, leader/trainer, leadership selection, leadership development, leadership sustainment

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