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PROVIDING CHRIST-CENTERED SOUL CARE
FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS THROUGH
GLOBALLEAD INTERNATIONAL

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PROVIDING CHRIST-CENTERED SOUL CARE
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PREFACE

This doctoral project would not have been possible without the encouragement of my wife, friend, and co-laborer in ministry, Penny Davis. You have walked with me and encouraged me through my formal education and through life's school of hard knocks. I could not have left the starting gate without your encouragement. To our son, Levi, may you embrace Christ, who gave you to us. May you one day grasp the depth of His love that chose you for us and us for you. I pray that the example of Christ's love that you have seen in the leaders of globalLead will impact you deeply throughout your life.

This project encompasses the investment of our dedicated globalLead staff, board, and the numerous mentors, friends, pastors, and life examples. Without each of you, this project would not have the depth and width of global impact that is possible.

I feel deep appreciation to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary staff and professors for their unwavering stance for biblical studies and ministry. I offer specific gratitude to Dr. Robert Jones for his wisdom and personal investment in the classroom as well as in his home as he encouraged me through the studies and subsequent project as an academic and practical guide.

Chris Davis

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission ministry of globalLead began in 1997, as Global Youth Ministry Network. Since that date, the Mansfield, Ohio, based mission organization has trained over 22,000 leaders from 51 different countries.¹ The purpose of globalLead is to serve those in ministry through trainings and mentorship in order to position Christian leaders for multiplication. The staff and volunteers engage biblical and globally transferable principles in seminars, conferences, networks, and mentorship programs to develop the skills and heart of Christian leaders.

Context

The training ministries of globalLead are carried out through four major hub locations. The international office team is located in Mansfield, Ohio. A Filipino-led team is located in the Philippines and is responsible for the Southeast Asia ministries. Another Asia-based team is led by Nepalese through the Northwest Asia office located in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Africa base is in Nairobi, Kenya, and is led by Kenyans there. Those indigenous ministry leaders who have received the trainings and who engage as volunteers to train others in their sphere of influence carry out the bulk of the ministry. These eighty volunteer trainers were developed as they progressed through three levels of the skill-based trainings. They are chosen to be trainers when they show leadership in local ministry and teaching skills. Once chosen to be a trainer, they are mentored and developed

¹ globalLead is an inter-denominational, faith-based mission organization that was founded as Global Youth Ministry Network in 1996. The ministry added additional trainings to include pastors and other church leaders in 2012 as a pilot project. Details about the ministry, its areas of influence, and ministry offerings are available at globalLead, accessed January 6, 2017, www.globalLead.world.

for the multiplication of these ministry skills to others. This multiplication of leadership has proven extremely impactful and is a trusted model of transferable ministry teaching with a highly integrated goal-setting platform, sought out in many locations globally.

Trainings Being Offered

Three major threads of trainings are currently being offered through globalLead: Youth Ministry Strategy, Church Ministry Strategy, and the Heart of the Leader conferences. All three offer significant strengths and weaknesses. First are the traditional youth ministry skill-based trainings. These four-day intense trainings look at the ministry of Jesus Christ in order to discern principles for youth ministers to employ. It became obvious that the same biblically-transferable principles apply to all areas of ministry throughout the church. globalLead has been expanding the number of Christian leadership conferences that involve various ministry departments utilizing a very similar curriculum. These youth ministry events, along with the church-wide leadership conferences, are the focus of two-thirds of the current skill-based trainings. The other portion of the ministry is the Heart of the Leader series of retreats that have been added. This is the third training conference that globalLead offers. Quite different from the skill-based “to do” trainings, this series of retreats is focused on who the leader is “to be.” Looking inward at their own soul care is the focus for these participants.

The strength of the skill-based trainings is the simplicity of the training, global transferability, ability to be locally applicable without comprising the biblical foundation, and the outcome-based approach based on goals. The curricula for youth ministry leaders and for the church-based leadership ministry teams are focused on the skill-based areas of meeting and evangelizing the lost, discipleship, and fellowship among the believers. The curriculum emphasizes the development of Christians to serve and multiply themselves in order to repeat the process. The church context of a family-supporting leadership are the key context areas taught in the curriculum. Each session has related goal sheets for teams of leaders to write specific plans and then to consolidate the goals into an annual ministry

plan. The strengths of these training seminars are the simple, Christ-based, ministry principles and the practical planning focus.

The biblical, principle-based model is incredibly effective in developing ministry activity around Christ and His example of discipleship multiplication. Beyond the initial training strengths, the seminars are offered with multiple levels that allow for follow up on the set goals and additional personal mentoring necessary for success. The greatest ministry strength abides in the multitude of indigenous trainers developed and multiplied for an exponential global impact. This multiplication occurs at the Level 3 events where faithful leaders are invited to be equipped as trainers.

The strength of the Heart of the Leader is that experienced Christian leaders have the opportunity to recalibrate their spiritual life. This occurs as they are reminded of the need to care for themselves as diligently as they care for their ministry. The strength in the current design of this offering are the experiential soul care times where leaders are positioned before God and given the opportunity to share what God is speaking to them about in a secure, mentor-led group environment. Table 1 displays the three major ministry offerings in globalLead and how they progress in each level to provide for multiplication.

There are current weaknesses in the ministry areas. Providing quality translations can be a challenge. globalLead currently offers a two-fold approach to this need by requiring local hosts to create written translations of the teacher and student notebooks. In addition, the oral translators at the live events use these notebooks. This second level of checking helps to insure proper transmission of thoughts. Keeping up with modifications to the materials globally with at least 20 different translations available is a challenge.

Table 1. Seminar training system

Seminar	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Church Ministry Strategy	13 sessions, based on the earthly ministry of Christ.	10 Sessions focused on core leadership issues of team, Biblical study, teaching methods and the internal life of the leader.	Training of trainers events that develop those leaders who are invited to train others in what they have implemented from Level 1 and Level 2.
Youth Ministry Strategy	13 sessions, based on the earthly ministry of Christ.	10 Sessions focused on core leadership issues of team, Biblical study, teaching methods and the internal life of the leader.	Training of trainers events that develop those leaders who are invited to train others in what they have implemented from Level 1 and Level 2.
Heart of the Leader	Two weeks of seminars (broken up across one to two years) offering a psycho-spiritual, healing journey model of self-care for experienced Christian leaders with mentors.	Fledgling work being done to equip mentors and speakers for the Heart of the Leader.	Some multiplication work has begun as leaders from other countries are considering offering this journey locally in their countries.

Another on-going need is to be sure that a high quantity of training opportunities occur and that these trainings are of high quality. The biggest hurdle to this approach is the temptation to multiply trainers too quickly. The compelling global needs for the lost to hear the gospel through trained leaders can induce an unchecked multiplication of lesser quality. Simultaneously, with explosive growth comes the potential for a lack of quality training being reproduced by those who receive the trainings.

The largest need seen globally is to ensure that those we are privileged to serve are positioned to minister for a lifetime. Leaders are being invested in at the beginning of their ministries through various trainings. Informal and formal trainings that focus on the skill or “how to” areas of ministry are growing rapidly. However, the question we are asking is, who is investing in the sustainability of these leaders? Or, who is pastoring the pastors? This project looked at a Christ-centered approach to soul care for pastors and ministry leaders.

Leaders globally are overworked, sometimes by the demands of multiple ministries, and often by the feelings of financial necessity. These esteemed Christian leaders are performing outwardly in ministry, but often sputtering inwardly in their own soul. Jesus warned the Pharisees of this disconnect of the outward and inward lifestyle of leaders:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matt 23:27-28)²

Today's news outlets seem to be echoing Jesus' warning as they consistently broadcast the heart wrenching stories of Christian pastors or ministry leaders who have succumbed to a lifestyle of repeated, unrepentant godless behavior.

Rationale

In reviewing the training strengths and weaknesses, it is obvious to globalLead that the leader's own soul care needs to be a thread throughout all the trainings, not just the focus of the Heart of the Leader events. Additions to the training of the trainers curriculum and process needed to be biblically grounded. These additions must include a Christ-centered approach to parallel the current training modules.

Historically, globalLead has seen the value of centering the skill-based models around the ministry activity of Jesus Christ by looking intently at how He did ministry and following His principled patterns. Consequently, any solid approach to leadership soul care should begin with the soul care of Jesus Himself and how He modeled that for His disciples. This study and subsequent training on the life of Jesus Himself will infiltrate all of globalLead's trainings. How leaders sustain themselves as they serve others was addressed directly in this instruction. Additionally, this study positions the globalLead team to recalibrate the current materials and structures of the globalLead

²Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

Heart of the Leader ministry curriculum to be properly grounded in Scripture and the life of Jesus Himself.

This project infused a more balanced approach to leadership development that bolsters the heart level care for leaders to be in parallel with the current skill-based focus. The example of David articulates the balanced approach: “With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand” (Ps 78:72). Leaders becoming a more balanced example is a critical need for the future of globalLead and those they serve. How sad it would be to continue to develop a movement of leaders globally that are primarily focused only on what they are building in ministry instead of continuing to ensure they are personally being built up from the inside out for ministry.

For the ministry of globalLead, and the multitudes of ministries and churches connected to the training mechanism, it is necessary to ensure that the leaders are deeply tied to the ways of Christ in His own soul care and the soul care of future New Testament leaders. Looking at the life of Christ as the only perfect leadership example is a critical study for implementation. The globalLead trainings currently follow Jesus’ ministry skill principles for the “how-to” portions of ministry. The training materials also stand upon the knowledge of who Christ is theologically. Building upon this knowledge of Christ and the ministry practices of Christ, the globalLead leadership dove deeply into the spiritual development and sustainable processes of Christ for His own well-being as a leader, and for His leadership example to others.

The specific approach to the study and related curriculum development took on three areas based on the life of Christ. First is a look at Jesus’ preparation and His identity through the Father and the Holy Spirit. Second is the study of how Jesus handled His own temptations. Third is how Jesus handled the times of stressful testing at Gethsemane. Jesus needed to face the soul-level issues that all leaders face. Interaction with sin and temptation was something Jesus had to face by depending upon counsel from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Critical questions are answered: What did this look like for Jesus?

How did Jesus receive counsel? This project looks at Matthew 4:1-11, which gives the example of Jesus' temptations in the desert.

In contrast to His handling of sin and temptation that tears leaders down, how did Jesus handle the building up of His own spiritual vitality while on earth? The study digs into Jesus' habits and disciplines for Himself and the modeling of the same personal soul care that He passed on to the disciples. What example did Jesus show His disciples regarding the building up of the inward man spiritually? This portion of the study engages the passages on solitude and prayer in the life of Christ as seen in Mark 1:32-39 and Luke 5:15-16.

The final aspect of study is the foundational building block of security that Jesus had in order to handle both the negative and positive attributes of leadership soul care. This facet looks at the outworking of the relational unity of Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit while on earth that provided Him the environment for His own soul care. In addition, the disciples, specifically the apostle Paul, needed to personally experience a similar abiding connectivity to the Father and Holy Spirit that Jesus experienced. It is critical that this soul care approach be constructed upon Jesus' unwavering, secure standing with His Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was interdependently one with the other members of the Trinity, as vividly seen in Ephesians 1:3-14, and Ephesians 3:14-21 that were studied. His disciples would rise or fall based on whether they would also abide in Christ and depend upon this intertwined security exemplified in the Trinitarian Godhead.

How Jesus Himself handled the potential demise of sin and temptation for Himself, and others, and how He exemplified the building up of His soul's strength through abiding is critical. It may seem theological only, but it is full of practical ramifications for all Christian leaders today and into the future. The languages, cultures and strains from ministry may look different globally, but at the core of humanity is the need for security in Christ. The practical outworking of this relationship is necessary for

leaders to face the potentially debilitating influences of sin and at the same time positively develop sustainability in their own soul through Jesus' examples.

This project produced a curriculum to be used within globalLead and its leadership teams for the development of the knowledge and practical application for Christian leaders globally. The curriculum was taught online after the assessments of the participants was taken. The participants received an additional assessment at the end of the study to measure the effectiveness as seen in the specific goal areas. Following the training, each leader was surveyed for how they would integrate the curriculum into their ministry setting. Those who received this training were the current staff, volunteers, and connected ministry partners globally who were available to partake and had a desire to integrate the principles from this training into the three main training and development seminars offered globally.

Purpose

This project developed a transferable, Christ-centered training curriculum that targeted the soul care of Christian ministry leaders and that was taught to the leadership mentors related to globalLead International.

Goals

Four progressive goals were implemented to develop, deliver, and measure the impact of the training curriculum.

1. The first goal was to identify and assess globalLead related participants' current knowledge and practice of soul care based on the example of Jesus.
2. The second goal was to develop and deliver a six-part curriculum that focused on the soul care practices of Jesus to the selected globalLead related participants.
3. The third goal was to evaluate the knowledge obtained and the soul care implementation following the delivery of the Christ-centered soul care curriculum.
4. The fourth goal was for each of the globalLead related participants to personally assess and report how they plan to use the materials in their teaching, preaching, and mentoring ministries.

The completion of each goal was measured utilizing a benchmark of success. The research instruments and methodology of each goal are detailed in the following section.

Research Methodology

The specific progressing goals of this project begin with assessments of the leadership mentors who were trained through a six-part curriculum.³ The course consisted of the study of the life of Christ that targets the soul care of Christian ministry leaders globally. The curriculum was taught and then followed up with an evaluation of the participants to gauge their progress. Additionally, each leader was asked to report on how they planned to integrate the teachings into their ministry areas of influence. The details of each specific goal and methodology are provided below.

Twenty-one of the globalLead partners were identified from various locations around the globe. These leaders were then assessed on their current knowledge of how Jesus cared for his own soul and set an example for those directly impacted in His ministry.⁴ This goal was successful upon the completion of the lifestyle survey and the test of their understanding of the engagement and impact of Jesus on the soul care of Christian leaders by the 16 top leaders that fully completed all of the assignments, and the data for both instruments has been analyzed to see the lifestyle and knowledge starting points for those involved.

The six-part curriculum was based upon Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:32-39, Luke 5:15-16, Ephesians 1:3-14, and Ephesians 3:14-21. These Scriptures looked at the exemplary life and ministry of Jesus, as well as the importance of the union with Christ.

³ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁴ See appendices 1 and 2. The ministry of globalLead has approximately 80 staff and volunteers globally. Twenty-one leaders were selected to begin the process with the expectation that no fewer than 10 leaders would complete the process fully and in a timely manner.

From these passages the hindrances to soul care, examples of positive soul care, and foundations for healthy soul care were developed. This goal was successful as the curriculum was created and delivered to 16 of the globalLead partners. The delivery of the content was done through an online system to allow for the completion of the materials across multiple time zones. The curriculum included video and PowerPoint notes.

Following the completion of the training, a second lifestyle survey and knowledge test was given and evaluated against the first survey and test. A paired *t*-test was developed from the results. The goal was successfully completed as the data was analyzed to understand the positive impact of the curriculum for the participants.

A final survey was provided for the participants to assess how they planned to implement the materials. This survey also sought to discern what video method was used (live or recorded), why it was chosen, and if there was a measurable difference in impact based upon the viewing method.⁵

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Certain terms used throughout this ministry project are defined below to aid the reader's understanding of the subject.

Soul care. In this project, soul care is defined as how the minister engages self-care as “the domain of lived Christian experience. Living all of life before God, through Christ, in the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.”⁶

Christ-centered. The term Christ-centered in this project refers to understanding “who we are in Christ by God's grace and how that affects our walk in

⁵ See appendix 3.

⁶ Glen G. Scorgie, *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 27.

life. Understanding the practical ramifications of our position and union in Christ is foundational to the walk in and by the Spirit of God.”⁷

Trainings. For the sake of this project, trainings refer to the globalLead’s Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 events that are typically held over a three to four-day time period.

Several delimitations were placed on this project. The delimitations were, first, the number of global participants. The number of leaders was limited to twenty-one initial participants to provide a manageable and qualified number that could interact with the curricula and plan their future ministry goals. Additional delimitations were the passages of Scriptures to be studied due to the nature of the project being focused on the centrality of Christ. Therefore, the biblical passages were limited to the Gospels and additional New Testament passages that refer to union in Christ.

Conclusion

Ensuring that Christian leaders globally are balanced in their approach to their own spiritual life is critical for the impact and longevity of the church globally. This project studied the spiritual life and soul care of Jesus and its impact upon the Ephesians church through the apostle Paul. This foundational study became a major thread of how globalLead ministers to, mentors with, and multiplies Jesus’ impact through healthy leaders globally.

⁷ Bible.org. “2.3. The Christ-Centered Life,” accessed January 4, 2017, <https://bible.org/seriespage/23-christ-centered-life>.

CHAPTER 2

JESUS' EXAMPLE OF SOUL CARE FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS AS SEEN IN SCRIPTURE

Introduction

History itself rises and falls around the centrality of Jesus Christ, God's exemplary leader. The written history of the life of Jesus and its application are meant to bring eternal life and to bring care for Christian leaders throughout history. Scripture shows that there is no greater source of soul care for Christian leaders than in the life-giving example of Jesus Christ Himself. Scripture speaks of the stress and temptation experiences of Jesus. The Bible also articulates how He responded to those experiences through His Trinitarian union that is exemplary for the soul care of Christian leaders today.

Jesus' preparation for life and ministry and His responsive methods for handling stress and temptations are to be examined in this work. If Christian leaders think that Christ-centered soul care is limited to the gospel examples of Jesus, the apostle Paul speaks to the leaders in Ephesus regarding the spiritual riches found in the Trinitarian relationships through Christ. Paul's prayer includes power, security, and the experiential love that is available beyond measure for every leader who follows Paul's example of Christ-centered soul care.

Jesus as the Leader's Example

For Jesus to be considered an authentic example, Christian leaders must begin with questions of His humanity and divinity and how they relate to non-divine Christian leaders. In His humanity, Jesus needed to prepare for His personal temptations and on-going times of stress. Jesus faced temptations and stress and set an example for Christian

leaders through His preparatory and responsive methods. This chapter studies Jesus' humanity, preparation, His times of testing and temptation, fondness for withdrawing from others to be engaged with his Trinitarian cohorts, and final earthly submission at Gethsemane builds a solid model for the soul care of leaders in Christian ministry.

Jesus as the Human Example

Was Jesus fully human in a way that today's Christian leaders can look to Him as a viable example? Klaus Issler asks, "Did Jesus have access to something extra that is unique to him and unavailable to believers?"¹ To consider Jesus as an example for any Christian leader, the question of whether Jesus is a proper standard must be considered. Issler states that the dilemma for followers of Christ is that "Christians cannot emulate his [Jesus'] example if he relied on his own divine power to live and minister to others."²

In the time of His incarnation, Jesus was fully God and fully human. This theological truth has been a part of the orthodox belief of Christianity's leaders for millennia. Integrating the human and divine into practice is the challenge at hand. What Jesus did with His divinity and how He related to the Trinity during the time of His incarnation is crucial. John Calvin states, "Jesus took the image of a servant, and content with such lowness, allowed his identity to be hidden by a "veil of flesh."³ Issler builds upon Calvin's thoughts in that there are examples of Jesus accessing His divinity for miracles, as a normal practice, "prior to his incarnation, Jesus voluntarily agreed to conceal to a great extent his divine nature and powers to live mainly within his human powers and to rely predominantly on the tutelage and power of the Father and the Holy

¹ Klaus Issler, "Jesus' Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 190.

² *Ibid.*, 203.

³ John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 2:15.

Spirit.”⁴ Jesus voluntarily concealed His divinity starting from birth, up through and including his years of active ministry. Bruce Ware articulates how Jesus lived in His human nature and divine nature:

Although Jesus possessed fully his divine nature, and through his divine nature he had access to infinite divine wisdom and power, he accepted instead the role of living life in dependence upon what the Spirit would provide for him for the purpose of living life as one of us, as a man with all the limitations that such a life involves. Rather than drawing upon the infinite resource of his divine nature, he prayed for help and trusted both his Father and the Spirit to bring to him what he needed.⁵

The explanation of Jesus experiencing a normal human life is clearly seen in Hebrews 2:17: “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” The apostle Paul clarified the kenosis, self-humiliation, of Christ as an example in Philippians 2:5-7: “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 emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” Millard Erickson further explains that “by taking on human nature, he [Jesus] accepted certain limitations upon the functioning of his divine attributes. These limitations were not the result of a loss of divine attributes but of the addition of human attributes.”⁶ Jesus was not emptied of His divinity, He voluntarily concealed His divinity an added-on humanity. Since Jesus veiled the usage of His divinity, humanity can count on His example.

Jesus’ pattern was to put off the usage of His divine power in order for His humanity to be simultaneously empowered by bonding with the Father and the Holy Spirit. For Jesus to be the example, He was empowered through his Trinitarian

⁴ Issler, “Jesus’ Example,” 223.

⁵ Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 44.

⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 735.

relationship, which Christians are also a part of. Issler continues, “If he [Jesus] planned to live as a human just like us then, once the Son voluntarily decided to add on human nature, he would need to veil his divine glory and predominantly rely on divine resources outside of his own divine power.”⁷ The Gospel of John communicates Christ’s utter dependency on the Father and the Holy Spirit. In John 5:19, Jesus said that the Son can do nothing and was dependent on the Father, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” The same theme continues in John 15:5 for Jesus’ followers: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus was the forerunner in His obedience to the Father and exemplified the necessary dependence for those who follow. Issler articulates, “Jesus develops a parallel between his dependency on the Father as the analogy for how his disciples will depend on him. Jesus offers himself as an example of dependency for believers.”⁸

Ware explains Jesus’ reliance on the Holy Spirit as he operated through His divinity and humanity: “Although Jesus was fully God, as a man he chose not to rely on his own divine nature but to rely on the power of the Spirit.”⁹ This example is critical for leaders today to understand how to orient their lives toward Jesus as their foremost example. According to Gerald Hawthorne, Jesus “was not aided to rise above and conquer temptations as God, but rather as a man whose will was set to do the will of God.

⁷ Issler, “Jesus’ Example,” 213.

⁸ Ibid., 205.

⁹ Bruce A. Ware, “Christ’s Atonement: A Work of the Trinity,” in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 182.

His sinlessness was nothing more than the continued obedience to the Father and to the Father's will."¹⁰

This raises another question of importance: "Could Jesus have sinned?"

Erickson states, "While he [Jesus] could have sinned, it was certain that he would not.

There were genuine struggles and temptations, but the outcome was always certain."¹¹

Erickson points out that one should not think that someone is less human because he does

not sin, in fact, Jesus was more human because He faced a higher intensity of temptation.

Erickson notes, "The person who resists knows the full force of temptation. Sinlessness points to a more intense rather than a less intense temptation."¹² In no way was Jesus less

able to sin, or did He face less temptation than people today. Erickson is clear in stating,

"Jesus was indeed tempted in every respect that we are (Heb. 4:15). Beyond that, the

descriptions of Jesus' temptations indicate great intensity. For example, think of his agony

in Gethsemane when he struggled to do the Father's will (Luke 22:44)."¹³ Jesus not only

could not have sinned, He did not sin even though He faced temptation in every respect

that all humans do. Beyond facing the temptations, He endured them at a higher intensity

than any Christian leader will face, therefore He can and should be looked upon as the

premier example.

Christian leaders who follow Christ are to be prepared for times of temptations

and stress. William Lane connects Christ's exemplary life through his comments

regarding Jesus at Gethsemane (Mark 14:28):

Spiritual wakefulness and prayer in full dependence upon divine help provide the only adequate preparation for crisis. . . . Jesus prepared for his own intense trial

¹⁰ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power* (Dallas: Word, 2003), 96, quoted in Issler, "Jesus' Example," 203.

¹¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 720.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

through vigilance and prayer, and thus gave to the disciples and to the Church a model for the proper resistance of eschatological temptation.¹⁴

Like Jesus, Christian leaders must surrender any assumption of strength and submit to the power and strength of their relationship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Issler explains the source of spiritual strength: “Jesus Christ’s supernaturally oriented life on this earth resulted from his predominant dependence on the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit, while living fully in his humanity, employing his own divine powers infrequently, if at all.”¹⁵

In discussing divinity and dependence, one must ask, if Jesus was merely activating His own personal self-sustaining divinity to overcome temptations and stress, then why would He need to be so dependent upon God’s Word and upon prayer as we see in the following discourses?

Jesus’ Preparation for Ministry

As the exemplar Christian leader, Jesus the Son of God experienced temptations and stress and set an example for Christian leaders through His preparatory and responsive methods. Jesus prepared and was proven prior to His public ministry. From birth until His first documented moment of temptation and testing in the desert, Jesus was being prepared to respond appropriately to the future challenges of private and public ministry.

Prior to Jesus’s temptations in Matthew 4:1-11, there were evident preparation processes for Jesus prior to His public ministry (Luke 2:22-52, Matt 3:13-17). Preparation clarified Jesus’ own self-identity. Ware explains how the Spirit-anointed Messiah needed the Holy Spirit: “The identity of Jesus as Savior is inextricably tied to his being the

¹⁴ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 520-21.

¹⁵ Issler, “Jesus’ Example,” 190-91.

Spirit-anointed Messiah, whose very person requires the indwelling and empowering Spirit for him to be who he is and to accomplish what he has come to do.”¹⁶

Jesus was with God in eternity, and in Matthew 3:13-17, He is fully declared not only as God’s Son, but as “My Son,” an intimate first-person declaration by God His Father. He was given a name that showed whose He was—God’s Son. Beyond the name of Son, God said, “I am pleased.” God’s pleasure was not based on any ministry accomplishment, because Jesus had yet to have any public ministry. Christian ministers should take note of this ordering of Christ’s identity. The identity was not developed first in ministry by God saying, “I am well pleased with your ministry Jesus.” The identity for Jesus came first as Son; therefore, the identity of Christian leaders is in the relationship not the performance. God is pleased through leaders first standing as a son and co-heir in Christ. No amount of successful or unsuccessful ministry will change God’s name as son for the Christian leader. God’s primary pleasure is the fatherly relationship.

This relationship and response of Jesus will be tested. The context of Jesus’ temptations as the pleasing Son of God is in the wilderness. Grant Osborne clearly states that Jesus was like Old Testament characters in that “the heroes of the faith go through testing throughout the Bible (Abraham, Moses, David, Job, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel; Heb 11), and through it they learn the dependence on God that is necessary for a triumphant ministry.”¹⁷ Jesus was also prepared for life and ministry through the testing and temptations allowed by the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was prepared through His growth: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Christian leaders should expect the same need for preparation and testing ahead of and in the midst of ministry.

¹⁶ Ware, “Christ’s Atonement,” 156.

¹⁷ Grant R. Osborne and Clinton E. Arnold, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 137.

Jesus was also prepared for ministry through the Triune partners of the Father and the Holy Spirit's direct participation in His life, as seen in His baptism:

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:16-17)

God the Father and the Person of the Holy Spirit were present at Jesus' baptism and confirmed His identity. This presence confirmed the crucial interdependent bonding identity of Jesus with the Father and the Spirit. This bond is not merely theological, but also familial. Christ builds upon this foundation as preparation in His development prior to testing and ministry. Jesus could face testing and temptations in the days ahead because He knew who He was and He had verbal confirmation of His identity from God His Father. To God, Jesus was not just a ministering Savior of the world, but a Son. God was preparing His Son like any good father for life ahead.

Jesus' Testing and Temptations

The beloved Sonship that the Father had proclaimed in Matthew 3 would now be directly tested by the arch enemy of God the Father, Satan himself. Tom Constable explains the testing scene: "The same Spirit who brought Jesus into the world (Matt 1:20) and demonstrated God's approval of Him (Matt 3:16) now led Him into the wilderness for tempting by Satan."¹⁸ The preparation of Jesus continued as the Holy Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt 4:1). David Turner correctly notes, "The chapter [Matt 4] amounts to a transition from preparatory events to public ministry."¹⁹ Jesus followed the Spirit and humbled Himself to human-like status by being baptized and by subsequently experiencing

¹⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), Mt 3:16-4:11.

¹⁹ David L. Turner, *Matthew, Mark*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 67.

temptations. Osborne explains that He was willing to be the example: “as in the baptism narrative, Jesus aligns Himself with the dilemma of humankind, this time in terms of temptation.”²⁰

Adding to Jesus’ preparation with His family and His community (Luke 2), and the participation by the Father and the Holy Spirit in His baptism (Matt 3:13-17), Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit, continues His life and ministry preparation by the Spirit-led fasting of forty days and forty nights. Not only was Jesus setting aside His desire and need for food, but He was engaging in solitude and most likely prayer and meditation on the Old Testament words of God that He studied as a youth. He was preparing for what the Father would have for Him next. Tom Constable explains, “Fasting in Scripture was for a spiritual reason, namely to forego a physical need to give attention to a more important spiritual need.”²¹ R. T. France helps to clarify that “in Jewish thought at the time; to be in the wilderness was to be prepared for a new beginning with God.”²² D. A. Carson states that testing is built upon the preparatory lessons learned: “Both Israel’s and Jesus’ hunger taught a lesson (Dt 8:3); both spent time in the desert preparatory to their respective tasks . . . to prove their obedience and loyalty in preparation for their appointed work.”²³ The parallel of Jesus’ testing wilderness experience with that of Israel is evident. Jesus passes the test that Israel had failed. It is notable that Jesus was fully prepared ahead of and in the midst of the wilderness and ensuing temptations through solitude, fasting, prayer, and Word-based meditation.

²⁰ Osborne, *Matthew*, 131.

²¹ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

²² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 129.

²³ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 141.

It should not surprise anyone that Satan, the tempter, would show up after Jesus' preparatory fasting and tempt Him in regard to food: "And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread'" (Matt 4:3). Not only was Satan attacking Jesus through the physical need of food, but most importantly, he was ambushing His identity as the Son of God. He was not questioning Jesus' position of security with God, but tempting Jesus to operate independently of God. Constable writes, "This temptation was not to doubt that reality [Jesus as God's Son]. It was to suggest that as the Son of God Jesus surely had the power and right to satisfy His own needs independent of His Father."²⁴ Beyond the attack on identity and independence, the Deceiver wanted to push Jesus into seeking a life of entitlement—a lifestyle of entitlement that can be a real temptation for any leader. Ministers may be tempted and tested through this sense of entitlement. Leaders can easily assume that they are due something physical for their spiritual services that is beyond any remuneration they are being provided by their spiritual authorities. France summarizes the lie that Satan was presenting to Jesus: "It is not only beneath the dignity of such an exalted figure to suffer hunger, but also unnecessary since he has the means to create food."²⁵ Jesus faced the temptation to misuse His title and His power. Turner explains, "At issue here is the type of son Jesus will be. Will He utilize his endowment with the Spirit in a selfish fashion, or will He humbly depend on his Father to meet his needs?"²⁶ Jesus exemplified the right way to handle His title and also the right use of the preparatory Word as the ultimate food. He demonstrated his Word-based preparation in His response to the enemy's temptation: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Constable notes that "Jesus' response to

²⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

²⁵ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 130.

²⁶ Turner, *Matthew, Mark*, 66.

Satan's suggestion (v. 4) reflected His total commitment to follow God's will as revealed in His Word. By applying this passage to Himself Jesus put Himself in the category of a true 'man' (Gr. *anthropos*).²⁷

Jesus was willing to be a true "man" by submitting to His Father's plans and not His own earthly desires. France clarifies, "Jesus' use of this OT text [Deut 8:3] shows that he understood his experience of hunger as God's will for him at the time, and therefore, not to be evaded by a self-indulgent use of his undoubted power as the Son of God."²⁸ Jesus had resistance power only through his dependence upon the Trinitarian relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus submitted to God and passed the first test from God through the temptation of the enemy by the very words of God. This test regarding His Sonship would come out at the cross as well. Carson compares the two temptations. The first temptation in Matthew 4 "was a temptation to use his sonship in a way inconsistent with his God-ordained mission. The same taunt, 'If you are the Son of God,' is hurled at him in [Matt] 27:40, when for him to have left the cross would have annulled the purpose of his coming."²⁹

Carson continues to explain the need for Jesus' obedience to the Word: "Jesus' food is to do the will of his Father who sent him (John 4:34)."³⁰ He continues, "More necessary than bread for Jesus was obedience to God's word."³¹ Jesus' knowledge and meditation on those Old Testament words helped Him remain faithful in order to live unto the Father. Jesus passed the test that Israel failed. Constable compares Israel and

²⁷ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

²⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 131.

²⁹ Carson, *Matthew*, 141.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

Jesus: “Israel demanded bread in the wilderness but died. Jesus forewent bread in submission to His Father’s will and lived.”³²

Throughout this first portion of Matthew 4:1-4, Jesus is living and experiencing the exemplary life in the midst of a face-to-face encounter with God’s arch enemy, Satan. It is evident that Jesus set aside His divinity to operate as a man in this battle. This is clear in that Jesus could have usurped His creative power over the rocks to turn them into food. However, He humbled Himself and responded in exemplary fashion for all Christians, and specifically ministry leaders, by depending on God’s provision through God’s Word. Most important to Christ was to faithfully be the God-man—a faithful, beloved Son, and not to misuse his title for His own gain, but to honor His Father. As the exemplary Shepherd to be, Jesus engaged in solitude, the Word, prayer, humility, obedience, and constraint of power. The same disciplines are necessary for ministering shepherds today as they experience temptations and stress.

Following the first temptation to turn rocks to bread, Jesus was then faced with the temptation to test God’s provision and power. Matthew 4:5-6 says,

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

Carson addresses this test of Jesus in comparison to Israel’s test:

The reference alludes to Exodus 17:2–7 (cf. Nu 20:1–13), where the Israelites “put the Lord to the test” by demanding water. So Jesus was tempted by Satan to test God, but Jesus recognized Satan’s testing as a sort of manipulative bribery expressly forbidden in the Scriptures.³³

Jesus responds out of His past preparation by utilizing his knowledge, training, and meditation on the Word of God by declaring, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Matt 4:7). If Jesus was to demand that God catch Him, He

³² Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

³³ Carson, *Matthew*, 142.

would be treating God as His servant versus continuing to serve the desires and will of His Father God. Constable declares why Jesus and other leaders cannot test God: “It is wrong to demand that God prove Himself faithful to His promises by giving us what He has promised on our terms. The proper procedure is simply to trust and obey God (Deut. 6:16–17). ‘Testing is not trusting.’”³⁴ Jesus endured the temptation to test His Father, God. The humility and obedience of Jesus before the Father exemplified humility for the leaders who would follow. Luther explains Jesus’ humble battling on behalf of Christian leaders:

It is true that Christ could have done this [jumped and demand angels to catch him] just as easily as walking on the water (Matt 14:25). But because He was there in His nature and wanted to endure this temptation for our good, God let the human nature in Christ first battle with the devil, and for our comfort strike and conquer him with His own sword, namely by saying, “You shall not tempt the Lord you God” (Matt 4:7).³⁵

As the exemplary leader, Jesus knows His authority is not His own, it is given by God for God, so He rightly set the example amid the testing of Satan by humbling Himself and remaining obedient through the Word. Jesus consciously remained in the Trinitarian relationship with the Father and the Spirit, even though Satan was tempting Jesus to usurp his Sonship in a rogue rebellion against His Father. Jesus exemplified the necessity of humility and obedience for all Christian leaders.

The scene now changes from the temple to a mountain. Satan attempted to convince Jesus to bypass the journey to glory through the cross by offering Jesus immediate authority:

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! ‘For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”’” (Matt 4:8-10)

³⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

³⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther’s works*, vol. 57, *Sermons IV*, ed. Benjamin Mayes, trans. Kenneth E. F. Howes (St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), 261-62.

Osborne explains the tradeoff being offered: “Satan now proceeds to offer Jesus the greatest temptation of all, a shortcut to power and glory.”³⁶ Carson adds, “Satan was offering an interpretation of the theocratic ideal that sidestepped the cross and introduced idolatry.”³⁷ Jesus had the option, in His humanity, to go a simpler more comfortable way to glory and kingship by submitting to Satan’s shortcut. Constable crystallizes this thought: “This temptation consisted of an opportunity for Jesus to obtain the benefits of messiahship without having to experience its unpleasant elements.”³⁸ Jesus knew from God’s instructions to Him, and to all the leaders who would follow, that worship and service was to be to God only. Osborne suggests that Jesus also recognized that “the use of ‘all the kingdoms’ along with ‘their glory’ stresses the earthly aspect; Satan could only offer earthly glory, not lasting glory.”³⁹ No shortcut would be allowed or chosen by Jesus. He would not trade earthly glory for eternal glory. Constable reminds Christian leaders of the eternal authority of Jesus that He passed on to them in Matthew 28:16:

The placement of Jesus on the mountain of temptation, where He refused to acknowledge the devil’s “authority,” is deliberately juxtaposed to the mountain (Matt. 28:16) of “the great commission,” on which He later affirmed that all ‘authority’ in heaven and on earth had been granted to Him (28:18).⁴⁰

Selfish power and glory not only tested and tempted Jesus, but will also test and tempt Christian leaders. Though Satan does not physically stand before Christian ministry leaders face to face, the world systems in which he has influence are surrounding every person in dramatic fashion, offering leaders the option to seek glory in anything besides the Lord God. In addition, leaders are tempted, like Jesus, to use their God-given authority to bring glory to themselves. Jesus exemplified the way to combat the testing

³⁶ Osborne, *Matthew*, 134.

³⁷ Carson, *Matthew*, 142-43.

³⁸ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

³⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 135.

⁴⁰ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

and temptations in the midst of the stress filled struggles with this world's system and the draw of the temporary horizontal glory. Jesus stood upon God's holy directives, even when an easier option was available. Jesus was willing to sit at the throne of God and its glory versus standing in rebellion by overthrowing God's throne to receive glory for Himself alone.

Jesus finishes the face-to-face testing and temptation encounter by sending Satan away: "Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve"' (Matt 4:10). Not only did Jesus speak the authority of Scripture in the previous interactions, the Word continued to have authority in the final interaction. Satan had to flee, for he was only allowed as long as the sovereign Father along with the Holy Spirit allowed him access to the beloved Son.

After the preparatory solitude, fasting, meditation, testing, and temptations, Jesus was in need of being ministered to: "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him" (Matt 4:11). Carson summarizes the testing and temptation of Jesus that was bookended by His disciplined preparation and provision from God's ministering angels:

Jesus had refused to relieve his hunger by miraculously turning stones to bread; now he is fed supernaturally. He had refused to throw himself off the temple heights in the hope of angelic help; now angels feed him. He had refused to take a shortcut to inherit the kingdom of the world; now he fulfills Scripture by beginning his ministry and announcing the kingdom in Galilee of the Gentiles (vv. 12–17).⁴¹

Jesus' example of preparation helps Christian leaders keep God's plans in perspective. Bock and Turner conclude, "The things Satan offered him—physical sustenance, spectacular protection, and authority to rule the world—were already his by virtue of his unique status as the Father's beloved Son."⁴² This temptation and testing dialogue was not merely for the sake of Jesus alone. Constable explains,

⁴¹ Carson, *Matthew*, 143.

⁴² Turner, *Matthew, Mark*, 67.

Many have observed that Satan followed the same pattern of temptation with Jesus that he had used with Eve (Gen. 3). First, he appealed to the lust of the flesh, the desire to *do* something apart from God's will. Second, he appealed to the lust of the eyes, the desire to *have* something apart from God's will. Third, he appealed to the pride of life, the desire to *be* something apart from God's will (cf. 1 John 2:16).⁴³

These temptations, along with many others, have been around from mankind's beginning. Jesus in His humanity was not exempt from experiencing these same trials and testing, yet He overcame them. These times of temptation and testing were for all of humanity to see and learn from. When leaders are prepared through their Christ-centered identity, solitude, prayer, fasting, and meditation on the Word, they can pass the test of temptations and stress. Dependence upon God's Word and Spirit is essential, just as it was for Jesus. Martin Luther explains Jesus' dependence on God's Word as his food:

Here Christ gains victory and teaches [us] how to gain the victory—because God is preferred to food, for He is not God of the belly, but the God of life, just as He proves on the basis of Moses that, “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word,” etc. [Deut.8:3]. Therefore, man possesses not only this life of the body, by means of bread, but also the present life and the life to come in the Word.⁴⁴

Jesus received His title, purpose, and pleasure from God, His Father, and the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Matt 3:13-17). He had been prepared prior to the baptism by His upbringing in His God-seeking family and His time among the temple teachers (Luke 2:39-52). The times of solitude, meditation, and fasting in the wilderness ahead of the temptations by Satan were preparatory for Christ. Clearly He had no physical bread during these times, but He feasted on the Word of God from the teachings regarding God's own people of Israel. Jesus was humanly engaged in temptation by the enemy. Jesus submitted His divinity in order to be an example of surviving and thriving as a leader through engaging in the power of relationship with God through the Holy Spirit as the holy Word was infused into his being in preparation. Table 2 helps to clarify both Jesus' temptations and today's temptations alongside appropriate responses.

⁴³ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

⁴⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther's works*, vol. 67, *Annotations on Matthew*, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015), 25-26.

Table 2. Jesus' temptations and response as an example for Christian leaders

Jesus and Christian leaders are tempted to . . .	But Jesus and Christian leaders can instead . . .
Find identity outside of God and the Holy Spirit.	Continually found His identity in His relationship the Father and the Holy Spirit.
Operate independently of God and the Holy Spirit.	Remained dependent on God through His Word.
Seek a lifestyle of entitlement.	He submitted to His Father's plans and depending upon God provisions and God's words.
Misuse title and power.	Realized that His title and power were from God, not of His own making or individual ownership. Constrained His own power in obedience to Father.
Test God's provision and power.	Obediently humbled Himself under God's power. He trusted God and did not test God. Remained in proper relationship the Father and the Holy Spirit.
Follow a shortcut to power and selfish glory. Obtaining the messiahship without the cost of the cross.	Sat at God's throne in worship instead of standing in rebellion. Worshipped God not His own possible premature power and glory. Realized that that the glory and power were already promised through His obedience at the cross and subsequent great commission of Matthew 28:16-18.

In summary, one can clearly see that Jesus was prepared ahead of time and in the midst of the wilderness temptations. Christian leaders can look at Jesus' response to His normative temptations and see an appropriate response to follow.

Jesus' Withdrawal and Prayer as a Responsive Method

It is appropriate to ask, if Jesus was not a valid example for humanity in regard to prayer and desperate need for spiritual power, then why did He longingly go to the Father to pray regularly? Jesus was prepared for the initial onslaught of the enemy in the wilderness, but He knew that the previous mountaintop experience would not carry Him through the valleys of life and ministry ahead of Him. Throughout his remaining time on earth, Jesus regularly responded to stress and temptations through his withdrawal from people and activity to find respite and refueling with God the Father through the Holy Spirit. Jesus not only did this for Himself but also saw this as an exemplary teaching method for His followers.

The experiences of the stresses of life and ministry did not subside when Jesus descended from the mountain. The first news that Jesus received after His mountain-top experience was the valley-like update that His only follower and ministry confidant to this point, His cousin John the Baptist, had been arrested. His next step, according to Matthew 4:12, was to withdraw: “Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.” The pattern unfolds of Jesus seeking solitude as He continued in exemplary cyclical fashion to minister and be ministered to by retreating back to the Father and the Holy Spirit’s presence. Mark 1:35 describes this withdrawal for the sake of energizing intimacy: “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” As Lane describes the scenery, there is a connection between Jesus’ wilderness temptations and this locale: “The fact that Jesus left the village while it was yet dark and sought a solitary place is described by Mark as a “wilderness place.” This was not a true wilderness in Capernaum, but was a solitary place, wilderness-like.”⁴⁵

Not only did Jesus face temptations that needed to be put off and for Him to be away from, but He also needed to rejuvenate from the full day of ministry. This solitary place in Capernaum, as explained by Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, is “a place of solitude where Jesus can rejuvenate in the presence of his Father.”⁴⁶ This place of solitude is also a crisis point for Jesus. Wessel and Strauss explain, “The temptation to stay in a place of security and success rather than fulfill the mission God has given to him . . . so Jesus seeks the strength that only communion and fellowship with the Father can provide.”⁴⁷ Not only was Jesus tempted by the current successful ministry location, but

⁴⁵ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 80-81.

⁴⁶ Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 719.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

this temptation is magnified by the plea of Simon (Peter). Lane paraphrases Peter's question to Jesus: "What are you doing here when you should be in the midst of the multitude who are clamoring for you? (Mark 1:37)."⁴⁸ Jesus would not give in to the demanding pace being imposed on Him. He exhibited life and ministry balance. Lane explains that Jesus finds that "His strength is in prayer through which he affirms his intention to fulfill the will of God."⁴⁹ This strength was from the continuing thread of His identity in being the pleasing Son of God from Matthew 3:17. Jesus found the most pleasure in being with the Father and continuing in His obedience, not in the acceptance of the crowds or even in pleasing His close disciple Simon Peter.

This scene with Peter was not to be Jesus' only time of prayer while under stress. Lane notes, "These three occasions have the character of a critical moment (Mark 1:35, 6:46, 14:32-42). The setting for Jesus' prayer in each instance is night and solitude."⁵⁰ Disconnecting from others while connecting to the Father is a reoccurring theme. The pattern of withdrawing and praying are evident through Luke's accounts of Jesus' ministry: "But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray" (Luke 5:15-16).

Intertwined are the themes of crowded activity, withdrawing, wilderness locations, engagement with God, and the disengagement from crowds and fame. Bock explains,

The large gatherings did not prevent Jesus from withdrawing habitually and finding time to commune with God or his disciples (Luke 4:42; Matt. 14:13, Mark 1:35, 45;

⁴⁸ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 82.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 81.

John 11:54). Despite all of the activity, Jesus is portrayed as seeking time with God, rather than fanning his fame.⁵¹

The examples are part of the continual lifestyle of Jesus. Leon Morris writes, “Luke tells us that there [in the wilderness] he prayed, (both verbs withdrew and prayed, indicate continuous action).”⁵² The context of Luke shows the reoccurring theme of stress in Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ response was a lifestyle of prayer as signified throughout Luke “(Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29).”⁵³

Ministry leaders are either in times of stress, heading into times of stress, or both. This stress and persecution is inevitable as leaders represent Christ and the provocative message He requires His leadership to proclaim (John 15:20-25).

A pattern of solitude and prayer was critical for Jesus and is also imperative for Christian leaders in their own Christ-centered soul care. Bock observes, “Jesus was headed for a series of conflicts in the events that followed. Luke makes clear that before Jesus got into trouble, he was spending time with God.”⁵⁴ Jesus prepared throughout His life and ministry to battle times of stress and temptation brought on by Satan, and to battle the cares and concerns of life, as the model shepherd of His own soul. He did not seek to engage in ministry alone but sought out the blessings of God the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit. This preparation would be fully tested in the days ahead at Gethsemane and the cross.

Jesus Tested in Gethsemane

In the entire history of mankind, there is no greater time of stress and temptation toward selfish desires than the evening Jesus spent in the Garden of

⁵¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 478.

⁵² Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2008), 136.

⁵³ Bock, *Luke*, 478.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 478.

Gethsemane. As the example for His followers, and for Christian ministry leaders, Jesus experientially demonstrates how to face stress and temptations. Gethsemane exemplified both the preparatory and responsive methods of Jesus. Jesus comes to this climactic moment carrying the weight of His future physical death but also the spiritual weight of all of mankind, past, present, and future. This time of prayer in the garden is excruciating for Jesus. Bock clarifies,

Conceptually, one may hear in this prayer reverberations of Jesus' testing in the wilderness (4:1-13), where the nature of Jesus' obedience was at stake. Indeed, it is here on the Mount of Olives that the motif of conflict reaches one of the highest points, with the opposing purposes of God and Satan coalescing in one scene.⁵⁵

Jesus can address Father God intimately based on God's pronouncement that He is pleased with His son (Matt 3:11-17). However, Jesus knows the holy demands of His Father, God the Judge. By Jesus facing the need to take on man's sin there will be a chasm set between Himself and His Father. There will be a physical separation as the human incarnate Son, and a spiritual separation as the divine Savior.

Though Jesus' circumstance is unique, He leaves his exemplary approach and a model for current and future followers. James Edwards explains, "Of Luke's score of prayer accounts, the prayer on the Mount of Olives, which follows the Last Supper and occurs prior to Jesus' arrest, is the most important."⁵⁶ Bock suggests Jesus' humanity in that "the portrait is honest in exposing the exemplary man who faced martyrdom and walked with God. He prepared himself by turning to God."⁵⁷ In a location of solitude and the quiet of the evening, Jesus withdrew along with His disciples to the familiar location of the Garden. Luke 22:39 states that He withdrew, "As was his custom," and Morris

⁵⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 779-80.

⁵⁶ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 642.

⁵⁷ Bock, *Luke*, 1753.

explains that “evidently throughout this week, and perhaps at other times also, it had been Jesus’ habit to spend the night on the slopes of this hill.”⁵⁸

The Stress

The stress Jesus faced was immense. Edwards notes, “We get some indication of the intensity of his feeling when we read of the sweat ‘like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.’”⁵⁹ Jesus faced stressful tension as He prayed for God to remove the agony of the cup that He had been served. This distressing prayer, says Edwards, “is the prayer of one who experiences the fierce claim of his human will over against the divine will. The tension produced by these two wills engulf Jesus not simply in mental anguish but in ‘anguish of soul.’”⁶⁰

Beyond the account in Luke, Allison A. Trites, Philip Wesley Comfort, and William J. Larkin suggest, “Matthew and Mark specifically note that Jesus was experiencing deep distress at this critical time, when he felt, ‘crushed with grief to the point of death’ (Matt 26:37-38; Mark 14:33-34).”⁶¹ Jesus feels the weight of the moment as seen by His posture. Luke states that Jesus knelt (Luke 22:4), while the other Gospel writers, Matthew and Mark, state that Jesus fell to the ground (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:35). Bock synthesizes the two accounts: “Given the note of agony in the prayer, these notes about kneeling and falling are not necessarily mutually exclusive”⁶² It is likely that Jesus both knelt and fell to the ground in response to the weight of the circumstance. Kneeling

⁵⁸ Leon Morris, *Luke*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 3 (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1988), 329.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 646.

⁶¹ Allison A. Trites, Philip Wesley Comfort, and William J. Larkin, *The Gospel of Luke & Acts*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 12 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 294.

⁶² Bock, *Luke*, 1757.

also was the desperate way for Jesus to humbly acknowledge His need for help. Much like a subordinate kneels before a King, Jesus humbled Himself before his Father in helpless need. Bock explains “Luke notes Jesus’ emotion and the physiological effect of trauma and Jesus entreats the Father more fervently.”⁶³ Jesus continued in desperate prayer as He wrestled with His will and felt alone in the midst of His disciples. Morris adds, “It must have added to his trial that at this critical moment his closest followers were so insensitive to his feelings and to what was happening about them that they slept instead of praying with and for him.”⁶⁴

The Approach

Recognizing that His situation was both testing and tempting, Jesus turned to the rightful “person,” His Father. Jesus approaches His Father, who is not just an ordinary authority. Edwards explains, “This prayer both models and testifies that Jesus does not face death alone, unknown, and unloved, but that he and his disciples may appeal to God as ‘Father’ in the hour of doubt, fear, sorrow, and need.”⁶⁵ This time of prayer was not a short prayer but an on-going wrestling dialogue (Matt 26:39-46; Mark 14:35-42). Jesus prayed, spoke to His disciples, then returned to prayer. Jesus does not just pray, He persists in a “cycle-like” season of prayer. The three times of prayer show battle with self-will is often an elongated process. Green writes, “God’s response to Jesus’ prayer is to provide strength for the ordeal, not to remove the cup.”⁶⁶ After the third interlude of prayer, Jesus’ response was firmly resolute, as He states to the disciples, “Rise, let us be going” (Matt 26:46).

⁶³ Bock, *Luke*, 1761.

⁶⁴ Morris, *Luke* (2008), 330.

⁶⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 645.

⁶⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 780.

As Jesus began His final steps as a human, it is obvious, as Constable states, that “Luke pictured Jesus as a real man, not a demigod.”⁶⁷ The divine will and human will collide in times of prayer. Green notes, “Jesus’ struggle on the Mount of Olives is presented by Luke as the watershed in the passion narrative, the critical point at which faithfulness to the divine will is embraced definitively in the strenuousness of prayer.”⁶⁸ Jesus’ persistent prayers and self-submission produced telling results.

The Results

The results in the life of Jesus, the disciples, and all of mankind are evident in this pivotal moment. Morris explains, “At Gethsemane [where] Jesus did not drink the cup; He consented to drink it. The real battle was fought here.”⁶⁹ In the near future Jesus would face the wrath of sin, “the cup,” in a battle at the cross. However, the battle with self-will and God’s will was won at Gethsemane. Edwards explains that the importance of Gethsemane is evident: “On the Mount of Olives, Jesus’ soul is crucified; on the Mount of Calvary, his body is surrendered.”⁷⁰ Jesus’ example of solitude, humbling prayer, persistent prayer, and surrendered prayer, through honest soul wrenching dialogue, was nothing less than the major battle being won over His own human will. The battle with sin and its impact was not just Jesus’ battle, but the on-going self-will versus God’s will tug of war of all of humanity. The battle of the wills lies at the center of successful Christ-centered soul care for Christian leaders.

The Teaching Example

The pending victory at Calvary, which Jesus was headed to, was the primary

⁶⁷ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Lk 22:41.

⁶⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 777.

⁶⁹ Morris, *Luke* (2008), 329.

⁷⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 647.

focus of Christ. Bock states, “Jesus’ agony as he goes to the cross is real, yet he is an example.”⁷¹ This scene at Gethsemane was exemplary for His disciples both then and now. Bock continues to explain that

the disciples fail to understand the gravity of the moment. In fact, they fail to understand Jesus’ warnings. They live from moment to moment without sensitivity to what is happening. Their insensitivity stands in contrast to Jesus’ dependence. By not looking to God, they are prone to faithlessness.⁷²

Ministry leaders today can learn from the example of the disciples, as the soon to be church leaders they were sleeping through times of prayer while knowing that Satan was prowling to sift them and test them in the future (Luke 22:31). Trites, Comfort, and Larkin describe,

Luke intended the reader to notice the pedagogic value of Jesus’ prayer for Christian leaders in their times of trial. This event served to “show that they should always pray and never give up” (18:1), however severe the trial might be. Prayer is the divinely appointed way of meeting and conquering temptation.⁷³

All Christian leaders need this attitude of expressing need and depending on the Father’s care as they center their soul care upon Christ’s real-life experiences.

Concluding Jesus’ Example

Jesus faced temptations and stress and set an example for Christian leaders through His preparatory and responsive methods. Jesus knew that disciples then, and now, would need His example. The shepherding ministry leaders would not only need to lead others, but be experiential examples. Jesus walked through, not around, intense stress, agony of soul, agony of body, agony of self-will, and betrayal by ministry friends (disciples). In addition, He carried the colossal weight of sin for humankind. Leaders today carry a similar, but not nearly as profound weight as they minister to hurting, sinful, distraught, and unfaithful people. Jesus was showing that ministry is possible.

⁷¹ Bock, *Luke*, 1755.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1753.

⁷³ Trites, Comfort, and Larkin, *The Gospel of Luke & Acts*, 294.

Ministers can move beyond just surviving and into succeeding. Success will mean the surrendering of the Christian leaders will, just as Christ did, and embracing his example of knee-bent, face-planted humility, with sweat-drop determination and agony. Authentic prayer before the never changing Father is critical. Leaders need to engage in Christ-like prayers that bend one's will into the will of the Father's so that they can stand and walk the path that points others to the Christ of the cross via Gethsemane. Jesus set the example for all Christian leaders through Gethsemane on His way to the cross. The example is accessible because of Jesus' practices and the future exemplary practices of His disciples.

Christ-Centered Soul Care for Leaders

Leaders need to be able to bring the history and experiences of Christ into their present reality. The bridge from the past to the present is built upon the union that Christ followers have both with Christ and as they live in Christ. What Jesus enacted through His life, death, and resurrection must be able to be engaged in the life of leaders. What Jesus accomplished for all, including Christian leaders, must now be fulfilled in every generation. Jesus set the example for how a leader can engage in His own personal soul care. Jesus was dependent upon the other two persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Holy Spirit, through prayer, solitude, submission and ministry. Jesus lived and ministered confidently due to the security of the Trinitarian relationship. Therefore, His disciples, as well as leaders today, can live and minister through the security and confidence provided through their union with Christ.

Being in Christ as the On-Going Example for the Soul Care of Christian Leaders

Since Jesus depended highly on the other persons of the Trinity, Christian leaders should seek to engage in understanding and experiencing the riches of the Trinitarian union that nourished the human soul of Christ and other New Testament Christian leaders. Being in Christ and accessing the security and power available through the love of Christ are paramount to the on-going soul care of any Christian leader. Two

passages from Paul to the Ephesian church and its leaders help us see how Christ-centered soul care continues from Jesus' life to the following generations.

Security in Christ

In Ephesians 1:3-14, the apostle Paul harkens back to this Trinitarian theme, as explained by Clinton Arnold:

This passage begins and ends with the Spirit of God (1:3, 13), as it likewise does with reference to the Father, yet Christ is at the center of the text. There is thus a strong Trinitarian character of this passage with the Father as the main planner and initiator of redemption, Christ as the central figure of the plan, who secures the redemption and becomes the nexus point for the relationship the redeemed have with God, and the Spirit now as the agent who bestows the blessings on the people God has redeemed.⁷⁴

A response is in order for those who grasp the depth of the spiritual blessings provided for leaders who are in Christ. According to Tony Merida, “This passage, then—all of it written from prison—is about praising the Trinitarian God.”⁷⁵ In writing to the Ephesians, Paul had experienced the need to engage with God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the person of the Holy Spirit. Paul, like Jesus, had his own wilderness experience that prepared him for his future ministry (Gal 1:21-2:1). Therefore, Paul understood the wilderness, stress, temptations, and even persecution.

This clear Trinitarian presence provides assurance and security for Christian leaders now and into eternity. However, the warning for leaders today is the same that was launched at the Ephesians later in Scripture. Merida reminds readers, “Even though it had an amazing history, the final mention in Revelation 2:1-7 about this great church [in Ephesus] is that they ‘abandoned the love [they] had at first.’”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 97.

⁷⁵ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 21.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

Ephesians 1:3-14 can be outlined and understood in the framework of the Trinity. The major themes, according to Merida are that “God the Father has chosen us, God the Son has redeemed us, and God the Spirit has assured us. Let us worship the triune God.”⁷⁷ The abundance of spiritual blessings that are intertwined in the Trinitarian statements impact Christian leaders on a daily basis. Constable explains, “The spiritual blessings that have come to us are the work of all three members of the Trinity. God Himself is the basis of these blessings.”⁷⁸ The spiritual blessings are too numerous to detail here as the focus is on the Trinitarian roles and specifically on Christ as central to understanding the depth of this treasured passage for leaders today. Not only was there a three-fold Trinitarian theme in the passages, there is also a deeply entrenched three-part theme of time that included the past, present, and future integration of the riches of being in Christ.

The blessings of God’s riches are found in Christ through God the Father.

Constable describes,

God, the Father was the basis of the spiritual blessings. The blessings were activated and applied through Christ. Therefore, the central thread of the Ephesians eulogy is the union in Christ. Without Christ as the conduit, the blessings would not be integrated to believer’s lives. The recurrence of the phrase “in Christ” and equivalent expressions emphasize that all these blessings come with our union with our Savior (vv. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13 [twice]).⁷⁹

The integral role of the “in Christ” truth is necessary for any Christ-centered soul care, as Merida explains,

Ephesians mentions union with Christ and being “in Christ” more than any other letter, about 36 times (Snodgrass, Ephesians, 39). This phrase occurs some 164 times in Paul’s 13 epistles. This is the heart of Christianity: to be united to Jesus Christ. Christians are people who are in Christ.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 31.

⁷⁸ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 1:3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Eph 1:14.

⁸⁰ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 13.

To engage with God, it is incumbent that leaders embrace their adoption by God through Christ. Arnold states, “Christ preexisted with the Father and has now been revealed as the means of redemption and the source of intimacy with God.”⁸¹ This inherent intimacy is experienced and exemplified as Paul illustrates the spiritual blessing of adoption and inheritance. This familial heritage of believers graphically shows the closeness and security of being in Christ. Just as tightly knit as God and Christ the Son are in relationship, Christian leaders can be assured that they are securely engrafted through adoption and spiritual inheritance into this relationship, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit enjoy Adoption to God occurs through Christ. Frank S. Thielman adds,

Adoption as God’s children is theirs “through Jesus Christ” because of their union with him, Jesus Christ shares his divine sonship with them. Believers call God, “Abba Father” because Jesus spoke this way of his relationship with God (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15; cf Mark 14:36 and Jeremias 1971: 61-68).⁸²

The blessings of the Sonship that Christian leaders now have with God through Christ are explained by Merida: “God has blessed us ‘in the Beloved’ (6b; cf. Col 1:13, Mark 1:11, 9:7). We have been caught up in the love the Father has for the Son.”⁸³ The depth of the relationship “in Christ” is explained in further detail by Arnold: “‘In Christ’ also refers to the present dynamic experience of closeness and unity with Christ, who cherishes them, nourishes them, provides for them, and gives them direction. A strong relational experience is suggested by this expression.”⁸⁴ This relationship is for the here and now and has dealt a complete blow to any past regrets to allow Christian leaders to lean forward in time. F. F. Bruce explains,

⁸¹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 96.

⁸² Frank S. Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 52.

⁸³ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 26

⁸⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 97.

In regard to time now and into eternity, the word “inheritance” is used in this chapter both of God’s portion in his people (vv 11, 18) and of the everlasting portion which he has reserved for them. They can enter into the enjoyment of this everlasting portion here and now by the ministry of the Spirit.⁸⁵

The Holy Spirit, as the third person in the Trinity, assures Christians of all that God has done in the past and into the present, and He seals this work now and into the future. Arnold expresses,

God imparts abundant blessings through the Spirit to all who are connected to Jesus Christ in a dynamic, personal relationship. Before he created the world, God lovingly chose a people for himself and devised a way of freeing them from their enslavement to sin.⁸⁶

Not only was the past enslavement destroyed in Christ through the Spirit, but the riches in Christ are sealed through the inheritance by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14). The security is not just declared but illustrated by Paul for leaders today through God’s sealing work by the actions of the Holy Spirit.

Arnold continues to explain that in the past, the physical seal was used so that “people declared themselves the possession of a deity by the imprint of a seal (Heodotus 2.113; Macc 2:29-30). . . . In the new covenant era, the one true God has marked all of his people as belonging to himself by means of a seal,”⁸⁷ the seal of the Holy Spirit.

Thielman expounds on the role of the Holy Spirit and Christian leaders:

The Holy Spirit seals the adoptive sonship in Christian leaders, that they were [are] now spiritually related to Jesus—God’s son par excellence—and that they were [are] heirs with him of a future glory when their bodily resurrection would make their “adoptive sonship” complete (Gal 4:1-7; Rom 8:14-17; cf. 2 Cor 6:18).⁸⁸

The secure sonship provided by Father God, brought by the Son, Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit, is the bedrock foundation for any Christian leader. Though theological and biblical in nature, the practical implications for Christian leaders is

⁸⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1984), 266.

⁸⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 73.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

⁸⁸ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 52.

mammoth. The past election, present reality, and future inheritance provide an anchored security for any Christian leader today. As Paul exemplified in Romans 8:38-39, there is real life security in Christ: “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Constable writes,

Our being in Christ means that the Lord Jesus surrounds and embraces the [Christian leader and] believer in His own life, and separates him at the same time from all outside and hostile influences. He protects the believer from all perils and foes, and supplies him with all that is necessary.⁸⁹

Leaders living in the protected armor of this real-life security in Christ will find an unshakeable foundation for their own Christ-centered soul care. The long-lasting external sources of hope, security, identity, and peace are found nowhere else but in Christ. These external sources are ready to be internalized. While many look for quick fixes and stepped methodologies, Scripture exudes the only true source of deep soul care in Christ the Son, from God the Father, and sealed through the Holy Spirit. This prospect for deep soul care is not a menial passive relationship of security, but a powerful engaging opportunity for those in Christ to access the power that is available now and throughout the ages.

Powerful Leaders for the Ages

Paul’s prayers in Ephesians (1:3-14; 3:14-21) are applicable for Christian leaders throughout the ages. Warren Wiersbe explains,

In the first prayer, the emphasis is on *enlightenment*; but in this prayer, the emphasis is on *enablement*. It is not so much a matter of *knowing* as *being*—laying our hands on what God has for us and by faith making it a vital part of our lives. Paul is saying, “I want you to get your hands on your wealth, realize how vast it is, and start to use it.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 1:1.

⁹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Ephesians-Revelation, The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 30-31.

Paul's emphasis is to bring the heavenly truths into the earthly practice of believers and Christian leaders. From the time of Paul's life and ministry, until today, and into the eternal ages, Christ-centered soul care is central. Jesus lived and ministered confidently due to the security of the Trinitarian relationship. This passage in Ephesians 3:14-21 shows that Paul, the leaders in Ephesus, and all Christian leaders through the ages can embrace the power of God. This power of God is experienced, as we will see in the paragraphs below, through kneeling, depending on the Trinity, receiving spiritual strength, leaning into the church, and trusting that this power will be for all the ages. Therefore, Jesus' disciples, as well as leaders today, can live and minister through the security and confidence provided through union with Christ. This power and strength for all leaders is abundantly evident in Paul's prayers for the Ephesians. Knowing the eternal riches and the personal security of adoption through Christ, Paul's desire is that Christian leaders be rooted and grounded in the truth of Christ and in the security of the outworking of the Trinity. Paul realized that this deep-rooted power begins in the soul, the inner being. He also clarifies that this soul care is not merely theological dogma, but truth to be experienced in the highest mountain tops and the lowest valleys of life and ministry. Merida writes, "God's salvation, God's power and love, are to be known and experienced."⁹¹ Ephesians is replete with acknowledgement that this truth is to be experienced in the inner man but also among the family of God, Christ's church. Merida in *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* helps guide Christ followers in the balancing of truth and experience that Paul explains in this prayer for the Ephesians and their leadership.⁹²

⁹¹ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 88.

⁹² Two contrasting warnings are articulated in regard to experiences and the spiritual life. Merida explains that Christians should first, watch out for *experiential abuse*. Some base too much on experience. They do not filter experience through God's Word. This can lead to mysticism. This is dangerous, as it can lead to heresy and all kinds of problems. God's revelation must be primary. We must understand our experience through the lens of Scripture, which alone is perfect. Second, watch out for *experiential*

As Paul writes from prison to the family of God in Ephesus, he acknowledges his needs and the needs of those in Ephesus by stating that because of the great and mighty truths he has explained in chapters 1, 2, and into 3, to this point, the only appropriate response is to kneel before this all powerful, but intimate God. Merida notes,

When we reflect on God's amazing grace, it should lead us to get on our faces before God, who called us, adopted us, and forgave us. Christ died on our behalf. The Spirit sealed us. God has brought us from death to life, has raised us with Christ, and has seated us with Christ. God has made us part of His church. In light of these realities, Paul says, "For this reason I kneel before the Father." And so should we.⁹³

Threaded into this prayerful dependency is the work of the Trinity that is the common cord throughout this passage in Ephesians 3:14-21. The Trinitarian bond is alluded to by Constable when he expresses that in "verses 14-17: Father (v. 14), Spirit (v. 16), and Son (v. 17; cf. 1:13-14, 17; 2:18, 22)."⁹⁴ Paul understands that the Trinity is not just theological, but a powerful working in the believer's life through prayer. Merida explains, "prayer is conversation with the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit (Eph 2:18)."⁹⁵ The prayer concludes as well with the Trinitarian dependency. Wiersbe notes, "Paul prays to God the Father, concerning the indwelling power of God the Spirit, made available through God the Son (Eph 3:20-21)."⁹⁶ The prayer was full of emotion as Paul communicates the need not just in word but in kneeling prayer. Merida proclaims, "Paul is so passionate and

avoidance. Some are afraid of the abuses of experience and the works of the Spirit that they have their own problem, that is, an avoidance of the Spirit and experience. They have a cold, dead orthodoxy as a result. (Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 88)

⁹³ Ibid., 83.

⁹⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 3:17.

⁹⁵ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 82.

⁹⁶ Wiersbe, *Ephesians-Revelation*, 33.

desperate in Ephesians 3:14 because he knows what the Ephesians need is something that can only come from God: power.”⁹⁷

A kneeling person not only knows their deep need for God, but is experientially expressing their heart-felt dependency. Klein articulates,

The posture was not as important as the inward attitude of the one who prayed, though kneeling may express an attitude of humility that recognizes God’s sovereignty and may also serve to intensify the urgency of a request (e.g., Mt 17:14). The posture of kneeling expresses worship and homage.⁹⁸

Jesus humbled Himself in posture by both kneeling and lying face down in Gethsemane as He gave over His will in order to follow His Father’s will. Wiersbe states the connection of the will to the heart: “Whether we actually bow our knees is not the important thing; that we bow our hearts and wills to the Lord and ask Him for what we need is the vital matter.”⁹⁹

Paul deeply desired that the believers in Ephesus have inner strength that would overflow into outward expression (Eph 3-6). Wiersbe expounds,

He prays that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will, in turn, lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience will enable them to “apprehend” (get hold of) God’s great love, which will result in their being “filled unto all the fullness of God.” So, then, Paul is praying for strength, depth, apprehension, and fullness. . . . Paul uses three pictures here to convey this idea of spiritual depth, and the three pictures are hidden in the three verbs: “dwell,” “rooted,” and “grounded.”¹⁰⁰

Osbourne adds that “the Triune Godhead is likely in Paul’s mind; all three members of the Trinity are performing the action here. The perfect tense of the verbs emphasizes that our rooting and grounding are the result of our being established in the Godhead (Eph

⁹⁷ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 84.

⁹⁸ William W. Klein, *Ephesians*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 97.

⁹⁹ Wiersbe, *Ephesians-Revelation*, 31.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

3:16-17).”¹⁰¹ The rich fullness of God, and the strengthening, power, indwelling, rooting, grounding, and experiential knowledge of the love of Christ is accentuated by the personal roles of the Trinity. Osbourne reflects,

In a very real sense being filled with God’s fullness is a reference to our being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is the presence of God living with us and within us (John 14:17). Moreover, since we experience this fullness “in Christ” (Col 2:10), this prayer-wish is mediated to us by the Triune Godhead.¹⁰²

Paul desired that those who read his written prayer would be immovable in their knowledge and experience of Christ, through God, as the Holy Spirit indwelt them. This unshakability is evident in the rooting and grounding word usage by Paul. Thielman explains, “Paul prays that God would give his readers fortitude, and do this out of the vast resources of his own majestic might.”¹⁰³ As seen in the life of Jesus, and as evident in the New Testament life of Paul, testing, trials, stress, and the storms of life and ministry are imminent. The need for a deep experience is explained by Wiersbe, who states, “Paul prayed that the [Christian leaders and] believers might have a deeper experience with Christ, because only a deep experience could sustain them during the severe trials of life.”¹⁰⁴ Klein notes, “The point is clear: he desires that their roots go deeply into God’s love, that their lives become built on the foundation of God’s love (Eph 3:17).”¹⁰⁵

Desire and reality are often only separated by ability. Who would not desire the richness of God’s blessings that Paul has articulated? Paul has clearly communicated through word and posture that neither he nor the Ephesians have the necessary power or

¹⁰¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse, Osborne New Testament Commentaries* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 101.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁰³ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 230

¹⁰⁴ Wiersbe, *Ephesians-Revelation*, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Klein, *Ephesians*, 98.

ability within themselves. Paul is unearthing the riches of God's power and work through Christ in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Paul passionately prayed for these heavenly truths to become the rock-solid foundational blocks in the believer's life.

The unspoken question that Paul answers is, "where will this ability come from?" "Are the sinners turned saints able to securely possess this power that Paul speaks of?" Knowing humanity well, Paul concludes that the prayer for Christ-centered soul care can only be obtained from the external sources of God's power and displayed through God's people, His church. Thielman expresses,

God's power is immense, and he has made that power available to the church [Christian leaders]. . . . God's power also works within the church by means of God's Spirit and the indwelling Christ, who encourages the church through helping it to understand the immensity of his grace.¹⁰⁶

Klein explains the impact of God's power:

The implication for the readers, then, is that they are to grow in and build on Christ's love in their relationships with one another. In this practical and tangible way, Christians come to know experientially more and more what Christ's love for them really means and entails.¹⁰⁷

Paul knows that the best point of access for leaders and all Christian believers is in the church. Osborne proclaims,

These believers should explore the recesses of that boundless love "together with all the saints." [Eph. 3: 18] Paul wants us to realize the communal nature of all of this—our need to discuss with each other the meaning of these profound truths and to remind one another of their importance.¹⁰⁸

The outward church and the inner soul care of leaders work together. God brings the eternal truth of His abundant rich-filled grace into the lives of individual believers through the Trinitarian partnership as the believer is called, forgiven, empowered, and secured. This inward reality occurs by God through His people. Paul is emphasizing the need of

¹⁰⁶ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 245.

¹⁰⁷ Klein, *Ephesians*, 100.

¹⁰⁸ Osborne, *Ephesians*, 103.

the people of Christ to be the body of Christ. The glory must be to God, but at the same time in the church “according to the power at work within us” (Eph 3:20-21).

The constant challenge of serving the church as well as being the church to one another is difficult for leaders. Allowing others to be the church to them is necessary for leaders to have the needed power for their own soul care. Christ works in partnership with His church—the two are inseparable. For Christian leaders to experience personal soul care it is often necessary for them to seek deep relationships with other Christians outside their local congregation. This type of relationship often provides the necessary freedom for the Christian leader to share in a non-dualistic relationship and therefore find Christ-centered soul care from someone outside of their local congregation but in the global church community.

Knowing humans both inside and outside of the church and his own depravity, Paul concludes with assurance that all that he said is possible through the power of God (Eph 3:16, 20). Thielman expresses, “When Paul addresses God as (*hō dynamenos*, the one who is able) [(Eph 3:29)], then, he draws these threads together: God is the one who is powerful, and he has placed his power at the disposal of Paul’s readers.”¹⁰⁹ Not only are all Christian leaders limited in their own power, but God’s power far exceeds even their ability to ask for all of it. Thielman continues to explain, “God is able ‘to do’ (*poiesai*) . . . infinitely more than what they can ‘ask or imagine’ (Eph 3:20).”¹¹⁰ This verse is so magnanimous that it is hard for Paul to explain in words alone. Osborne adds,

This force gives this word the sense of “exceedingly beyond the greatest abundance,” or, as several have translated, “infinitely more than, beyond all measure.” There is no task too great for God, yet we regularly underestimate what he can accomplish in our lives.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 242.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Osborne, *Ephesians*, 105.

Osborne explains that “there are two terms for God’s strength here, and together they could be translated “his power that works powerfully.” The verb is *energeō*, and the English equivalent is apt: “the God who is the true ‘energizer.’”¹¹² In regard to the power being discussed, Klein adds,

Wondering whether Paul’s request has been too expansive, we should ask whether God can really grant to his people this “fullness,” Paul answers in no uncertain terms: “Yes, he can! Nothing limits God’s ability.” . . . In other words, it is well within God’s ability to accomplish far beyond what his people can ask for, or even imagine as possible, because God keeps working in ways that are in keeping with his mighty power.¹¹³

Theilman writes, “The availability of God’s power to believers has been a prominent theme in the letter so far.”¹¹⁴ This power provided by God, according to Bruce, explains, “His capacity for giving far exceeds his people’s capacity for asking—or even imagining.”¹¹⁵

Bringing the heavenly resources into earthly reality depends upon the power of God, not on the power of any Christian leader, yet Paul pleads in prayer with God that these truths become a reality in the people of Ephesus, as well as its leadership. Paul understands that “apart from Him we can do nothing” (John 15:5), but, as Merida proclaims, “God can do more in response to one prayer than we can do in one hundred years of planning and plodding.”¹¹⁶

If any Christian leaders think that they have arrived at understanding Christ’s love, let them be reminded of Paul’s prayer for Christians that they continue “to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:19). God wants His leaders to be rooted and grounded in His love, His power, His indwelling, His security, His strength through

¹¹² Osborne, *Ephesians*, 105.

¹¹³ Klein, *Ephesians*, 101.

¹¹⁴ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 241.

¹¹⁵ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 330.

¹¹⁶ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 91.

the knowledge, and His life-giving experience of the unsurpassed love of Christ. God desires to ground leaders through this foundation. As Wiersbe quoted a friend of his, that said, “Pastor, the most important part of this building is the foundation. If you don’t go deep, you can’t go high.”¹¹⁷ God wants to bring the high and unmeasurable riches of Himself downward in order to build the foundation stone, Christ, more deeply into each Christian leader.

Kneeling as desperate souls before Christ for their soul care is essential for every Christian leader. Jesus’ words in John 15:5 ring true today, as Merida explains: “Apart from [Me] Christ we can do nothing” (John 15:5). This should humble us and make us desperate, but it should also encourage us.”¹¹⁸ Christian leaders can do ministry with His help. Merida continues,

Forever, God will be glorified in the Christ, who fell to His knees before the Father in the garden of Gethsemane, who took the cup of wrath that we could receive the cup of grace, who has reconciled us to the Father and one another, and who now dwells in our hearts, through faith by the Spirit. To God be the glory forever!¹¹⁹

Conclusion

Christian leaders need a leader. The leader for any Christian leader is the ultimate example, Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus not only brought His power and riches of salvation to Christian leaders, but He brought His humble example in order that they could follow His personal commitment to be in intimate relationship with His Father and could join in the Trinitarian security and provision that they so desperately need. As seen, Scripture clearly speaks of the stresses and temptations experienced by Jesus and how He responded to them through His Trinitarian union, which is exemplary for the soul care of Christian leaders today. Jesus faced temptations and stress and set an example for

¹¹⁷ Wiersbe, *Ephesians-Revelation*, 32.

¹¹⁸ Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 84.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

Christian leaders through His preparatory and responsive methods. He knew the Father's Word, He fasted, prayed, sought solitude and silence, was willing to humbly kneel face down, and He laid down His own will, in order for His Father God to receive glory. The Trinitarian grace brings salvation, identity, power, security, spiritual blessings, adoption, and intimacy, all of which are found in the example of Jesus Christ Himself.

Where can any Christian leader go today to handle the stress and temptations that came to Christ and His leaders? Only to Christ, the ultimate answer for every Christian leader's soul care.

CHAPTER 3

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES TO CHRIST-CENTERED SOUL CARE FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

Throughout history, there has been the need for those in Christian ministry leadership to consider their own soul care, but they often put others first to the detriment of their own well-being. From biblical times until today, leaders have grappled with keeping stability in their own soul care so they could be strong enough to lead others forward. Recent negative trends in ministry leadership show the incredible need to closely examine how leaders in ministry can be sustained. Focus on the Family states, “According to the Barna group, the average pastoral career lasts only 14 years, and 1500 pastors leave their assignments every month in the United States because of conflict, burnout, or moral failure.”¹ The adage is true that “everything rises and falls on leadership.” Whether in a business, home, or Christian ministry setting, leadership is the key to any movement’s sustainability and long-term impact. The negative consequences of not sustaining the soul care of leaders is devastating to businesses, homes, and churches.

This chapter will provide insight into the soul care challenges of Christian leaders as seen in some of the current ministry systems and from within the ministry leaders themselves. Beyond these challenges, the symptoms of ministry leadership will be reviewed. A deeper look at what surface level responses are being currently provided will be examined and then compared to an in-depth study of what Jesus provides Christian leaders in regard to their own soul care.

¹ Focus on the Family, “Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey,” 3, accessed January 18, 2018, <http://www.parsonage.org/images/pdf/2009PMSurvey.pdf>.

Soul Care Challenges for Ministry Leaders

The challenges of today's Christian leaders are mammoth, but not insurmountable. Christian ministry leaders face daunting challenges in their life balance and soul care needs that put them at high risk for breakdown. At first glance, the trials may seem far different than millennia's past struggles because a plethora of resources today discuss the needs of care giving for ministry leaders. However, most of the prescribed Christian approaches are centered upon managing symptoms versus digging deep into the causes of the needs at hand. These resources discuss the stresses and needs of Christian leaders, but primarily search for ways to manage the needs through focusing on skill-based trainings or surface-level counseling and sociological management approaches. Many of the available resources treat the symptoms of stress, burnout, temptations, loneliness, and a myriad of other symptoms. Soul care for Christian leaders must begin with the source of the issue and biblical Christ-centered responses prior to engaging any symptom-based solutions.

Challenges from Ministry Systems

The systems that ministry leaders relate to have a high impact on their success or failure. The training institutions, written resources, churches, and lack of accountability structures all provide challenges to today's ministry leaders. Reviewing the roles and impacts of these systems are essential. In the 2016-2017 academic year, the Association of Theological Schools noted that their member schools spent over 1.9 billion dollars preparing students for ministry.² The average annual expenditure per student is \$54,031 dollars.³ It is expected that the investment on the front end for ministers in training would be high. However, the amount of funds spent by congregations and ministers themselves

² The Association of Theological Schools, "2016-2017 Annual Data Tables," accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tables/2016-2017-annual-data-tables.pdf>, table 4.10A.

³ Ibid., table 4.3A.

annually on sustaining themselves in ministry through books, seminars, and mentoring is usually miniscule in comparison. If \$2,000 per minister is invested annually in training and soul care, when comparing this to the initial investment in a three-3 year seminary program investment over \$160,000 (per the ATS statistics previously mentioned), it would take over eighty years for this annual soul care amount to equal the amount of investment of the three seminary years. There is a clear discrepancy in financial investment in seminary preparation for ministry for sustainability investment while in ministry. Investment in retention of experienced leadership is wise, and the statistics show that sustainability levels for Christian ministry leaders are horrendous. A redistribution of “formal training” and “enduring care” needs better development. It is essential to consider how additional soul care opportunities can be added to the positive impact of existing formal trainings in order to further equalize the investment in both formal and informal long-term care for ministry leaders.

The problem of Christian leaders staying in ministry is not just seen in the leaders themselves, but it is systemic. While many churches and ministries constantly complain that they need more leaders, the answer is likely right under their nose. Is it possible that God has provided enough ministry leaders, but many do not finish well because there is little on-going maintenance planning in place at a church and personal level? When large numbers of experienced leaders leave the ministry, they take with them the God-given wisdom of decades of service and are replaced often times with younger energetic leaders who lack the life-long experience. Resources are spent at an ever-increasing rate to train up new leaders, but at the expense of a lack of investment in retaining seasoned veterans. Ideally there would be investment in both older and younger leaders so that the quantity and quality of ministry leaders would continue to grow. However, current trends in leadership systems are in a state of adding then subtracting at the same time. The actual number of students entering seminaries for ministry are decreasing, not increasing. ATS reports that full-time student enrollment dropped by 1.5

percent.⁴ The need to rethink the focus and methodology of Christian leadership development and long-term encouragement is clear and requires a look into current methods to alleviate the plague of Christian leaders leaving the ministry.

The current needs of Christian ministry leaders are broad and deep. Steve Johnson describes ministry leadership: “There are very real risks that come with the rigors of pastoral ministry, and unless specific disciplines are practiced, and preventative safeguards are in place there can be serious consequences for the pastor’s health, his family, and his ministry.”⁵ These risks tend to metastasize into a real life cancerous impact on the life of not just the pastor, but their family, communities, and the larger global Christian work. H. B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman explain that “40 percent of pastors say they have considered leaving their pastorates in the last three months.”⁶ They also write that “the typical pastor has his greatest ministry impact at a church in years 5 through 14 of his pastorate; unfortunately, the average pastor lasts only five years at a church.”⁷ This short-circuiting of the longevity of pastors is severely truncating fruitfulness over the long haul.

London and Wiseman have their hand on the pulse of ministry leadership and explain, “Ministry hazards are choking the hope out of pastors’ souls. They feel disenchanting, discouraged, and often even outraged.”⁸ These stress points to perform and to be constantly available are openings for leaders to crumble under the strains of ministry.

⁴ The Association of Theological Schools, “2016-2017 Annual Data Tables,” table 2.3A.

⁵ Steve Johnson, “Pastoral Care for the Pastor,” accessed January 17, 2018, <http://www.my-pastor.com/pastoral-care.html>.

⁶ H. B. London, Jr., Neil B. Wiseman, and James Dobson, *Pastors at Risk* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 11.

In *Leading from the Inside Out*, Samuel D. Rima states,

Never before have there been more demands and pressures for those in positions of spiritual leadership. As a result of these increased demands and expectations, a higher percentage of pastors than ever before are leaving the ministry as a result of burnout and depression.⁹

London and Wiseman discuss church impact: “The church faces a perilous future when pastors find it so tough to survive emotionally and economically.”¹⁰ The church is not innocent in this demise of church leadership. London and Wiseman plead, “Pastors are at risk. The risks they face demand an all-out corrective action by the church.”¹¹ A Focus on the Family survey noted that “41.6% of pastors describe their emotions regarding pastoral ministry are either: apathetic, lonely, discouraged, exhausted, or overwhelmed.”¹² London and Wiseman declare, “Without steadfast pastors there can be no vital churches.”¹³ The very nature of many church and ministry organizations can also lead to loneliness and isolation. Gary Kinnaman and Alfred Ells state,, “The new century will be characterized by a move away from denominational and institutional traditions to a shared kingdom vision and mission.”¹⁴ Although there is freedom in these new “structures” the lack of accountability and structure is alarming for both theological reasons and for the much-needed accountable relationships of authority for pastors and leaders.

⁹ Samuel D. Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out: The Art of Self-Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 190.

¹⁰ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹² Focus on the Family, “Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey,” 10.

¹³ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 12.

¹⁴ Gary D. Kinnaman and Alfred H. Ells, *Leaders That Last: How Covenant Friendships Can Help Pastors Thrive* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 24.

Challenges from within the Ministry Leader

Beyond the structures of authority and authenticity, the pull for leaders to perform looms large, Eswine reminds, “We lose rest of soul when we believe that bigger is better. The Serpent tempts all of us to believe that some places matter more than others, that some people matter more than others, and that our strategies and gifts rather than God’s wise calling are our answer.”¹⁵ The temptation for leaders to perform works hand in hand with many unhealthy escapes that pastors may seek. Though church structure and demands of the church are ingredients for stress, each ministry leader needs to face their own realities and take action. A look at both the leaders and the structures are in need of evaluation. Kinnaman and Ells have a series of reflections and summarize, “The culture of the church is often superficial and artificial, even dysfunctional, because we pastors are all of those things, and the Christian community can never be anything more or less than what we model.”¹⁶ They continue,

The Christian community will never ‘become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13) unless leaders in the church model community themselves. . . . Something has to change radically in the Christian leadership community before significant change can happen in the Christian community at large.¹⁷

Johnson hones in on the Christian leader:

What if the shepherd needs shepherding or the counselor needs counsel? Are we pastors so infallible that we never experience distress, disillusionment, dejection, or depression? Do we exist on a level above the human condition so that we never struggle with loneliness, stress, conflict, anger, or temptation?¹⁸

With the dissolve of accountable church structures outside of local congregations, Christian leaders can feel like they are on an island carrying all of the heaviness of ministry. This

¹⁵ Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 146.

¹⁶ Kinnaman and Ells, *Leaders That Last*, 17-18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ Johnson, “Pastoral Care for the Pastor.”

statement by Kinnaman and Ells rings true: “Leaders need leaders, pastors need pastors, not only for professional guidance and support, but for life.”¹⁹ Similar needs are expressed by Kinnaman and Ells: “The challenges of Christian ministry are, humanly speaking, impossible to overcome. We surely need the love and strength of God to sustain us in the battle, but we also need one another.”²⁰ Individuals and institutions are not the real issues, they are simply the containers that hold and display the symptoms of the potential life-threatening spiritual diseases.

Symptoms of Ministry Leadership Challenges

The overview and context of ministry challenges are helpful starting places, but in the milieu, one sees the resulting symptoms birthed out of the context. Statistics show the symptoms and even end results of the situation of Christian leadership’s potential demise, as shown in statistics from both Jared C. Wilson and Mike Ayers, based on Barna research:

- 80 percent believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families.
- 90 percent believe they are inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands.
- 70 percent of pastors constantly face depression.
- 70 percent do not have someone they consider a close friend.
- 50 percent of pastors feel so discouraged that they would leave their ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living.
- 50 percent of the pastors starting out will not last 5 years.²¹

Some of the surface level reasons for the gloom is noted by many leadership authors. In “7 Reasons Pastors Burnout,” Thom Rainer states, “The 24/7 mentality. Conflict. Expectations. Unwillingness to let go. No friends. Not suited for some tasks. No

¹⁹ Kinnaman and Ells, *Leaders That Last*, 85.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹ Jared C. Wilson and Mike Ayers, *The Pastor’s Justification: Applying the Work of Christ in Your Life and Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 18-19.

life outside the church.”²² Many of these lists are symptoms that should be evaluated deeper by delving into the actual causes.

Henry Cloud addresses the issues in the context of needed bonding. Writing about all individuals, his list of potential symptoms from a lack of bonding could easily be overlaid to any pastor. If one thinks of the hurts that pastors attempt to manage or deny based on church-related battles and stresses and the “failure to bond” to those they lead in the church, one can see how the list by Cloud applies:

Symptoms of failure to bond: depression, feelings of meaninglessness, feelings of badness and guilt, addiction, distorted thinking, emptiness, feelings of unreality, panic, rage, excessive caretaking, and fantasy. In addition, he adds barriers to bonding: past injury, distorted thinking (our view of ourselves, our view of others, our view of God), defense mechanisms, denial, devaluation, projection, reaction formation, mania, idealization, and substitution.²³

The unique setting of a pastor or Christian leader adds to a real concern of potential loneliness that could arise from a lack of bonding. Henri Nouwen rightly reminds that “loneliness is the minister’s wound not only because he shares in the human condition, but also because of the unique predicament of his profession.”²⁴ Working alongside the lonely realities of Christian leaders is what Nouwen calls the trap of self-rejection:

Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity and power, can indeed, present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions.²⁵

²² Thom S. Rainer, “7 Reasons Pastors Burn Out,” September 28, 2013, accessed January 17, 2018, <http://thomrainer.com/2013/09/seven-reasons-pastors-burn-out/>.

²³ Henry Cloud, *Changes That Heal* (repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 62-78.

²⁴ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Image, 2013), 87.

²⁵ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992), 27.

When a leader rejects himself, he is hardly in a healthy position to help others. Often the performance and drive of some Christian leaders is not one of clamming up in retreat but fighting the battle for personal acceptance in performance. Zack Eswine explains, “Some of us are ministering the gospel right now because we want to have the esteem that someone else currently has (envy) and because we competitively desire to receive more praise or credit than someone else does (rivalry).”²⁶ Eswine continues to articulate what this clamoring often looks like and the treadmill effect that it produces:

Gradually the programs and the hype become what has to be maintained. If a lull begins to creep in, we create a new hype with a new initiative to rally everyone again. It is like we are parents scared our teen should ever be bored. We confuse activity with achievement.²⁷

It is not hard to see the circular vortex created when more hype and programs are needed to feed the success void in the soul of a leader. This approach only ends in a lack of focus on the major need of soul care for self. Even the symptoms of anxiety come rushing in when, as Eswine notes, the pastor “does not yet know how to do a day as a minister if speed, hurry, quantity, pressure, immediate results, and money-based evaluations are removed from him. The absence of these things harasses him into anxiety.”²⁸ Three additional rules described by Eswine show how ministry activity can become the opposite of the ministry of Jesus:

The three rival rules—celebrity, consuming, and immediate gratification—teach us to use our days in order to make a name for ourselves by using people and things to make something bigger happen as fast as we can. . . . This way of ordering a pastoral ministry will slowly ruin us and those we try to serve. We and they may be and feel “successful,” but we will little resemble the way of Jesus.²⁹

²⁶ Zack Eswine, *Sensing Jesus: Life and Ministry as a Human Being* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 242.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 269.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 288.

²⁹ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 298.

These circumstances can easily distract the well-meaning Christian leader from the key focus of their personal soul care, growth, and maturity into Christlikeness. Ultimately, as Wilson and Ayers clarify, “the pastor who neglects personal holiness has forgotten who’s in charge. He believes he is an employee of his flock, so it is not holiness he is chiefly after but the appearance of success.”³⁰ This disorientation requires a reorientation on the part of the Christian leader. Understanding what a biblical reorientation looks like is the key to all the challenges discussed for ministry leaders. Eswine speaks to pastors and Christian leaders about the real need: “Beneath your vocation as a pastor [Christian leader] aren’t you forgetting, Zack, that beneath your vocation as a pastor you are an ordinary Christian who needs your heart at rest with God—not for the sake of your ministry, but for the sake of your own life?”³¹

Unfortunately, many of these well-meaning experts—Cloud, Eswine, Kinnaman, Ells, Wilson, Ayers, and Johnson—are great at stating the current challenges of Christian leaders from both external and internal sources; however, they tend to only provide surface level responses to fix much deeper issues.

Surface Level Responses to the Needs of Christian Ministry Leaders

Any valid endeavor of caring for people, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually, requires an analysis below the symptomatic surface level. The example from the medical community will assist in understanding the symptom versus causes view of soul care. If a doctor treated ongoing, disorienting headaches with aspirins only, remedying only the pain, and did not ask deeper questions and do below skin level scans, then it is possible the patient could have a brain tumor or some other ailment. Asking questions of cause versus effect are critical, not just in the medical community, but in the soul care of

³⁰ Wilson and Ayers, *The Pastor’s Justification*, 42.

³¹ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 142.

the Christian leaders' inner and outer life. Well-meaning authorities on the soul care of Christian ministry leaders either look at practical next steps of lifestyle changes or look at psychological needs, but rarely dive into the soul-level core of the leader. Often the approaches offered are a quick fix jump from one hill to the next without a look into valley-level needs of the source causes.

Cloud notes the need to look beyond some current “church” answers, “Looking for answers that work, and not finding them in the church, they [people] turn to psychology. Often psychological methods succeed, and hurting people find relief.”³² However, these psychological methods often only provide relief, not root cause answers and changes. To be fair Cloud does engage Scripture, as he states as his purpose of the book *Changes that Heal*:

I want to show you that there are biblical solutions for your struggles with depression, anxiety, panic, addictions, and guilt, and that these solutions lie in your understanding certain basic developmental tasks—tasks that you may have failed to complete when you were growing up and tasks that bring changes that heal.³³

However, Cloud simply supplies surface-level proof texting attached to psychological methods or tasks. His solutions are merely texts that attempt to back up psychological systems versus beginning with an exegetical study of Scripture and then moving to action-like task items to meet psychological needs. To illustrate Cloud's recommended actions, he states that people need to “bond with others, separate from others, sort out issues of good and bad, and take charge as an adult. Without the ability to perform these basic God-like functions, we can literally remain stuck for years, and growth and change can elude our grasp.”³⁴ These “God-like” functions of simply engaging actions are only bandages on a disease often not leading to real cures. Likewise, London and Wiseman state the main surface level problems of pastors and Christian leaders but fail to address

³² Cloud, *Changes That Heal*, 11.

³³ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

the deep biblical issues. Example responses that London and Wiseman list in order for a ministry leader to avoid being at risk include, the following comment from Archibald Hart through their interview in their book:

Rethink your day off, understand your personality type, welcome spouse into prevention, reach across isolation, take charge of your prevention or recovery, confront your addictions, limit your clinging vines [alluding to those who in our ministry who sap life from us as co-dependent people], and get back to doing what you want to do.³⁵

Are these recommendations bad or even anti-biblical? By no means. However, they fail to engage root causes for pastors and Christian leaders from Scripture. While interviewing Archibald Hart, London and Wiseman look at the typical Monday blues of pastors and Christian leaders and term it as *adrenalin depression*. Although adrenalin depression is a serious concern, no view is taken from a biblical perspective of a rhythm of Christ the Great Shepherd and His approach to ministry and renewal. Nor is any biblical example given, only a response that the need to heal by rest is God given. Archibald notes the need for adrenalin management:

I really think this system is designed as part of God’s intelligent creation to facilitate the healing process within our bodies. And if we scorn that process, we do so to our own peril because the consequences of ignoring those calls by the body for rejuvenation will invariably be an increased proneness to burnout and stress.³⁶

Other examples of “wisdom” not emerging directly from Scripture include Rima’s lists to help with emotions: “Physical activity, serving others, and learning to think and act rightly.”³⁷ Even those who not only write on the subject but who are tasked to care for pastors espouse only practical actions versus a biblically-grounded swell of life giving water from the Word. Pastoral Care Inc. published an article titled “Stress & Burnout” with the following headings discussed: stress, reasons for stress, burnout,

³⁵ London, Wiseman, and Dobson, *Pastors at Risk*, 168-71. The pages in the book are notes from an interview with Dr. Archibald Hart, by the authors.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁷ Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out*, 197-99.

symptoms of burnout, causes of burnout, and prevention. In the area of prevention, the author only uses ideas such as be aware, accept limitations, use common sense, balance, Sabbath (only approached in relationship to delegation, not spiritual biblically-grounded focus and examples), deal with disappointments, and serve in called and gifted areas.³⁸ None of the input is destructive, but it is deeply concerning that the majority of “Christian” soul care for leaders is not deeply engaging the biblical wisdom as the source before moving toward the practical steps.

To be fair, some writers do advocate that the needs are deep rooted in areas of personal soul care and personal holiness. London and Wiseman state, “It was a life-changing day in pastoral ministry when we realized that personal holiness was the most important thing we could bring to the congregation and to our families.”³⁹ They continue to explain that “though details differ in every ministry, the pressures to bypass daily renewal are real for every pastor regardless of the size of his church.”⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the answers for how to attain the goal of renewal or attempts at personal soul care are only scratching the surface. A list of helps for pursuing personal holiness is given: “Recognize your need for power to control, use devotion as a catalyst for discipline, resist the “too busy” syndrome, refurbish your original vision, drop all pretense, seek clarifying schedule, review patterns of ministry, and take God into your realities.”⁴¹ No biblical building blocks, let alone Christ-centered starting points, are offered. Most, if not all, of those struggling know those prescribed actions, but the disconnect is often the power of the Holy Spirit working through meditation on Scripture, as seen in Christ’s example as the starting point.

³⁸ Pastoral Care Inc., “Stress & Burnout,” accessed January 17, 2018, <http://www.pastoralcareinc.com/articles/stress-burnout/>.

³⁹ London, Wiseman, and Dobson, *Pastors at Risk*, 175.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 190-95.

London and Wiseman even dig below the surface to discuss love for God and Christ: “To put our love in anyone less than God can only result in its eventual crumbling like a house built on sand. . . . We have been given things to use and people to love. Both will disappoint us if they are not seen in the context of our love for Jesus.”⁴² Love of Jesus is a necessary truth, but what does this love look like from a biblical life perspective? What examples of Scripture does one draw upon from another pastor or leader? The authors are on the right track in at least moving from the surface needs to God and Christ as the answer, but fall short. London and Wiseman add that it is important to recall that “many expressions of pastoral ministry started with Jesus.”⁴³ William Meninger states, “What is worth having more than Jesus’ companionship? What is more regrettably lost? When we have Jesus we have everything, without him we have nothing.”⁴⁴ However, what does this “having Jesus” look like? Eswine remarks, “You and I have learned many ways of being in leadership and not all of them from Jesus.”⁴⁵ London and Wiseman suggest it is often tempting for Christian leaders to “respond with a high sounding excuse, ‘Though I am no better than my Lord, I do not have the resources for ministry He had.’ But we can have them.”⁴⁶ The issue at hand is not contriving a huge list of external new resources, but to begin with fully engaging with the best resources available: God’s Words and the example of Jesus Christ in His own life and ministry. In Matthew 7:24, Jesus declared, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man

⁴² William. Meninger, *Bringing the Imitation of Christ into the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 27.

⁴³ H. B. London and Neil B. Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006), 14.

⁴⁴ Meninger, *Bringing the Imitation of Christ*, 28.

⁴⁵ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 229.

⁴⁶ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 174.

who built his house on the rock.” Proper soul care for leaders begins on the “the Rock” not on man’s attempt to manage surface-level symptoms.

Christ as the Example of Christian Soul Care for Leaders

Based on the external and internal challenges and dangers for Christian ministry leaders, the words of London and Wiseman support the situation at hand: “Ministry can be among the most dangerous of all occupations spiritually.”⁴⁷ Although good practical advice is often given, they frequently fail to look at the core of the soul that is best dealt with in spiritual ways, from the ultimate spiritual book, the Bible. As seen in chapter 2, many practical advices can be found in the Bible, but the optimal starting point in soul care for any Christian leader begins with the example of Jesus Christ. As London and Wiseman explain, He was the first pastor: “Jesus, the Pastor . . . it seems clear that many expressions of pastoral ministry started with Jesus—something He said, something He did, or something He challenged His disciples to do or be.”⁴⁸ When leaders look to His ways, from His book, it will produce His results. Kinnaman and Ells state that people in churches “need someone who cares, “a high priest who is [able] to sympathize with our weaknesses . . . so that they may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:15-16).”⁴⁹

If a Christian leader states, “I have tried the basics and they are not working,” then the issue is not the Bible, or the example of Christ, but likely in the methods of applying the basic biblical principles into the life of a leader. Is it possible that leaders have given up in deeply searching the Word? Is it possible they have not learned to apply the methods Jesus used in his own soul care to their own soul care? Is it possible they

⁴⁷ London and Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor*, 207.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁹ Kinnaman and Ells, *Leaders That Last*, 82.

have too quickly looked for answers in treating symptoms versus searching the depth of the causes? Maybe the busyness of Christian ministry helps leaders cover over an honest view of self. Leaders are often too busy to be quiet enough to evaluate the current condition of their soul. Those in spiritual inner poverty tend to run from time of solitude. Spurgeon once said that in “quietude, some men cannot abide, because it reveals their inner poverty.”⁵⁰ The Psalmist said it best as he requested a heart-level, surgical exploration done by God, not man, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Ps 139:23-24). The scalpel for searching and salve for healing are the Word of God in combination with the Spirit of God. Paul illustrates the audacious power of the Word in combination with the Spirit:

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. (Eph 6:16-18)

These methods were not only Paul’s rallying cry, but they were the very methods seen in the life of Jesus. The biblical foundations for the exemplary life of Jesus Christ in respect to His own soul care have been laid out in the previous chapter. The next section will lay out the impact of this example in His life and in the Pauline expression of the “in Christ” power for all believers and ministry leaders to follow.

A study of Jesus as the valid example for Christian ministry leaders must begin with an understanding of who Jesus was in regard to His own humanity and His divinity. At times, Jesus voluntarily concealed His divinity. Issler explains, “Although Jesus was God, he veiled his deity, permitting himself to experience a normal human life with its attendant weaknesses.”⁵¹ Since Jesus experienced a normal human life, Christian ministry leaders can trust his example.

⁵⁰ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 143.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

Identity as the Well-Pleasing Son

One sees glimpses of Jesus' ministry preparation in Luke 2 as He was active in learning and sharing from others. Obviously, the years ahead of Jesus' baptism were deeply formative as He heard the words of God and read them in study and meditation. The defining starting point for Jesus as God's man was His baptism. Matthew 4:1-11 displays the example of Jesus receiving His identity from His Father, God. Ministry leaders today would do well to follow this exemplary starting point for ministry by taking notice that Jesus was declared "my son," and He continued to bask in God's statement that "I am pleased" with you. God was not pleased in Jesus ministry accomplishments at this point in time because He had not begun the public ministry.

In contrast to Christ's acceptance, ministry leaders can easily sense rejection when they look at themselves. Whether they compare their ministry to others or compare their life and soul to others. Self-rejection runs counter to identity in Christ. Nouwen describes this battle: "Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the 'Beloved.' Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence."⁵²

Beyond self-rejection, Christian ministry leaders can feel or actually be rejected by others. John 13:21-30 shows the ultimate betrayal by Judas toward Christ. Jesus set the example for Christian leaders by relying on His true identity. Jesus looked upward to His Father and recalled who He was in regard to God and allowed that to impact who He was to even His betrayers. Jesus was not only betrayed here by Judas, but in the future by His close confidant Peter (Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38; John 18:15-17, 25-27), yet He not only prayed for him but sought him out after the betrayal (John 21). Jesus remembered His role was to please the Father not to please others in both circumstances. Robert D. Jones reminds us of Jesus' approach with Judas and Peter,

⁵² Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, 28.

There is a strong lesson here for us. Jesus’s service sprang from his clear sense of his identity before his Father. As he grabbed the towel, Jesus knew three things: (1) that “the Father had put all things under his power,” (2) that “he had come from God,” and (3) that he “was returning to God” (v.3). In other words, Jesus’ identity, origin, and destiny were all secured by God his Father. And based on that—note the “so” in verse 4, “so he got up”—Jesus could show kindness to his betrayer. Only a secure identity in Christ—as a son or daughter of the living God—will allow you to do good to those who oppose you.⁵³

The apostle Paul echoed this theme of serving others based on the example of Christ, as seen in Philippians 2:3-5: “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” The perspective of Jesus in John 13 to look upward to God in order to know how to properly engage with others is critical for God’s servants today. Christian ministry leaders must serve from their identity in Christ. They must then continue to be sustained by God’s words of “son” and “well pleased,” not on their own merits, but in the merits that Christ provides.

Temptations of Jesus and Christians Leaders

The critically staunch foundation of identity in God and in Christ for ministry leaders is essential because stress and temptations follow in ministry. Jesus experienced temptations prior to ministry and throughout his ministry, starting with his forty-day wilderness onslaught. Wielding the sword of the Word, versus man’s so-called wisdom, Jesus, as the first Christian ministry leader, stood strong in the battle against Satan. Jesus blazed the trail for future ministry leaders by his Word-based responses to Satan’s attacks and temptations. Eswine reminds, “In the midst of the temptations with the enemy, Jesus sifts through all these ugly accusations, temptations, memories, fears, and lies to detect the Father’s voice and stand there among the sentences. ‘It is written,’ he affirms.”⁵⁴ Jesus

⁵³ Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 189.

⁵⁴ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 163.

did not blindly respond to the attacks of Satan—He had previously and continued to engage in biblical disciplines of solitude, fasting, and meditating on the Word that produced humility, obedience, and a constraint of power. These biblical disciplines along with their fruit were enacted to combat the threats of identity, independence, and entitlement. Jesus deals with these temptations from Satan thousands of years ago to set the example for Christian leaders today.

Many leaders today find their identity shaken or misplaced. Leaders today can be lured into an independent, self-based, I can do this in my power approach. Leaders today can also be ensnared by a sense of entitlement, thinking they are owed more than God or their authorities provide for them. Noteworthy to Jesus' approach was His high value and dependence on God's revealed words. Carson illustrates that "Jesus' food is to do the will of his Father who sent him (John 4:34)."⁵⁵ He continues, "More necessary than bread for Jesus was obedience to God's word."⁵⁶ In addition, Jesus faced the temptation for selfish power and glory in Matthew 4:8-10. Eswine explains, "Our Savior was confronted with the temptation to celebrity. 'Everyone is looking for you' (Mark 1:37) became words common for him to hear."⁵⁷

Christian leaders have faced the lure of power and self-aggrandizement. Eswine draws a picture of power seeking that was no different than that of the Serpent's original temptation of Adam:

I had not yet associated serving God with the love of money, the networking for position, the lust of power, or the advancement of my own name. I did not know that serving God could be used as a means to try, in line with the Serpent's old whisper, to become like God (Gen. 3:5).⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 163.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁷ Eswine, *Sensing Jesus*, 241.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

No minister would outwardly proclaim he was trying to usurp the place of God and to dethrone Him, but he can be easily deceived in becoming a power seeker instead of power giver. It is easier to seek comfort versus the sacrificial pain of the cross for leaders today and even for Jesus, but Jesus would not trade earthly glory with eternal glory, and neither should any Christian leader following in His steps. The enemy will attack at the identity level for any Christian leader, just as he did with Jesus. In Matthew 4:1-11, Satan tried to undermine the identity of Jesus twice with the words, “if you are the Son of God.” Today, leaders can easily face an identity crisis if they turn their eyes and hearts even slightly from God and His declaration of sonship on them. Some authors, like Cloud, speak of the need for this identity through bonding, but the discussions or root thoughts are not derived from the biblical Trinitarian bond. Cloud mentions only that “without a solid, bonded relationship, the human soul will become mired in psychological and emotional problems. The soul cannot prosper without being connected to others. Without bonding to God and other humans, we will suffer sickness of the soul.”⁵⁹

What examples can ministry leaders see of this bonding that can be explored more deeply? Bonding is an important need for the Christian leader’s spiritual and emotional health, but the most important bonding is not found in human relationship, as Cloud discusses, but in the Trinitarian bonds seen in Jesus with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was interdependently united to God and the Holy Spirit through His eternal Sonship relationship. Christian leaders today can find their secure standing as they relate to Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit and develop a healthy eternal bond that goes beyond any human relationship that could be sought out. Jesus connects all Christian leaders into this Trinitarian bonding through their spiritual adoption. By examining Jesus, as through a microscope, Christian leaders see Him alone as the ultimate soul care model

⁵⁹ Cloud, *Changes That Heal*, 47.

in the midst of temptations and stress of ministry leadership. Nathan A. Finn and Keith S. Whitfield get closer to the core issue in their review of Gregory Vall's statements:

Recently, Gregory Vall has given a fresh attention to the theology of the early church father Ignatius of Antioch. In his book *Learning Christ*, he identifies as the centerpiece of Ignatius's theology his sense that Christianity is fundamentally *Xristomathia* (Christ-learning). By that he meant "not merely learning *from* Christ or *about* Christ but learning the very person of Christ," affirming that "Jesus is not only our teacher but is also the truth that we are attempting to learn."⁶⁰

London and Wiseman speak to the centrality of Christ for the minister in ministry as they reflect on the call of ministry leaders, "The invitation to ministry is a call to become fully like Christ as much as it is to do ministry."⁶¹

Jesus' Example of Solitude

Jesus' identity and sustainability were confirmed through the baptism and subsequent temptations. He learned that God's Word is the primary weapon for ministries battles. The temptations happened in a season of solitude for Jesus. Although this season was formative, He continued this biblical discipline throughout His ministry. Jesus prioritized solitude and engagement with His Trinitarian cohorts to stay connected spiritually for the needed strength of ministry. Eswine states, "Jesus seemed drawn not to the spotlight but from it. Where they [the disciples] often found him was alone in desolate places praying (Luke 5:16)."⁶² London and Wiseman rightly proclaim that, like Jesus and His disciples,

We are committed, as we should be, to the Great Commission. Obviously, that means lots of work for most of us. But somehow, Christian leaders have lost sight of the importance of being able to rest in Christ. Christ is our Sabbath rest, and we must learn not to usurp His work—only to be a servant to it.⁶³

⁶⁰ Nathan A. Finn and Keith S. Whitfield, *Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 226.

⁶¹ London and Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor*, 133.

⁶² Eswine, *Sensing Jesus*, 244.

⁶³ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 161.

The temptations that Jesus and Christian leaders face were not as direct from Satan but were visible in the crowds longing for Him and through His disciple Peter attempting to question His priority of solitude (Mark 1:37). The crowds clamored, but Jesus was wise enough to withdraw when needed, as seen in Luke 5:15-16: “But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray.” Ministry leadership by Jesus depended upon soul care through solitude as a biblical discipline. Christian leaders need to give themselves permission to disappear from the clamor and to appear before God. Eswine writes, “Disappearing for forty days in the desert at that moment made little sense for Jesus. People would talk. Jesus was not everywhere at once but with the Father in the desert with the Word.”⁶⁴ For one who is called to minister to others, it can seem contrary to the goal of ministry engagement when He disappears to be with God. This makes no sense in the natural realm, but for the minister to minister, he must be ministered to directly from the Father and the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus Himself was. Rima points Christian leaders back to the example of Jesus: “The need for personal retreat was a fundamental aspect of public life and leadership that Jesus was quite aware of and took seriously.”⁶⁵

Jesus faced countless challenges to His authority, numerous demands on His time, and on-going battles with religious leadership. Strength for these endeavors are exemplified by Jesus for Christian ministry leaders. Strength in times of engaging solitude is paramount. As London and Wiseman explain,

God “resources” us even when ministry depletes us. God enables us when ministry baffles us. God makes us sufficient for every situation we encounter for Him. What

⁶⁴ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 162.

⁶⁵ Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out*, 143.

exhilarating news—this inward pursuit of Christlikeness rejuvenates purpose, renews stamina, and rekindles passion.⁶⁶

Rima gets it right in his statement for Christian leaders today: “Clearly, inner purity, integrity, and health through frequent and consistent exposure to the sacred text are essential elements of personal soul care.”⁶⁷

Jesus’ Battle of the Will as the Example for Christian Leaders

The core battle of a leader is the battle of the will. Deciding who to serve not only at conversion but throughout life is the battlefield. Lest one thinks that this is only a contemporary battle, Jesus faced the pull of self-versus God, comfort versus the cross, and surrender versus safety. This tug of war came to center stage at the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus once again is seen in solitude with His Trinitarian partners. Luke 22:39 states that Jesus went to pray, “As was his custom.” Morris explains, “evidently throughout this week, and perhaps at other times also, it had been Jesus’ habit to spend the night on the slopes of this hill.”⁶⁸ This distressing evening of prayer, says Edwards, “is the prayer of one who experiences the fierce claim of his human will over against the divine will. The tension produced by these two wills engulf Jesus not simply in mental anguish but in ‘anguish of soul.’”⁶⁹ Is this not the same battle all ministry leaders face—the human will versus the divine will? Where do leaders go to in the midst of these pressure cooker moments? Some would look to life balance approaches and a myriad of bandage-like fixes. These may assist in setting the stage, but in and of themselves the life balance, symptomatic approaches are powerless to move the human leader into a divine

⁶⁶ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 174.

⁶⁷ Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out*, 132.

⁶⁸ Leon Morris, *Luke*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 3 (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1988), 329.

⁶⁹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 646.

willful decision toward Christlikeness. Success will mean the surrendering of the Christian leaders will, just as Christ submitted His will. Embracing His example of repetitive knee-bent, face-planted humility, with sweat-drop determination and agony is essential. The details of the exact words Jesus prayed are not given to the reader to follow. Likely this is so that Jesus' followers do not think there are magic words to wave in times of stress. Only the principles of the exemplary life of Jesus are recorded. Certainly, Christian leaders will not face anything close to the horrific physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences of Jesus. Therefore, how much more can they trust that if the biblical spiritual practices of Jesus at Gethsemane and later at Calvary sustained Him, why would they not sustain the Christian leader today?

Christian Leaders in Christ Today

What does it look like today for leaders to be infused with Christ-like fortitude in ministry? The biblical accounts show the progression of the power of Christ over temptations and stress. From this example, ministry leaders see the development of the Christ-centered approach of Christian leaders in the first century. Due to space limitations, the application of "in Christ" principles will be narrowed to the apostle Paul and his personal declaration of the security, power, and love of Christ experienced through the Trinity. Like Jesus, Paul built his strength and understanding on prayer. Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:14-21 are applicable for Christian leaders throughout the ages. Paul knew that those in Ephesus had not personally seen Jesus, and a life-breathing example and explanation was required for their soul care and for those through the centuries who would engage his words.

A Christian leader without continual abiding in Christ will lead himself to demise and frustration. Beyond the salvation experience, Christian leaders must remain in Christ. The theme of "in Christ" is central to the New Testament's proclamation of where Christians can find strength. Merida explains,

Ephesians mentions union with Christ and being “in Christ” more than any other letter, about 36 times (Snodgrass, Ephesians, 39). This phrase occurs some 164 times in Paul’s 13 epistles. This is the heart of Christianity: to be united to Jesus Christ. Christians are people who are in Christ.⁷⁰

John MacArthur explains that for those who are in Christ,

Christ’s riches are our riches, His resources are our resources, His righteousness is our righteousness, and His power is our power. His position is our position: where He is, we are. His privilege is our privilege: what He is we are. His possession is our possession: what He has, we have. His practice is our practice: what He does, we do.⁷¹

This past exemplary power of Christ, appropriated through Paul’s words in Ephesians into leaders’ current situations, should bolster their power and strength for ministry. Beyond the “in Christ” focus in Ephesians, Paul emphasizes the work of the Trinity in his life and in all believers throughout the Ephesian prayers. This Trinitarian focus that started with Christ in relationship with His Father and the Holy Spirit provides needed security for Christian leaders today. Just as the identity of Christ was secured in the Trinitarian relationship, that same security of relationship is available today for Christian leaders who abide in Christ. Paul not only drew upon the power of the Trinitarian Godhead, but, as signified by his kneeling in prayer (Eph 3:14), he recognized his need for dependence upon all three persons of the Trinity. Power for ministry comes when Christian leaders today recognize their needs and then go humbly to the powerful Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, just as both Jesus and Paul did. Paul prayed for the inner strength “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph 3:16). In kneeling, Paul recognized who had the ability, as seen in Ephesians 3:20: “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”

The personal connection of the Christian leader is emphasized by Paul through

⁷⁰ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 13.

⁷¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 10.

the adoption wording he uses: “In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:4-5). The inner strength that Paul needed was the same for those in Ephesus and for Christian leaders throughout all of history. The love and security of God, through Christ, enabled through the Spirit’s work in Christian leaders, provides the needed power. Paul centers in on Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father as the sources for strength and power in the inner being of Christian leaders. Ministry leaders may gain some knowledge from books and from other’s insight, but Paul knew where to go and how to go to the only source of all power, strength, and wisdom. Paul knew that Christ had made the way for power, strength, and security in the inner man. He knew that this would come through kneeling prayer as a sign of humble need. Christian leaders today can find the power they need from God, through Christ, experienced by Paul, and multiplied to leaders today.

Conclusion

The strain and pressure on all Christian leaders are immense. The need for powerful Christians to lead humanity to hope in Christ is essential. However, many Christian leaders are not finishing well in ministry and therefore it is obvious that there is a lack of power for life and ministry being appropriated by many Christian leaders today. No doubt these leaders sense what Jesus explained in John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” Leaders honestly desire to see Christ produce fruit in their own soul, and then see that fruit multiplied into those they care for. However, the stresses of ministry in various forms often pull leaders away from their first love of Christ and His Word, in solitude, prayer, and other biblical disciplines. As Revelation 3:4 states, “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”

Well-meaning authors, pastors, and ministry leaders have clearly spelled out the needs of ministry leaders to have a more balanced life. In addition, experts have provided great practical tools for prioritizing life, handling stress, balancing time, etc., but few, if

any, start with a biblical Christ-centered approach to soul care for Christian leaders. These surface level tools and ideas may provide some positive impact. The ideas can even be attached to a biblical text here and there, but much deeper long-term help is available for those willing to engage the biblical approach that starts with a thorough Christ-centered examination. Starting with Christ provides the much-needed, rock-solid, never changing approach. Practical applications will change as the years move forward and as cultures around the globe change. However, the example of Christ, as seen in the Word of God will remain throughout eternity. May God be glorified in the Christ-centered soul care of Christian leaders. “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph 3:20-21).

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DETAILS

The teaching project related to the study of Christ-centered soul care for Christian leaders had several key phases necessary for completion. The phases implemented were the curriculum development phase, the participants preparation phase, the teaching phase, and the post-course concluding phase. Each phase was essential to the success of the following stages. In this chapter, each phase will be explained in more detail to more fully comprehend the context and the content of the project.

Curriculum Development Phase

It was important to organize all the research into a cohesive and presentable package of sessions for the participants. To do this, it was imperative to utilize the research from chapter 3 as a foundational point to state the needs and current responses being offered in this area of study. After establishing the context and the needs at hand, it was critical to delve into the biblical studies from the research of chapter 2. Combining the context and the content insured that ample attention was given to each important area in the study to produce the teaching outline. The detailed content made up the majority of the sessions with application being provided within each session for the participants.

The design of the research began with the in-depth study and the developing of the materials to be presented in the training. The materials developed consisted of six sessions based upon Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:32-39, Luke 5:15-16, Ephesians 1:3-14, and Ephesians 3:14-21. These Scriptures looked at the exemplary life and ministry of Jesus as well as the importance of the principle of being in Christ for Christian leaders.

From these passages, the hindrances to soul care, examples of positive soul care, and foundations for healthy soul care were developed.

The six sessions were packaged into a set of presentations accompanied with note pages as well as PowerPoint files. The sessions were titled as follows: “Why Christ-Centered Soul Care for Christian Leaders?,” “Jesus as the Example and His Preparatory Pre-Ministry Methods,” “Jesus Our Example in Testing and Temptations,” “Jesus’ Example of Soul Care in the Midst of Ministry,” “Leaders Being in Christ,” and “Powerful Leaders for the Ages.” Due to the nature of the audience, the sessions were offered online using both synchronous and asynchronous methods.¹

Participant Preparation Phase

The final audience for the sessions included sixteen selected Christian ministry leaders representing nine different countries across four continents related to globalLead International as either staff, volunteers, or key ministry partners. Because of the global nature and diversity of the group invited to participate, the preparation phase included a series of personal invitation emails, as well as detailed explanations of the schedule and the online tools to be utilized. The pre- and post-course test and surveys, as well as the online avenues developed to present the trainings, were made available to the participants at this time as well. Each participant was required to register through the online training software *GoToTraining*, connected to the administration account set up by the globalLead International office staff. Beyond the *GoToTraining* system site, a YouTube playlist site was developed to upload the recorded versions of the training for those choosing to partake of the training offline at their convenience.

¹ Synchronous is a live webinar type of event that has the benefit of face-to-face interaction. Asynchronous is a pre-recorded option that does not engage participants live but on their own time frame and availability. *GoToTraining* online software was used for the live portions. YouTube sessions were used for the recorded portions.

Once the participants were confirmed, each participant was provided a link to a pre-course test and a pre-course survey along with due dates for the completion of the forms. The test and survey were set up in Google Forms and can be seen in the appendices 1 and 2. Included in the survey was the required consent to participate. Once completed, the data from the initial pre-course test and survey were downloaded to use as a baseline for the participants in comparing to post-course test and surveys.

Final email reminders were sent to each participant prior to the first live session. At this point the participants were made aware that they had the option of taking the sessions live with me through *GoToTraining* or taking the training at their own convenience after the live session recording was uploaded into YouTube. Participants were encouraged to complete each session within the week that it was presented live and before the next week's live session. Participants were not required to fully commit to one delivery method over the entire series of sessions.

Teaching Phase

The content for the teaching phase included six sessions that were delivered over seven weeks. The first session was delivered on June 26, and the final session was completed on August 7. Due to the possible need for adaptations mid-course, and my schedule, there was an off week on July 10. Each session began at 9 a.m. Eastern Standard time with participants from around the globe engaging live according to their time zone, as available. Each session was presented live via *GoToTraining*, with participants watching the sessions via the live video feed. Ahead of each session, participants were provided a basic session outline in Word and a set of the PowerPoint files to follow along with for viewing and note taking. Those watching the recorded version were provided the same materials. As the sessions were presented live and viewed offline, records were kept of who chose what type of delivery for their sessions. Each session was between 40 and 60 minutes in length. Overview summaries for each session are provided in the following pages.

Session 1: Why Christ-Centered Soul Care for Christian Leaders?

The opening session dealt with the context upon which content and application would be engaged. The context thoughts were developed from the chapter 3. The challenges were presented using the figure 1 as an outline to understanding the context and content to be delivered. An overview of each area of the soul care context graphic follows.

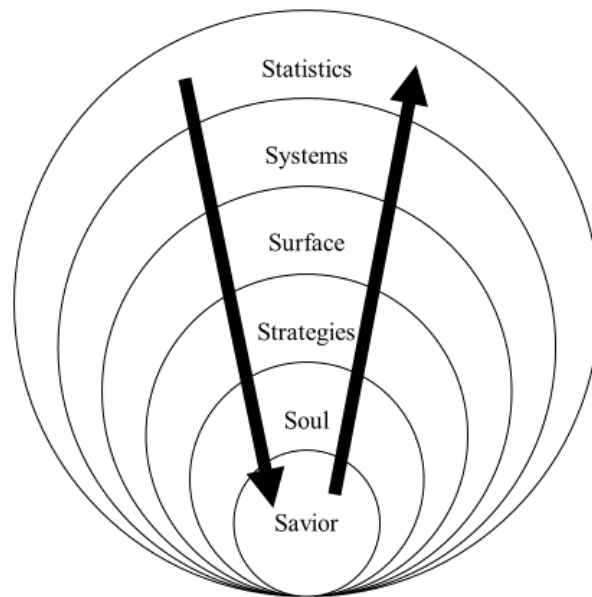


Figure 1. Soul care context

Statistics. To understand the need for Christ-centered soul care, the context of soul care needed to be developed. Various sources provide statistics of the current situation of Christian leaders. Statistics from London and Wiseman state that the typical pastor has his greatest ministry impact at a church in years 5 through 14 of his pastorate; unfortunately, the average pastor lasts only five years at a church.”² Participants were asked to pause and consider the question, “How do we not become a statistic that leaves

² H. B. London, Jr., Neil B. Wiseman, and James Dobson, *Pastors at Risk* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 34.

behind destruction in churches, in our own family, and in our self?” Beyond personal reflection, it was important to communicate that Christian leaders must understand the external and internal issues at play. This transitioned their thinking to the section on systems.

Systems. Three major systems that surround Christian leaders needed to be addressed:

1. Their church hierarchy or lack thereof.
2. The incongruent amounts of investment in preparation prior to full-time ministry, versus the amount of investment in soul care in the midst of ministry.
3. The pervasive business-like measurements used by church leadership oversight teams that can form an inordinate amount of pressure that can lead to a lack of health in ministry leaders.

Kinnaman and Ells summarize the issue of hierarchy: “The new century will be characterized by a move away from denominational and institutional traditions to a shared kingdom vision and mission.”³ This decentralized movement as a church system means a lack of accountability for current ministry leaders. Even in situations where accountability is provided within a structure, leaders need to realize that few will actually reveal all to those in authority over them, especially to those in authority who control the leader’s finances and future ministry position.

The inequality of investment in the leader by comparing formal education as preparation and informal soul care investments while in ministry also showed the disparity of the current systems. The average annual expenditure per student for ministry education

³ Gary D. Kinnaman and Alfred H. Ells, *Leaders That Last: How Covenant Friendships Can Help Pastors Thrive* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 24.

in seminaries is \$54,031 dollars.⁴ The estimated average investment for soul care or continuing education for pastors and leaders is around \$2,000 annually.

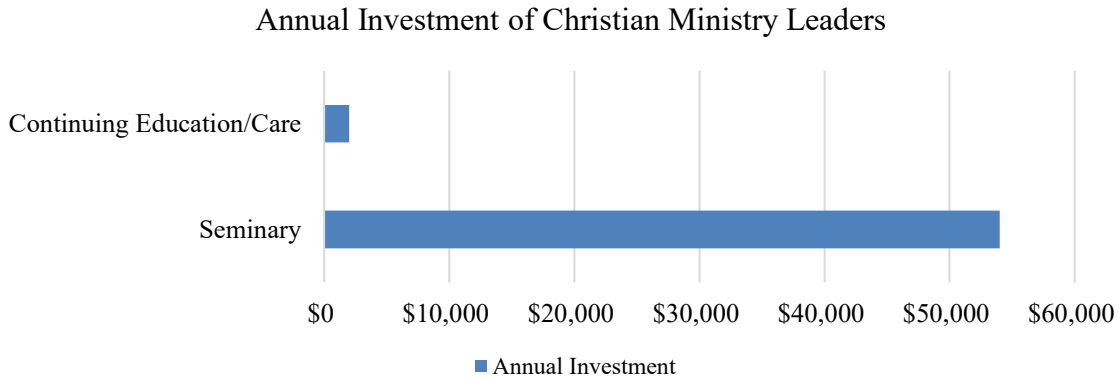


Figure 2. Annual investment comparison

Since only 10 percent of Christian leaders are finishing well, the education and care systems are way out of balance and not supporting the needs of the Christian ministry leader’s current context.

Dealing in a healthy way with the potential internal system of production quotas by church leadership is essential for pastors and other leaders. Eswine reminds, “We lose rest of soul when we believe that bigger is better.”⁵ The temptation to perform works hand in hand with many unhealthy escapes that pastors may seek.

London and Wiseman understand the reality that of the situation at hand: “Ministry can be among the most dangerous of all occupations spiritually.”⁶

⁴ The Association of Theological Schools, “2016-2017 Annual Data Tables,” accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tables/2016-2017-annual-data-tables.pdf>, table 4.3A.

⁵ Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 146.

⁶ H. B. London and Neil B. Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006), 207.

Surface. Beyond the statistics and the connected systems, those who approach care for leaders often take a surface level or symptom only methodology. In the training, I likened this to a doctor prescribing an aspirin for headache pain, when the underlying issue is brain cancer. Cloud's approach is exemplary when he offers a series of almost unending surface needs but provides little beyond surface level approaches:

Symptoms of failure to bond: depression, feelings of meaninglessness, feelings of badness and guilt, addiction, distorted thinking, emptiness, feelings of unreality, panic, rage, excessive caretaking, and fantasy. In addition, he adds barriers to bonding: past injury, distorted thinking (our view of ourselves, our view of others, our view of God), defense mechanisms, denial, devaluation, projection, reaction formation, mania, idealization, and substitution.⁷

Eswine explains, "Some of us are ministering the gospel right now because we want to have the esteem that someone else currently has (envy) and because we competitively desire to receive more praise or credit than someone else does (rivalry)."⁸ However, few Christ-centered-first approaches are prescribed.

Strategies. Teaching continued to work through the circles inwardly toward the Savior in the Christ-centered approach. Some strategies are being offered to the symptoms, but it was discussed that the majority are only applying a surface level symptom approach versus looking at root core causes. Cloud's response to the symptoms is fairly normal, he states that people need to "bond with others, separate from others, sort out issues of good and bad, and take charge as an adult. Without the ability to perform these basic God-like functions, we can literally remain stuck for years, and growth and change can elude our grasp."⁹ The approach to change was discussed here by Cloud but again no

⁷ Henry Cloud, *Changes That Heal* (repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 62-78.

⁸ Zack Eswine, *Sensing Jesus: Life and Ministry as a Human Being* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 242.

⁹ Cloud, *Changes That Heal*, 13.

biblical, Christ-centered approaches are applied to the issues. London and Wiseman quote the following comment from an Archibald Hart interview in their book:

Rethink your day off, understand your personality type, welcome spouse into prevention, reach across isolation, take charge of your prevention or recovery, confront your addictions, limit your clinging vines [alluding to those who in our ministry who sap life from us as co-dependent people], and get back to doing what you want to do.¹⁰

Again, no biblical or Christ-based examples are included.

Soul. Moving further inward it was important to discuss the area of the soul and how little room is made to evaluate the status of the leader's own soul. Those in spiritual inner poverty tend to run from time of solitude. Spurgeon once said that in "quietude, some men cannot abide, because it reveals their inner poverty."¹¹ The busyness of Christian ministry helps leaders cover over an honest view of self. The Psalmist said it best as he requested a heart-level, surgical exploration done by God, not man: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Ps 139:23-24). At this juncture the leaders were asked to review the following questions for personal reflection.

1. Is it possible that leaders have given up in deeply searching the Word for His answers?
2. Is it possible that we as leaders have not learned to apply the methods Jesus used in his own soul care to their own soul care?
3. Is it possible we have too quickly looked for answers in treating symptoms versus searching the causes?

Savior. Finally, the session arrived at the key question, "Where is Jesus in the midst of our soul care?" We discussed how the apostle Paul taught in Corinth for at least a year and a half, yet proclaimed, "For I decided to know nothing among you except

¹⁰ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 168-71. These pages are notes from an interview with Archibald Hart, by the authors.

¹¹ Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 143.

Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). Soul care needs to be rooted in Scripture first and Christ as the predominant example. The students were encouraged to base their soul care needs upon eternal, biblical, Christ-centered exemplary wisdom, not well meaning current human knowledge. As Eswine states so profoundly, “You and I have learned many ways of being in leadership and not all of them from Jesus.”¹²

The first session concluded with a reminder of the visual chart of circles and recalling that many focus their soul care on the outward rings, while the real work needs to begin with the inner circle example of the Savior’s knowledge and application of personal soul care. From that place of stability, all leaders can work outward through the circles to be a positive statistic.

Session 2: Jesus as the Example and His Preparatory Pre-Ministry Methods

Session 2 began with a review of the chart of circles, showing the soul care context to remind participants that the main focus in the sessions was on the core circle of the Savior, Christ, in soul care as the example. This session dealt with two major areas of Jesus as the example and how He was prepared for ministry.

I asked, “Who was Jesus prior to His public ministry?” and then asked the participants for personal reflection upon who they were as a believer prior to full-time ministry? Related to these questions about Jesus and leaders, we worked through Jesus’ divinity and humanity and whether He could be a valid example for all Christian leaders. We reviewed Issler’s thoughts on this subject: “Christians cannot emulate his [Jesus’] example if he relied on his own divine power to live and minister to others.”¹³

Participants were taught from Issler’s statement that “Jesus voluntarily agreed to conceal

¹² Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 229.

¹³ Klaus Issler, “Jesus’ Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life,” in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 203.

to a great extent his divine nature and powers to live mainly within his human powers and to rely predominantly on the tutelage and power of the Father and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴ The session concluded that Jesus could be a trustworthy example due to His full humanity in operation beside His full divinity.

The study of the preparatory section of Jesus’ life began with Luke 2:52: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” This passage was followed up with Jesus’ baptism and the concept of His identity being in His relationship with God, not in His ministry for God. God’s pleasure is the fatherly relationship, not any productive ministry, as Jesus had not yet been engaged in public ministry. The next stage of preparation for Jesus was exemplified through His preparation in the wilderness through the disciplines of solitude and fasting, as well as the assumed times of prayer, and meditation on God’s Word that come forth in Matthew 4:1-11. Participants were then asked to reflect upon the following questions as the session concluded.

1. Do I excuse my sinfulness and lack of soul care by using my status of “only human?”
2. Where do you find your identity today?
3. How do you feel about your current identity?
4. What do you learn from the preparation of Jesus that you can engage in personally?

Session 3: Jesus Our Example in Testing and Temptations

A reminder of the circle diagram, the Soul Care Context, and a review of session 2 were used as an introduction for session 3. Continuing into the depth of the passage in Matthew 4:1-11, session 3 dealt with how Jesus handled testing and temptation. The training participants saw the three temptations of Jesus: to see His own provision through entitlement, to test God, to take a short cut to power and glory. The

¹⁴ Issler, “Jesus’ Example,” 223.

students and I discussed that even though these were Jesus' temptations they are temptations as well in the current context as ministry leaders.

D. A. Carson articulates the summary of the teaching in this area: "More necessary than bread for Jesus was obedience to God's word."¹⁵ Jesus' knowledge and meditation on those Old Testament words helped Him remain faithful in order to live unto the Father. Participants learned that as the exemplary Shepherd to be, Jesus engaged in fasting, solitude, the Word, prayer, humility, obedience, and constraint of power. The same disciplines are necessary for ministering shepherds today as they experience temptations and stress.

Tom Constable properly summarizes the section here related to being tempted to test God. Jesus and other leaders cannot test God because "it is wrong to demand that God prove Himself faithful to His promises by giving us what He has promised on our terms. The proper procedure is simply to trust and obey God (Deut. 6:16–17). 'Testing is not trusting.'"¹⁶ Jesus consciously remained in the Trinitarian relationship with the Father and the Spirit, even though Satan was tempting Him to usurp His Sonship in a rogue rebellion against His Father.

Taking a shortcut was not an option for Jesus. Constable crystallizes this thought regarding the mountain top temptation for Jesus to worship Satan: "This temptation consisted of an opportunity for Jesus to obtain the benefits of messiahship without having to experience its unpleasant elements."¹⁷ Participants were reminded that leaders are tempted, like Jesus, to use their God-given authority to bring glory to themselves. The summary of the temptations shared with the participants was that Jesus was tempted like

¹⁵ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 142.

¹⁶ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), Mt 3:16-4:11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Mt 3:16-4:11.

all of us as Christian leaders to seek provision through entitlement, test God's power, and take a shortcut to power and glory. While concluding this session, participants were reminded of Wiersbe's note, that "Jesus used the spiritual resources that are available to us today: the power of the Holy Spirit of God (Matt. 4:1), and the power of the Word of God."¹⁸ This teaching on the temptations was followed up with personal reflection and application questions:

1. Do I attempt to control my circumstances instead of standing on God's provision as understood in His Word?
2. Does it seem easier at times to seek power or glory in my own way and timing instead of God's?
3. How am I personally engaging Jesus' exemplary spiritual disciplines of (fasting, solitude, the Word, prayer, humility, obedience, and constraint of power) for overcoming temptations?
4. How is my study of Jesus' own soul care in the Gospel's progressing?

Session 4: Jesus' Example of Soul Care in the Midst of Ministry

Session 4 began with a review of session 3 and the context developed by the chart of soul care circles. This session looked at the lifestyle pattern of solitude and prayer in which Jesus engaged as an example for those in ministry and concluded with an in-depth look at Jesus' example of prayer in the midst of extreme ministry stress at Gethsemane. The major revealed themes were as follows:

1. Jesus set the example to prioritize solitude and prayer in the midst of busy ministry and competing demands.
2. Jesus understands stress beyond what we, as ministry leaders, could face.
3. Jesus responded to stress by persistent prayer.
4. Jesus understood the central battle of His will versus the Father's will.
5. Jesus responded to the Father and to stress with humility.

¹⁸Warren W. Wiersbe, *Matthew-Galatians, The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 18.

Those themes were exemplified in the detailed studies of Mark 1:35-39 and 14:32-42. Additional passages were referenced in line with these passages as well.

Reflection questions included the following:

1. What does a cyclical pattern of shouting crowds and seeking solitude look like in your life?
2. Have you engaged in early morning or late night quiet consistent time with the Father?
3. If you are not meeting the balance of self-care and care for others (ministry), what is God asking you to do about this?
4. How do you recognize the battle of the will in your life?
5. How does God want you to respond to His will differently than you may have been?
6. How can you celebrate when you yield to His will?

The session ended in prayer as participants contemplated the real battle of self-will and God's will, not just in the major times of stress, but in the daily activities of life and ministry.

Session 5: Leaders Being in Christ

Session 5 began a transition from the very life and ministry of Jesus in regard to His soul care and responses to how this was exemplified and carried forward through Paul and the leaders in Ephesus, specifically to show that the principles of Jesus apply beyond Him and into all of the ages to come. Specific emphasis was given to the “in Christ” themes in Ephesians 1:3-14. Just as Jesus related often and directly with the other persons of the Trinity while on earth, namely the Father and the Holy Spirit, so should Christian leaders engage the Trinity. The spiritual blessings and riches through and in Christ were taught so that they could be applied to ministering believers today. Constable's quote was central to the details of the appropriation of the riches:

God, the Father was the basis of the spiritual blessings. The blessings were activated and applied through Christ. Therefore, the central thread of the Ephesians eulogy is the union in Christ. Without Christ as the conduit, the blessings would not be integrated to believer's lives. The recurrence of the phrase “in Christ” and equivalent

expressions emphasize that all these blessings come with our union with our Savior (vv. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13 [twice]).¹⁹

The leaders were reminded that true, deep, soul care begins and ends with Christ. Based on the teachings so far, the following questions were asked of the participants:

1. Are you getting alone more often? Having extended prayer? Having extended alone time? Disconnecting through solitude?
2. Are you meditating on Scripture? (Praying the Bible book)
3. Are you fasting? Start now? (Humility)
4. Are you kneeling in prayer?
5. Are you in fellowship and have a social life?
6. Are you repenting of sin?
7. Are you expressing emotionally to the Lord?
8. Are you accountable to others?

Session 6: Powerful Leaders for the Ages

Continuing with the theme of applying the Christ-centered passages in Ephesians, session 6 focused on Ephesians 3:14-21. Paul centralizes the teachings to focus in on the inner being and strength through Christ who is more than powerful enough to do this very work in us, as Christian leaders, in the church, and through every generation to come. The emphasis was placed upon the power available from God through Christ and the Holy Spirit enacted through His church. God wants to bring the high and unmeasurable riches of Himself downward to build the foundation stone, Christ, into each Christian leader. Central themes for this session included Paul's emphasis of being in Christ, which provides security for Christian leaders, Paul's emphasis on adoption and the spiritual riches as critical areas for Christian leaders' soul care, and God providing the needed spiritual power. The same application questions were asked again

¹⁹Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 1:14.

of the participants that were at the end of session 5 regarding the disciplines, expression, and accountability. Participants were reminded to watch their email for the post-course set of surveys to fill out as they continued to apply the knowledge to their personal soul care practices.

Post-Course Concluding Phase

Immediately following the session 6 presentation, participants were sent links to three separate Google Forms to complete. The email included the same two forms that they completed pre-course, one on biblical knowledge of soul care and the second gauged their application of soul care since the beginning of the teaching series. Both tools were identical to the pre-course test and survey. An additional survey was delivered through Google Forms to gather data and open-ended responses to gauge the age, location, roles in ministry, details about why they chose which delivery method, and how they planned to apply the teachings into their ministry settings. Participants were given ten days to finish the surveys for completion online. The collected data and results, as well as reflections will be explained in more detail in the chapter 5 as the pre- and post-course data were compared and conclusions and findings were revealed.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This concluding chapter will evaluate the implementation of the project as well as the project as a whole. This chapter deals with the accomplishment of the purpose and goals, the strengths of the project, and the weaknesses of the project, which will help unearth what could have been done differently. Additional reflection in the theological implications, personal reflections, and a conclusion are also provided.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of the project was to develop a transferable, Christ-centered training curriculum that targeted the soul care of Christian ministry leaders, which was taught to the leadership partners of globalLead International. The purpose of the project was accomplished in that a Christ-centered training curriculum was developed and taught to leadership mentors related to the organization structure of globalLead international. The teaching was designed in a transferable method so that the leaders could plan to use the materials in various methods and locations, both formally and informally in their future ministry.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

Four progressive goals were implemented to develop, deliver, and measure the impact of the training curriculum. Beyond the stated goals, this section also includes additional research findings from the surveys.

Goal 1

The first goal was to identify and assess globalLead’s trainers and related leaders’ current knowledge of how Jesus cared for His own soul and those of His leaders. As mentioned in chapter 1, 21 participants agreed to partake in this research project at the outset. All of the participants were identified as staff, volunteers, and partners with globalLead around the globe. Each participant’s knowledge was measured using a Google Forms test.¹ Each participant’s soul care practices were measured using a Likert scaled survey of Soul Care Practices, also utilizing Google Forms.² The results are given in the section on goal 3. All participants completed the test and survey ahead of the first teaching session and the results were downloaded and entered into a baseline spreadsheet that was used in the *t*-test measurements based upon post-course analysis.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop and deliver a six-part curriculum that focused on the soul care practices of Jesus to the selected globalLead related participants. As described in chapter 4, this goal was fully accomplished across the provided time table. Based on the original goal of having a minimum of 10 participants, 21 began the process and 16 fully completed all sessions and completed the end test and surveys, therefore exceeding this original involvement goal. The findings listed beyond this point reflect the results of the 16 participants who finished all requirements.

Goal 3

The third goal was to evaluate the knowledge obtained following the delivery of the Christ-centered soul care curriculum. The knowledge obtained was evaluated successfully based on the action steps in chapter 4 of pre- and post- test and survey. The results of the 16 participants who completed the full process were evaluated. The

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

following paragraphs and charts provide the results of the participants in both the knowledge of Christ-centered soul care and the personal application of Christ-centered soul care from the pre-course measurements.

Pre-course measurements. The test for the knowledge of the participants prior to taking the online course showed the participants had an average score of 78 percent. The survey for the personal soul care practices prior to taking the online course showed that the participants scored an average of 68 percent on the soul care application survey.

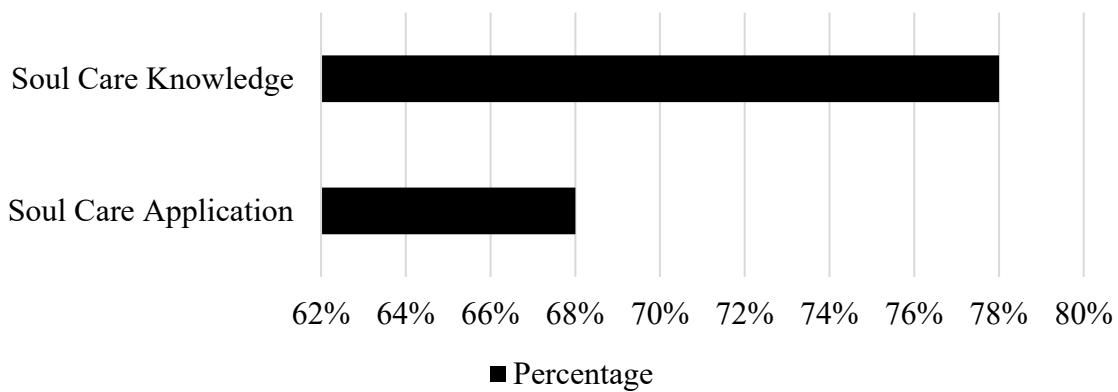


Table 3. Pre-course knowledge and application of soul care

In comparing the two pre-course scores it showed that the knowledge level versus the level of personal application were not in alignment. The amount of knowledge exceeded the amount of application.

Post course measurements. The test for the knowledge portion prior to taking the online course showed the participants had an average score of 78 percent. The survey for the personal soul care practices prior to taking the online course showed that the participants scored an average of 68 percent on the soul care application survey scales.

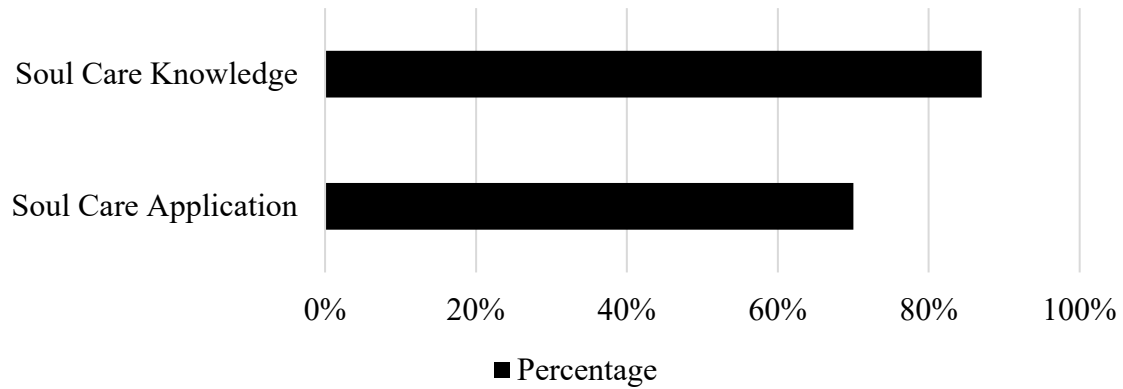


Table 4. Post-course knowledge and application of soul care

Using simple averages, the previous charts showed an increase of 2 percent in the Christ-centered soul care application and a 10 percent increase in Christ-centered soul care knowledge. For the statistical measurement using the *t*-test comparisons, the pre-course data was compared to the post-course data using two separate single tailed matching *t*-tests.

The results of the knowledge based *t*-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference ($t(15) = 3.65, p = .0012$) in the knowledge of Christ-centered soul care.

The results of the application based *t*-test showed there was a statistically significant difference ($t(15) = 1.92, p = .0369$) in the increase in personal soul care practices applied by the participants.

In summary, the results show that the third goal of evaluating the knowledge obtained following the delivery of the Christ-centered soul care curriculum was completed and statistically measurable growth was seen in both the amount of knowledge regarding Christ-centered soul care and the amount of personal application of the obtained knowledge. Table 5 combines these findings in a chart form.

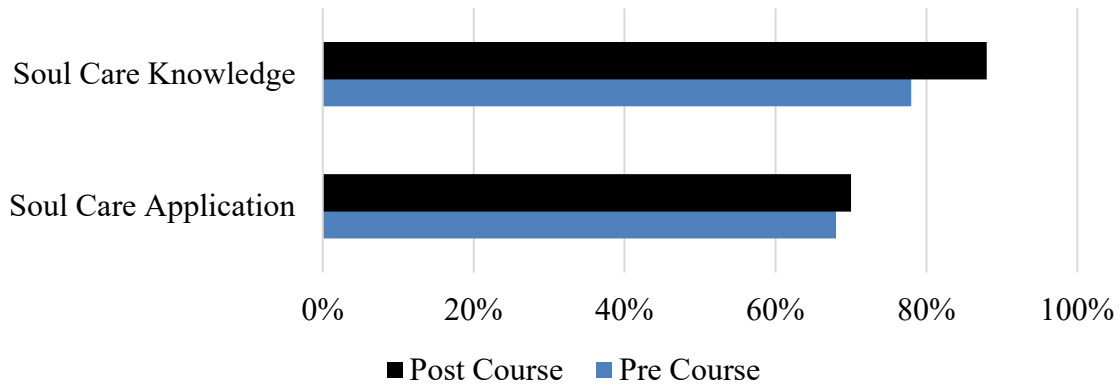


Table 5. Pre- and post-course knowledge and application comparison

Goal 4

The fourth goal was for each of the globalLead participants to develop their own one-year plan for teaching and training others using the six-part curriculum. This goal was obtained in the sense that each participant was asked to predict how they would use the materials in the future. Two areas were requested of those in the survey. First, participants were asked, “How do you plan to integrate the biblical passages in mentoring?” Second, they were asked to respond to, “How do you plan to integrate at least three Biblical principles into your teaching and/or preaching ministry?” Due to the nature of the group, where only a small portion were globalLead staff, the participants did not spell out highly detailed, measurable goals of usage, as planned. However, there were a high number of documented plans for usage noted by the participants. The following table shows the implementation plan numbers based on the total group of participants.

Table 6. Training plans by participants

	Mentoring at least 3 people using the principles from the materials	Preaching/Teaching using at least 3 of the principles learned
Number of the 16 total participants who plan to use the materials in the specific areas.	14	15

Additional Findings

Beyond the planned goals for measurement, it was feasible and highly beneficial to incorporate the following data and analysis related to Christ-centered soul care. Since this project, by necessity, was delivered online, additional data was collected regarding online soul care training. The details in this section show some of the additional findings.

Included in the third administered survey were questions related to online usage during the training. This third survey provided data using the qualitative approach of open-ended survey questions for the participants.³ This qualitative approach helped discern why participants chose the delivery method in which they were engaged. This data compared against the number of participants engaged in the two delivery types helped to understand what delivery method the majority of the participants chose from around the globe and to dig deeper into understanding why they chose a particular method.

The qualitative data was categorized using a coding system to gauge the primary answers to the question of why a particular delivery method was chosen. Most of the global participants chose to use the asynchronous, recorded version of the training because of their schedules, unreliable internet, or desire to be able to replay the teaching and interact with the notes properly. Viewers that engaged in the live delivery stated they desired to do this study with interaction with the teacher and students.⁴

Table 7. Why participants chose the method of online delivery

	Synchronous— Live Coding Score	Asynchronous— Recorded Coding Score
Reasons for choosing method	Interaction with teacher and students – 8	Schedule – 10 Unreliable Internet – 3 Desire to have ability to replay the teaching and interact with the notes - 2

³ See appendix 3.

⁴ Participants could list more than one reason for choosing the method of content delivery.

The findings show that despite the desire to interact with one another live, most participants chose the recorded option due to busy schedules and time zone issues.

Beyond the usage and method of delivery choice data, research was compiled on the impact by each user type, online and recorded viewer, to gauge if there was a difference in impact by delivery method. The following data reveals the research.

To discern the level of improvement from the trainings and how that may or may not be connected to the delivery method, additional data comparison was completed to take the initial quantitative data from the *t*-test stages and compare this data with measurements of what delivery method the participant engaged in primarily to evaluate if a particular delivery method showed a better opportunity for improvement in the knowledge area and personal application area of the trainings delivered.

In comparing the results of the data, it was discovered that those who chose the offline training method had significantly improved results (89 percent) against those who chose to primarily take the training sessions live (60 percent).⁵

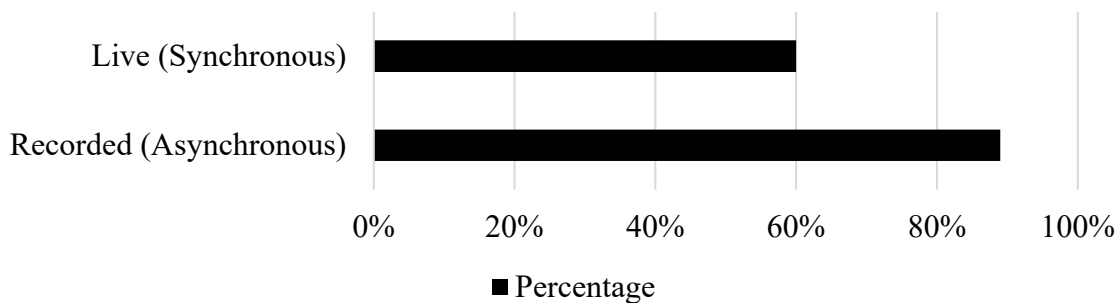


Table 8. Combined impact of knowledge and application of soul care compared by viewing method

⁵ Measuring the improved results was calculated by counting the participants who increased in at least one of the measurable areas of knowledge or soul care. Eight of the 9 participants who viewed recorded videos increased in at least one area with 5 of the 8 increasing in both areas. Only 3 of the 5 live viewing participants increased in at least one area and only 1 of those 3 increased in both areas.

The comparison of the data shows that there was a substantially measurable difference in the levels of improvement based upon the delivery methods chosen. For the long-term sustainable training plans of globalLead International, this data will be indispensable in developing this and additional online training systems for spiritual impact around the globe.

Strengths of the Project

There were several strengths seen to this project. Strengths included an in-depth study of the real need in the area of a Christ-centered soul care approach for Christian ministry leaders. The content provided was unique in many ways and provided strength and validity to the project. A unique audience involved in the study also added to its strengths. Added to these strengths were the research findings and analysis brought out, beyond the initial purpose and goals.

Real Needs Addressed

The regular reporting of pastors and ministry leaders leaving the ministry for various reasons led to the need of soul care for all ministry leaders to be addressed. The research and statistics presented in chapters 1 and 3 illuminate the depth of concern, despair, and need that permeates the role of Christian ministry leaders. Beyond statistics, the systems of lack of accountability and of production-based evaluation have contributed to the needs at hand. The lack of on-going investment in soul care as compared to initial ministry preparation display a real need that was addressed.

Unique Content Focus

The unique content developed in this research and subsequent training were a strength. As illustrated with the circle diagram in chapter 4 that was used throughout the training, most discussions around soul care for Christian leaders revolve around symptoms and surface-level strategies of life-style change. The content presented here challenged participants to begin discussions and studies on the ultimate example of Jesus Christ as a

Christian ministry leader, and to build strategies outward from His example. Additionally, we see in Paul’s writing to the Ephesians that his soul care approach also began with the understanding that his power came from being in Christ and could be appropriated to all Christian leaders. The content also showed that this power of Christ from being in Christ, could be and was carried out in the next generation of Christian leaders of the church of Ephesus, and therefore set the standard for future generations. The content’s strength here is a clarion call to return soul care to the source of and creator of our soul, Christ Himself.

Unique Audience: Global, Education, and Online

This project had a unique audience in that sixteen participants comprising of four continents and nine countries participated in and completed the study. All of the participants were native to their location, which added a high level of diversity to the group. Although there are a myriad of online training options today in formal and informal education and training, little previous research was discovered that studied all three elements of education, online, and global within one book or research project. As seen in Figure 3, this project added to the research conversation in these integrated realms, specifically around the targeted topic of Christ-centered soul care.

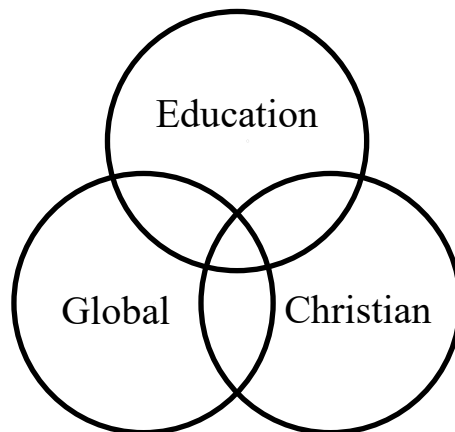


Figure 3. Diagram of literature and research relationships for online global, Christian, and education characteristics

Additional Findings

Adding strength to this project were the additional findings from the course. To find that the higher amount of impact on students was obtained by those who chose the recorded option over the live option was insightful feedback and a strength of the project. To discern why participants chose one delivery method over the other, specifically in a global context, was important information for globalLead and others seeking to replicate similar studies.

Weaknesses of the Project

One specific weaknesses of the project stood out, which was the use of the specific online training tool, *GoToTraining*. This section elaborates on this weakness.

Delivery Method Software

Although a high amount of research was done to choose the best online delivery tool to accomplish the needed communications level, the *GoToTraining* software underperformed in the environment of use. The original course design was to utilize both views of the speaker and the PowerPoint to be seen by the participants simultaneously. After several failed attempts during session 1 it was obvious that issues in the software restricted this option. This led the presentations to be just focused on the presenter. To overcome this obstacle, participants had the PowerPoint presentation available to see on their local devices for viewing and note taking. Additionally, the system was to have the option for everyone to see and interact with others in the course; however, the system would not allow this option for the full number of online participants involved.⁶ Another feature to be utilized was the ability to set up sub groups for interaction within the sessions. This option turned out to be undeliverable due to the above-mentioned restrictions.

⁶ Since the *GoToTraining* system limited the number of users to see one another, that featured was disabled to keep consistency among all of the users.

The software limitations restricted the training to be much more of a “one-to-many presentation” rather than a “one another experience.” Participant feedback also showed a high desire for interaction among their peers both in the sessions and in between the sessions to further enhance the soul care application portions. Although the impact was measurable regarding the soul care application portions, there would have likely been an even higher degree of growth if the live interactions would have been accessible. Online interaction could have been supplied in between the sessions through message boards or other written interactions that would have assisted to overcome the software weaknesses. Moving from an online to a more hybrid delivery of content and interaction would be ideal for this training in the future.

Theological Reflections

Numerous positive reflections were brought out in the midst of research, writing, and teaching others for His purposes. In this section I review several theological reflections, including the study of Christ as the example for soul care for Christian leaders, global churches lack of Christ-centered and Bible-first approach to soul care, centrality of a Word-first approach to life and ministry, and practical realms of application of theological and biblical truth in line with obtaining biblical truth. Additionally, input regarding online training discipleship, soul care, and training in the modern age of the globally connected church will be discussed.

Christ as the Example

The major theological impact from the study centers around the realization that Jesus is the example in soul care. Many people may struggle with looking at Jesus as the best example, and may say, “He was God, and I am not.” However, the theological understanding from Scripture reveals that even though He was fully God, He was also fully man. Additionally, as stated by Issler, “prior to his incarnation, Jesus voluntarily agreed to conceal to a great extent his divine nature and powers to live mainly within his human

powers and to rely predominantly on the tutelage and power of the Father and the Holy Spirit.”⁷ As discovered in chapter 2 of this project, Issler explains, “Although Jesus was God, he veiled his deity, permitting himself to experience a normal human life with its attendant weaknesses.”⁸ Issler’s explanation of Jesus experiencing a normal human life is clearly seen in Hebrews 2:17: “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Beyond the passage in Hebrews one can also review Paul’s words in Philippians 2:5-7 that focused on the kenosis, self-emptying humiliation of Christ. This theological truth is critically important to set the foundation that Jesus is not merely “an example” for soul care, but *the example* for Christ-centered soul care.

Lack of Biblical and Christ-Centered Approach to Soul Care

As the research revealed, there was a lack of biblically-based, and specifically Christ-centered approach to soul care and Christ-based lifestyle practices found in resources that dealt with the issues of pastor or ministry leader burnout and challenges. The statistical research showed that there is a need to undergird Christian leaders more substantially. Underlying systems, surface level symptoms, topical strategies, and soul level needs were discussed, but very limited, in-depth Christ-first approaches were available that look at Jesus’ soul care methods as the first and pre-eminent Christian leader upon which to build a working theology and practice of soul care.

The research and practices discovered and implemented in this project helped to provide the theological and practical foundation upon which the other aforementioned

⁷ Klaus Issler, “Jesus’ Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life,” in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 223.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

issues can be added in order to provide a holistic approach to soul care for Christian leaders that is solidly built upon Christ Jesus our Rock.

People Tend to Know More than They Practice

One of the revealing notes from the study was that people, and specifically the group of ministry leaders in this study, tend to know more than they practice. Although both the knowledge and application areas increased in this study, the truth was confirmed through the research statistics showing that the level of knowledge both at the beginning and conclusion of the teachings were much higher and grew more rapidly than the amount of actual implementation of soul care practices. This insight challenges teaching methods and pushes all instructors to include more experiential learning and practices of what was learned so that all three elements of the head, heart, and hands are engaged in soul care teaching for a more holistically balanced impact within a more inter-related community training environment.

Online Training Discipleship

On a practical level, through this group of global ministry leaders, the research clearly showed that online trainings are a valid method of training since there was measured growth in both knowledge of and practice of soul care. Additionally, it was discovered that more people preferred the offline, recorded versions, typically due to time zones and busy ministry schedules. One surprising impact was that those who watched the videos offline had much higher growth in knowledge and impact than those who watched live. This impact result is likely because those watching live got a limited opportunity to grasp what was being taught, while those utilizing the video could pause, reflect, and review the video for additional reflection and clarification. For both groups there was a desire to have more interaction through discussion boards, groups, or additional submission of questions, and accountability than was offered.

Personal Reflections

As a personal reflection I will walk through several impactful insights around my family, ministry board, church, and the immeasurable value of the Word of God in my life and ministry.

I was fully reminded that my strength in life is undergirded by the incredible gift of those around me. My wife and son graciously and gladly allowed me the hours of time weekly, the weeks away at school, and a postponed vacation to see this project fulfilled. This reminded me of the gift of family and sacrifice made by them, which will be reciprocated over time by me to them as God leads and provides me the opportunity to show them my practical appreciation.

The board of globalLead was also an incredible gift to me in this process. I re-learned their heart for me and the ministry by their commitment to release both the financial support and time needed for this work. Beyond this practical arrangement, I learned the art of balancing time and priorities from the board. Their wisdom in requiring me to not only add this time of study and focus, but to wisely ask me what could be taken off of my ministry plate and delegated since there was more work being added.

The gift of time from my home church as well, where I was actively leading ministry areas as a volunteer, helped me appreciate as a leader the need to allow others time off in active ministry as needed for studies or other important areas for a season.

As a minister, this project reminded me of the importance of starting and finishing all of my ministry in His Word. The authority and sufficiency of the Word was brought into a crystal-clear focus for me. The time to dig into and reflect more into the Word sharpened my tenacity toward an even more biblically-centered ministry and lifestyle. Beyond the entirety of Scripture, I was reminded to look first to Christ as a personal example and keep my teaching and preaching centered upon Jesus Himself. The reminder from Paul to those in Corinth rang through my mind throughout my studies and summarized what I learned about myself about the important basics of the centrality of the Word, Christ Jesus:

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor 2:1-5)

At a personal soul care level, I discovered that I needed to improve in the realms of control and pride. For control issues in my life, the reflections and subsequent applications have led me to reflect on Jesus' surrender of His will at Gethsemane. When I have personally wanted to control my current circumstances and future outcomes, the Lord has brought me back to the passage in Luke 22:39-46 to lead me to be more like Christ and say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42b). Regarding personal pride, it has been far too easy for me to study diligently and produce the needed work in this project, but not take the time to integrate it fully into my own soul along the way. I list this as pride in the sense that I felt as if what I was writing something I knew in principle. As I finish up the project God has continuously brought me back to the principles and challenged me to practice them in my own life as a humbling reminder that a degree and study do not in and of themselves create deep soul level discipleship.

Conclusion

Clearly there is a tremendous need for the simple, bold, and exponential growing message to be proclaimed and appropriated to Christian ministry leaders that Jesus is the best example for soul care needs. This online-based project with leaders globally visibly presented this need based upon the fact that statistics and the surface-level approaches being offered, even in the Christian literature base, are not dealing with the real questions or offering the best answers for those engaged in ministry today.

This study and the implemented project showed that a proper study of soul care for ministry leaders begins with the life of Christ as seen in the Scriptures and that the methods of Christ should be the pillars upon which all other methods of study, lifestyle, and life reflections should be built upon. These Christ-centered, biblical truths that have

been with humanity since the days of Christ are just as applicable for the Christian ministry leader of today as they were for Christ in His ministry in years past. May ministry leaders finish as well as the Savior Himself, who cried out in triumph upon the cross, “It is finished!”

APPENDIX 1

KNOWLEDGE TEST OF THE BIBLICAL CONTENT OF CHRIST-CENTERED RESPONSES TO THE SOUL CARE OF LEADERS

The following instrument is the Test on the Biblical Content of Christ-Centered Responses to the Soul Care of Leaders. The questions provided will test the current knowledge of the selected leaders centered upon the biblical passages taught in the curriculum. This test will be administered prior to the training and immediately following the training. The instrument's purpose is to assess each leader's current biblical understanding of the passages included in the curriculum.

TEST ON THE BIBLICAL CONTENT OF CHRIST-CENTERED
RESPONSES TO THE SOUL CARE OF LEADERS

1. Which of the following disciplines did Jesus engage in when He was in the wilderness for 40 days? (Choose all that are true)
 - Prayed
 - Fasted
 - Meditated on God's Word
 - Solitude
 - Journaling
2. Did Jesus ever pray face down?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I am not sure
3. Based on biblical accounts, when did Jesus usually get away from the crowds to pray?
 - During darkness
 - During light
4. What is the dominate theme of Ephesians 1?
 - Love
 - Predestination
 - Being in Christ
 - The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer
5. What it the main theme of the Book of Ephesians?
 - Physical riches
 - Spiritual riches
 - Family
6. Did Jesus look to His disciples to provide fellowship with Him?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I am not sure
7. What is the dominate theme of Ephesians 3:14-21?
 - Love
 - Predestination
 - Being in Christ
 - The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer
 - I am not sure
8. Was Jesus ever faced with mental anguish?
 - Yes
 - No

9. Which of the following emotions did Jesus feel? (Check all that apply)

- Sorrow
- Troubled
- Distress
- Agony
- Sadness
- Weeping
- All of the above

10. How many times was Jesus betrayed by a disciple?

- Never
- Once
- More than once
- I am not sure

APPENDIX 2

LIFESTYLE SOUL CARE SURVEY

The following instrument is a survey of the lifestyle soul care of the selected globalLead participant leaders. The questions provided will gauge the lifestyle practices of the leaders. This survey will be administered prior to the training and immediately following the training. The instrument's purpose is to assess each leader's soul care lifestyle.

LIFESTYLE SOUL CARE SURVEY

1. I get alone for time with the Lord for more than 10 minutes. (check only one)
 - A. More than once per day
 - B. Once per day
 - C. Several times per week
 - D. Once per week
 - E. Several times per month
 - F. Never

2. I meditate on Scripture (beyond just reading). (check only one)
 - A. More than once per day
 - B. Once per day
 - C. Several times per week
 - D. Once per week
 - E. Several times per month
 - F. Never

3. I pray for more than 5 minutes how often? (check only one)
 - A. More than once per day
 - B. Once per day
 - C. Several times per week
 - D. Once per week
 - E. Several times per month
 - F. Never

4. I have prolonged time with the Lord (more than 30 minutes).
 - A. More than once per day
 - B. Once per day
 - C. Several times per week
 - D. Once per week
 - E. Several times per month
 - F. Never

5. I fast for spiritual purposes.
 - A. Weekly
 - B. Twice per month
 - C. Once a month
 - D. Once a quarter
 - E. Rarely
 - F. Never

6. I position myself physically in prayer in ways that coincide with how I feel.
 - Yes
 - No

7. I have social interaction regularly that is not related to ministry.
 - A. Daily
 - B. Weekly
 - C. Twice per month
 - D. Once a month
 - E. Once a quarter
 - F. Rarely
 - G. Never

8. Within what amount of time do you typically repent of known sin.
- A. Within seconds
 - B. Within hours
 - C. Within the day
 - D. Within the week
 - E. Rarely
 - F. Never
9. I am able to express myself with emotion to the Lord.
- A. Daily
 - B. Weekly
 - C. Twice per month
 - D. Once a month
 - E. Once a quarter
 - F. Rarely
 - G. Never
10. I recognize the impact of stress on my spiritual soul.
- A. More than once per day
 - B. Once per day
 - C. Several times per week
 - D. Once per week
 - E. Several times per month
 - F. Never
11. I meet with someone outside of my church to whom I am accountable for spiritual actions.
- A. Daily
 - B. Weekly
 - C. Twice per month
 - D. Once a month
 - E. Once a quarter
 - F. Rarely
 - G. Never
12. I disconnect from ministry work both physically and mentally for more than 8 hours at a time.
- A. Weekly
 - B. Twice per month
 - C. Once a month
 - D. Once a quarter
 - E. Rarely
 - F. Never

APPENDIX 3

FINAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following survey was given in order to assess the impact and future usage plans of those participants in the Christ-Centered Soul Care training. The survey also assisted in deciphering why the participants chose a specific online method of the training: either synchronous (live) or asynchronous (recorded). The questions were provided through Google Forms.

Final Survey Questions

- Email Address
- Gender:
- Ministry Title or Role: Age:
- Years in full-time ministry:
- Please explain, in detail, why you chose the live or recorded delivery method that you used in taking this course. (If you did some sessions live and some recorded, please comment on why each style was used).
- If you believe this course assisted your understanding of personal soul care, please explain.
- Please explain how this course assisted your application of personal soul care.
- What changes would you like to recommend to enhance the entire course experience?
- I plan to add to or improve my current personal application of spiritual disciplines based on what I learned in the training?
- Please explain, in sentence form and in detail, which disciplines you wish to improve upon and add, as well as what that may look like for you.
- I will be able to integrate at least one of the biblical passages in mentoring relationships with at least 3 other people.
- Please explain, in sentence form and in detail, how you plan to integrate the biblical passages in mentoring.
- I plan to incorporate at least three principles learned from the training into my teaching and/or preaching ministry.

- Please explain, in sentence form and in detail, how you plan to integrate at least three biblical principles into your teaching and/or preaching ministry.

APPENDIX 4
T-TEST RESULTS PAGES

Biblical Content Tests

Using a one-tailed *t*-test.

There was a statistically significant difference ($t(15) = 3.65, p = .0012$) in the amount of biblical knowledge regarding soul care.

Table A1. Pre- and post-biblical content test scores

1st Measurement	2nd Measurement
9	9
7	7
9	9
8	8
8	8
8	8
7	8
8	9
7	9
8	9
8	10
7	10
8	8
6	9
8	10
9	10

Soul Care Application Survey Results

Using a one-tailed *t*-test.

There was a statistically significant difference ($t(15) = 1.92, p = .0369$) in the application of personal soul care.

Table A2. Pre- and post-soul care survey scores

1st Measurement	2nd Measurement
40	41
41	38
47	45
42	43
38	37
33	39
43	44
19	38
44	40
37	46
30	44
45	41
36	38
31	45
32	37
37	34

APPENDIX 5

IMPACT SCORES BASED ON VIEWING METHODS

The table below numerates the results of the participants knowledge and soul care, pre and post course tests. It organizes the results based on methods. A=Asynchronous (recorded viewing). S=Synchronous (live viewing). E=Those who watched equal amounts of sessions in each category. Equal amount viewers (3 session in synchronous and 3 in asynchronous were not counted in either category for the findings in figure 6 in chapter 5.

Table A3. Pre- and post-results organized by delivery method

Method	Participant #	Pre-Knowledge	Pre-Soul	Post-Knowledge	Post-Soul	Difference Soul	Difference Knowledge	Increase?	Same or Less?
A	1	9	40	9	41	1	0	1	1
A	2	7	41	7	38	-3	0		2
A	4	8	42	8	43	1	0	1	1
A	7	8	33	8	39	6	0	1	1
A	9	7	43	8	44	1	1	2	
A	10	8	19	9	38	19	1	2	
A	15	8	30	10	44	14	2	2	
A	17	6	36	8	38	2	2	2	
A	18	6	31	9	45	14	3	2	
Totals								89%	
E	19	8	32	10	37	5	2	2	
E	21	9	37	10	34	-3	1	1	1
Totals									
S	3	9	47	9	45	-2	0		2
S	6	8	38	8	37	-1	0		2
S	12	7	44	9	40	-4	2	1	1
S	13	8	37	9	46	9	1	2	
S	16	7	45	10	41	-4	3	1	1
Totals								60%	

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ABSTRACT

PROVIDING CHRIST-CENTERED SOUL CARE FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS THROUGH GLOBALLEAD INTERNATIONAL

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This project sought to prepare the strategic level staff, volunteers, and key ministry partnership leaders of globalLead to be able to more fully understand and apply soul care principles for leaders from the life of Christ. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of globalLead and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of six passages of Scripture (Matt 4:1-11, Matt 26-36-46, Mark 1:32-39, Luke 5:15-16, Eph 1:3-14, Eph. 3:14-21) to show that Scripture speaks of the stress and temptations of Jesus and how he responded through His Trinitarian union that is exemplary for the soul care of Christian leaders today. The Ephesian passages shine light onto how the example of Jesus was looked upon for those in leadership in Ephesus. Chapter 3 explores the additional literature based upon the fact that Christian ministry leaders face challenges from their human nature, their organization structures, and their unique calling that puts them at an incredibly high risk for burnout. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and teaching methodology of the leadership development curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project seeks to ensure that Christian leaders globally are placing a priority on their own soul care through the example of Christ for the sake of the impact and longevity of the global church.

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