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TRANSFORMING THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CULTURE IN CHURCH REVITALIZATIONS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Education

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by

Donald Ray Sanders, Jr.

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APPROVAL SHEET

TRANSFORMING THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
CULTURE IN CHURCH REVITALIZATIONS:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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To my wife, Stephanie

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PREFACE

To take credit for such a product as this seems wrong. This work is the culmination of five decades of shaping, teaching, influencing, correcting, guiding, and encouraging from so many people and churches along the journey. While these few words cannot adequately express all my gratitude to these individuals, I trust they will convey my deep appreciation for the influence and contributions of these people.

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Finally, words could never express my love, appreciation, and thankfulness for my wonderful wife, Stephanie. You have sacrificed the most through this experience. Thank you for believing in me, encouraging me, and listening to me. Thank you for enduring all the late nights, stacks of books, time away, and neglected stuff around the house. There is no way I could have done this without you by my side. You're the best!

Don Sanders

St. Charles, Missouri
December 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Andrew Davis declares, "The church scene of the West in the twenty-first century is not encouraging."[1] Both empirical research and practical experience validate this view of the state of the effectiveness of the church in America.[2] In 2004, The Barna Group declared, "Since 1991, the adult population in the United States has grown by 15%. During that same period the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million—a 92% increase!" [3] Eight years later, The Pew Research Center published a report confirming the decline of Christianity in America: "The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public—and a third of adults under 30—are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling."[4] This is an ominous state of affairs for an organization charged to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19).[5]

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[1] Andrew M. Davis, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 17.

[2] Rainer notes, "Eight out of ten of the approximately 400,000 churches in the United States are declining or have plateaued." Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 45.

[3] George Barna, "Number of Unchurched Adults Has Nearly Doubled Since 1991," Barna Group, accessed February 3, 2018, https://www.barna.com/research/number-of-unchurched-adults-has-nearly-doubled-since-1991/.

[4] Pew Center Research, "'Nones' on the Rise," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), October 9, 2012, http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/. Lipka further confirms the decline in 2015, "The 'nones,' a category that includes people who self-identify as atheists or agnostics, as well as those who say their religion is 'nothing in particular,' now make up 23% of the U.S. adults, up from 16% in 2007." Michael Lipka, "Religious 'Nones' Are Not Only Growing, They're Becoming More Secular," *Pew Research Center* (blog), November 11, 2015, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/11/religious-nones-are-not-only-growing-theyre-becoming-more-secular/.

[5] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

Two influential studies by prominent evangelical researchers confirm this challenging assessment of the state of the North American church. In *Breakout Churches*, Thom Rainer searched for churches that grew after experiencing several years of decline. He began with data on 50,000 churches and discovered only thirteen that met the criteria of a "breakout church."[6] Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, in *Comeback Churches*, provide pages of denominational statistics detailing the decline of the American church, including the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.[7] When these numbers are combined with the realization of the amount of resources (time, money, and talent) invested in declining and closing churches, an imperative exists for church leaders to understand and commit to church revitalization.[8]

The Research Problem

"Church revitalization" has grown into a ubiquitous term. The number of books and resources published on the subject is growing rapidly.[9] As a concept, "church revitalization" seems self-explanatory but can be nuanced. Andrew Davis emphasizes church health in revitalization as "the effort to restore by biblical means a once healthy church from a present level of disease to a state of spiritual health as defined by the Word

[6] Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 20–21. Rainer used six criteria to define a "breakout church." (1) Record at least 26 conversions annually; (2) sustain an average conversion ratio of no higher than 20:1 (members to conversions) for at least one year since its breakout year; (3) experience a period of decline or plateau for several years prior to breakout; (4) experience substantial new growth for several years following the breakout; (5) the slump, reversal, and breakout all took place under the same pastor; (6) Impact on the community since the breakout.

[7] Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B & H Pub. Group, 2007). Their study focused on 324 churches that met the following criteria: (1) experienced five years of plateau or decline, defined as worship attendance growing less than 10% in a five-year period; (2) the period of decline was followed by significant growth over the next two to five years, including a membership to baptism ratio of 35:1 or lower and a 10% increase in attendance each year (xiii).

[8] "The American Church–The State of Established Churches 2000-2007," accessed February 5, 2018, http://www.theamericanchurch.org/free-state-of-established-churches-2000-2007-download.html. Between 2000-2007 only four states saw numeric growth in attendance in established churches. These states were Kentucky (+1.5%), Virginia (1.6%), Vermont (0.3%) and Hawaii (0.6%). Twenty states (primarily in the South) saw declines of 0-10% while the remaining twenty-six (primarily in the Northeast, upper Midwest, and West) saw declines of over 10%.

[9] A search on Amazon.com for "Church Revitalization" yielded 135 results.

of God."[10] Others, such as Stetzer and Dodson, as well as Rainer, emphasize numerical growth. While there may well be general agreement on the concept of church revitalization, difficulty arises when further defining ambiguous terms such as "period," "plateau," "greater," "church health," and "growth," and applying them to specific churches and contexts. Chapter 3 addresses the specific criteria for "revitalized" churches employed in this study.

Authors writing about church revitalization routinely make the case for engaging in revitalization efforts. These appeals recognize first and foremost the spiritual dimension of church revitalization. Hileman notes, from a spiritual perspective, church leaders must understand that "declining membership and attendance, fewer baptisms, and lower financial giving are not the problem; they are the symptoms of a deeper spiritual problem."[11] Only after addressing the spiritual nature of church revitalization can a church focus on the practical issues.

From a practical standpoint, what is the primary success factor of a church revitalization? Simply put, the embodiment, development, and deployment of well-trained church leaders ranks as the number one factor. Stetzer and Dodson list "leadership" as the primary factor contributing to church revitalization.[12] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck link poor church health to the lack of intentional leadership development. They write, "Quite simply, a failure to equip people for ministry results in an unhealthy church."[13] Robert Stuart adds his voice to the need for leadership development in church revitalization, "Weak leaders produce weak churches, and weak churches are ineffective

[10] Davis, *Revitalize*, 20.

[11] Leah J. Hileman, "Sometimes We Plant, Sometimes We Fertilize: Making Church Revitalization a Priority," *Brethren Life and Thought* 59, no. 2 (September 2014): 52.

[12] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 34.

[13] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2016), 35. Citing a 2012 Lifeway Research study, they note that fewer than 25% of church leaders said they had any semblance of a program for developing and training people for ministry.

in reaching a dying culture with the gospel of Christ."[14] The need for understanding the role of leadership development in church revitalization becomes paramount.

Current Status of the Research Problem

The literature on leadership development and church revitalization falls into three categories: (1) empirical research studies on church revitalization; (2) anecdotal and practical summaries from leaders with experience in church revitalization; and (3) works devoted to leadership development in the general church context. Each category of the literature possesses strengths and weaknesses in addressing the issue of leadership development in the specific environment of church revitalization. Empirical studies identify the importance of leadership and the desirable qualities of leaders in the process of church revitalization, but typically lack details on how to develop leaders in this specific context. Anecdotal and practical summaries identify the importance of leadership and traits of leaders, and may even offer specific programmatic direction for developing leaders, but these works draw from limited contexts without empirical substantiation. General leadership development works offer extensive direction for developing leaders without specific application to church revitalization contexts. Examples of the strengths and weaknesses of each literature category follow.

Comeback Churches by Stetzer and Dodson and *Breakout Churches* by Rainer serve as excellent examples of empirical research projects of church revitalization. As previously noted, Stetzer and Dodson's research identified leadership as the number one factor in revitalizations.[15] The authors summarize the functions of leaders in

[14] Robert Stuart is inclusive in his use of the term "leader," stating, "I use the word *elder* as the term for a leader in the church, but I have every intention of including Baptist deacons, Episcopal vestrymen, Methodist council members, and the like. When I write *session*, I also mean *elder or leadership council*. It doesn't matter what church leadership is called; though there are many extraordinary shepherds in the church, the major illness in most denominations is the same—weak or poor leadership." Robert D. Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016), 13.

[15] The authors define a leader as "a person involved in a process of influencing and developing a group of people in order to accomplish a purpose by means of supernatural power." Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 37.

revitalization. However, the heading of "Developing Leaders" provides only four anecdotal references to vague commitments to developing leaders.[16] They address the necessity of godly leadership in church revitalization while offering little information on how churches develop leadership. Similarities exist in Rainer's work. He argues for two chapters (chaps. 2 and 3) on the importance of "Acts 6/7" leaders to turnaround churches.[17] Ultimately, Rainer concludes that "Acts 6/7 leaders are concerned about their ministries well beyond their own tenure or even lifetime. That is why we call them legacy leaders. We believe that many of the characteristics of Acts 6/7 leaders can be learned and applied by others."[18] Despite this assertion, the author provides no process for developing these leaders.

In his PhD dissertation, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study," Steve Hudson employs Behavioral Event Interviews (BEI) combined with Delphi questionnaires with an expert panel to construct a competency model for church revitalizers. His findings reinforce the importance of leadership in revitalizations. The six most frequently observed competencies were (1) organizational awareness; (2) team leadership; (3) initiative; (4) conceptual thinking; (5) information seeking; and (6) relationship building. He concludes, "The relationships between the top competencies suggest that these six competencies generally, and the top three competencies in particular, may prove to be of primary importance in training, selecting, and assessing successful church revitalizers.[19]

Church Revitalization from the Inside Out by Robert D. Stuart, *Revitalize* by

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[16] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 50–52.

[17] Rainer uses Acts 1-6 as a paradigm for levels of leadership in the church. Leaders in Acts 6/7 are "Legacy Leaders" and have a burden for a successful ministry beyond their own lifetime. Fewer than 1% of leaders fall into this category. Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 45.

[18] Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 67.

[19] Joseph Stephen Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 155.

Andrew M. Davis, *From Embers to a Flame* by Harry Reeder, and *Can these Bones Live?* by William Henard serve as four examples of anecdotal and practical summaries. *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* specifically addresses the issues of leadership in church revitalizations. Stuart summarizes the thrust of the book: "The spiritual health of the local church is directly related to the spiritual health of her leaders. When the health of leaders improves, so too does the health of the church."[20] Fourteen chapters describe and define the traits and actions of spiritual leaders without any direction on how to develop them. In *From Embers to a Flame*, Reeder acknowledges, "For your church to go from embers to a flame, you must develop leaders, and then deploy them in the church and in the society around you."[21] The author devotes an entire chapter to leadership development (chapter 10, "Revitalization Strategy 8: Servant Leadership Multiplication"). Descriptions of leadership traits, responsibilities and practices fill the chapter. A proposed curriculum for leadership development provides helpful direction. In *Revitalize*, Davis devotes one chapter to leadership development (chapter 14, "Develop and Establish Men as Leaders"). Full of biblical advice and axioms for leaders, the chapter also includes specific advice for transitioning to a plurality of elders leadership format.[22] In *Can These Bones Live?,* Henard writes fourteen chapters on practical advice for church revitalization while indirectly addressing leadership and omitting anything on leadership development.[23]

Designed to Lead by Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck and *Building Leaders* by Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini serve as two examples of works on general

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[20] Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*, 15.

[21] Harry L. Reeder and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church*, rev. and exp. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 2008), 151.

[22]Davis, *Revitalize*, 180–81.

[23] William David Henard, *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015). The only discussion of leadership is on evaluating and changing the leadership structure (182-87).

leadership development in the context of the local church. In *Designed to Lead*, the authors contend that "the church is uniquely set apart to develop and deploy leaders for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel . . . in all spheres of life."[24] The authors produce an intricate blueprint for leadership development in the church that focuses on conviction, culture, and constructs. In *Building Leaders*, the authors lament the lack of leadership development in church: "Few [churches] have informal leadership development programs in place. Fewer still have established formal, intentional systems for developing leaders through the organization."[25] The remainder of the book meticulously describes and unpacks an intricate system of leadership development. While these types of works earn high marks for providing systems for leadership development, they lack a connection to a specific context for implementation or empirical research to substantiate applied success.

Significance of the Study

While the literature and research on church revitalization identifies leadership as a significant factor, it offers little specifically on leadership development in the context of church revitalization. This study seeks to understand the role of leadership development in church revitalizations, identify common leadership development practices, and generalize effective practices into transferable principles.

Research Purpose

This individual research study exists as a component of a larger study conducted by a team of seven Doctor of Education students at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This study employs an explanatory multiphase sequential mixed methods design. This type of study collects quantitative data first and then explains the

[24]Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 2.

[25] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 11.

quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. The quantitative strand contains two phases. The first phase identifies churches meeting the criteria of "revitalization" through data from the Annual Church Profile collected by Lifeway Research.[26] The second phase employs a quantitative survey of those churches meeting the above criteria to assess the presence of intentional leadership development initiatives during the church revitalization. The third phase of the study is a qualitative strand which employs follow up interviews to explain the quantitative results.[27] The purpose of this study is to understand and describe the role that leadership development plays in revitalization for churches.[28]

Research Questions

The larger research project is comprised of seven individual research projects. All seven individual projects employ the same research questions for the quantitative strand of the project (phases 1 and 2). Each individual project employs subject specific qualitative research questions for phase 3.

Quantitative Research Questions

Six research questions are considered. The quantitative research questions are as follows: (1) What percentage of SBC churches are plateaued or declining? (2) Of those churches that have experienced decline, what percentage have experienced revitalization? (3) Of those SBC churches experiencing revitalization, what percentage emphasized leadership development in the process of revitalization?

[26] These criteria were determined jointly by the EdD research team.

[27] John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2011), 155.

[28] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 135.

Qualitative Research Questions

The qualitative research questions are as follows: (4) In what ways does intentional leadership development contribute to church revitalization? (5) What changes to the church's organizational culture facilitated effective leadership development? (6) Which principles and best practices of leadership development can be identified for use in other church revitalization contexts?

Methodology Overview

The study examines factors present in church revitalizations within the Southern Baptist Convention. The larger study examines to what extent changes in discipleship, evangelism, leadership, mission (both national and international), prayer, and worship influence church revitalizations. The research team jointly conducted a mixed methods study consisting of a quantitative study that was shared and utilized with all members. Each team member then conducted a qualitative study drawn from the shared quantitative data.

Quantitative Phase

Phase 1. This quantitative study defined the criteria of "revitalization" and identified the churches from the population that met the criteria. As defined above, the population consists of SBC churches who have completed the Annual Church Profile as compiled by Lifeway Research.[29] The research team applied the revitalization criteria to this group of churches to arrive at the "revitalized" church population. This phase served to further define the group of churches for the next phase.

[29] Lifeway Research states, "The Annual Church Profile is an annual statistical report churches voluntarily submit to the Southern Baptist Convention. The reported numbers provide an annual snapshot of the impact Southern Baptists are making through their local churches in penetrating their communities with the Gospel." "The Annual Church Profile: Vital and Reliable," accessed February 22, 2018, http://www.sbclife.net/Articles/2014/06/sla13.

Phase 2. This phase utilized a quantitative survey to the "revitalized" churches from phase 1. This survey combined specific items covering the six research areas (discipleship, evangelism, leadership, mission (both national and international), prayer, and worship) as each team member contributed to the survey. The purpose of this survey was to identify churches that exhibit specific characteristics of revitalization. This group formed the subjects for the next phase. The following survey items were administered concerning the level of leadership development that occurred during the revitalization process.

1. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership development processes which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization.
2. Prior to the revitalization process, a culture of effective leadership development existed within the church.
3. Leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process.[30]

Qualitative Phase

Phase 3. Interviews were conducted with churches whose revitalization included a significant component of leadership development.[31] Interviews were conducted with individuals in each church who had a significant role in leading the church through the revitalization process. Interview data was compiled and examined to determine significant principles and best practices for leadership development.[32]

Definition of the Research Population

The research population consisted of churches that are members of the Southern Baptist Convention, have experienced revitalization, and have indicated that leadership development played a role in the revitalization.

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[30] The survey items were scored on a 6-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Disagree, 4=Somewhat Agree, 5=Agree, 6=Strongly Agree.

[31] The intention was to identify and interview twelve church leaders in this phase.

[32] See appendix 2 for interview questions.

Delimitations of the Research

The population for this study was limited to churches meeting the criteria of the methodology. Thus, the following delimitations apply:

1. The research was delimited to SBC churches that completed the ACP (Annual Church Profile) for the defined years and met the criteria for revitalization.
2. The research was delimited to churches that agreed to participate in the study and indicated leadership development played a role in the revitalization.

Limits of Generalization

The quantitative research was drawn from a population of churches that indicated leadership development played a role in the revitalization process. The results cannot be generalized back into all churches that have experienced revitalization, all SBC churches, or evangelical churches as a whole. However, the qualitative research suggests trends, themes, and practices that can be considered, shaped, and implemented to congregations beyond the study sample.

Terminology

Church revitalization. "An intentional change of culture and praxis by members of a church community, after a period of church plateau or decline, that leads to greater church health and numerical growth."[33] For this study, a revitalized church is defined as (1) experienced less than 10% growth in average yearly worship attendance over five years prior to the turnaround; (2) experienced 10% or greater average yearly worship attendance in two of the following five years; while (3) also achieving a 20:1 average yearly attendance to baptism ration in those same years.

Declining church. A church experiencing a numerical decline in average yearly worship attendance of greater than 10% over a five-year period of time.[34]

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[33] Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization," 10.

[34] See also Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, xiii.

Growing church. A church experiencing a numerical increase in average yearly worship attendance of greater than 10% over a period of time, coming from new disciple growth as measured by a 20:1 average yearly worship attendance to baptism ratio.[35]

Leader. A person serving a church in a position of influence. This can be a paid or volunteer position.[36]

Leadership development. "An intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every level of ministry to assess and develop their Christian character and to acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills."[37]

Plateaued church. A church experiencing less than 10% growth and less than 10% decline of yearly average worship attendance over a five-year period of time. [38]

Conclusion

Given the prominence of leadership in the success of church revitalization, an imperative exists to understand the dynamics at play. If the church is to effectively fulfill its mission, the process of church revitalization must be analyzed and understood. Thus, the phenomenon of church revitalization can only be understood when the role of leadership is understood. How does leadership, the development of leaders and leadership abilities contribute to church revitalization? This study begins to find those answers.

This chapter identified a void in the literature concerning leadership development in the process of church revitalization. While the literature addresses individual components of leadership development and church revitalization, a lack of

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[35] Thom S. Rainer, "Church Growth and Evangelism in the Book of Acts," *Criswell Theological Review* 5, no. 1 (1990): 59.

[36] Stetzer and Dodson's full definition of Christian or biblical leadership is, "A person involved in a process of influencing and developing a group of people in order to accomplish a purpose by means of supernatural power." For the purpose of this study, the above abbreviated and modified definition of a leader will be used. Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 37.

[37] Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 23.

[38] Rainer defines a "plateaued church" as a church that experiences a growth rate below the population growth rate of their communities. Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 245.

intersection exists. Chapter 2 further examines the literature on the topics of church revitalization and leadership development to precisely identify areas of deficiency.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces both the need for church revitalization and the importance of leadership within the revitalization process. This study seeks to understand the role of leadership development within specific church revitalization experiences. Chapter 2 provides the necessary foundation for understanding the ideas and practices related to this study. The first topic considered will be church revitalization. Foundational components of church revitalization will be reviewed, including descriptions and definitions, biblical foundations, the need, challenges, and principles drawn from the church revitalization literature. Next, transforming church culture will be explored. Specifically, an analysis of the general concepts of organizational culture, church culture, and principles for transforming church culture will be considered. Finally, leadership development will be addressed. In particular, the topics of defining leadership development, the spiritual aspects of leadership development, various models, and the role leadership development plays in church revitalizations will be covered. This overview will demonstrate a void in the literature concerning leadership development in church revitalizations. Therefore, this chapter argues for more research targeted at understanding the role of leadership development in the process of church revitalization.

Church Revitalization

As noted in chapter 1, the literature on church revitalization tends to fall into two broad categories: (1) empirical research studies that focus on many contexts; and (2) anecdotal descriptions drawn from one specific context. This section will trace a path

through both categories to synthesize specific themes related to this study. First, a definition and description of church revitalization will be established. Second, the biblical foundation for church revitalization will be examined. Next, the need for church revitalization will be framed. Finally, the challenges to church revitalization will be summarized.

Church Revitalization Defined

Church revitalization has grown into both a ubiquitous and ambiguous term.[1] In one sense, it is a straightforward descriptor of a church that has experienced some sort of turnaround, renewal, or gained positive momentum. At the same time, anecdotal sources speak of church revitalization in general descriptions while empirical studies all impose unique criteria for what qualifies as "revitalized." Michael Ross sees revitalization through the lens of growth, stating, "[Revitalization is] the process whereby a church is refocused on its mission of both evangelism and nurturing, and renewed in its efforts to minister to others so that numerical, spiritual, and organizational growth occur and are sustained."[2] In contrast, Andrew Davis defines revitalization is spiritual terms, writing, "Revitalization describes the effort to restore by biblical means a once healthy church from a present level of disease to a state of spiritual health, as defined by the Word of God."[3] Joseph Stephen Hudson encompasses both emphases, stating that revitalization is "an intentional change of culture and praxis by members of a church community, after a period of church plateau or decline, that leads to greater health and

[1] Regarding ubiquity of revitalization, Hudson notes that the publication of books and theses and dissertations on church revitalization have increased steadily for the past thirty years. Regarding ambiguity of the term revitalization, he also observes, "Definitions of church revitalization remain inconsistent across popular and academic literature and often use imprecise language." Joseph Stephen Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 21–23.

[2] Michael F. Ross, *Preaching for Revitalization: How to Revitalize Your Church through Your Pulpit* (Glasgow: Mentor, 2006), 21.

[3] Andrew M. Davis, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 20.

numeric growth."[4] This definition, which will be used throughout the rest of this study, is helpful as it brings to the forefront intentionality, culture change, process, church health and numerical growth.

Within the literature, three emphases of the church revitalization movement emerge. First is an emphasis on church health rather than just numerical growth. Second, there is an emphasis on individual transformation as a catalyst for congregational revitalization. Finally, an emphasis on spiritual renewal rather than programmatic planning is evident. The following three sections discuss the relevance of these emphases to the current study.

An emphasis on church health rather than just numerical growth. The modern church growth movement casts a long shadow on the ideas and expectations of the American church.[5] Thom Rainer defines the church growth movement as "including all the resources of people, institutions, and publications dedicated to expounding concepts and practicing the principles of church growth, beginning with the foundational work of Donald McGavran in 1995."[6] As the movement matured and then splintered, the idea that growth of any kind defined a successful church emerged. Rainer evaluates this misconception as, "A number of voices have been heard that are driven more by popular notions of Church Growth than by a root understanding of the Church Growth movement."[7] Gary McIntosh shares the same view: "While some church leaders understand that the primary focus of church growth is the fulfillment of the great commission, a common perception is that church growth is all about techniques,

[4] Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization," 10.

[5] Rainer notes, "The movement's practical impact evidenced at the local church level is beyond measure." Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 68.

[6] Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 21–22.

[7] Gary McIntosh, introduction to *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views*, ed. Gary McIntosh, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 20.

methods, and models."[8] This diversion from the roots of the church growth movement led some revitalization voices to distance the concept from the idea of church revitalization. Harry Reeder and David Swavely draw a sharp distinction between this misconception of church growth and the perceived goal of revitalization: "The objective should not be church growth, but church health, because growth must proceed from health."[9] Numerical growth alone does not equate to church health. McIntosh, a direct descendant of McGavran's coaching tree, seeks to bridge the tension and restore the concept that church growth and church revitalization are similar concepts.[10] He defends the core ideas of church growth: "I have concluded that church growth principles, theology, and theory, rightly understood, still provide biblical answers on how to grow a faithful church."[11]

Tom Cheyney summarizes the church revitalization movement as, "a movement within protestant evangelicalism which emphasizes the mission work of turning a plateaued or declining church around and moving it back towards growth."[12] This description reveals a distinction between the two movements. According to Rainer, whereas the church revitalization movement speaks in terms of missional spirituality and missional work, the church growth movement encompasses all types of growth in a church.[13] Davis counters the idea of measuring church success by noting, "Numerical

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[8] Gary McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 17.

[9] Harry L. Reeder and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church*, rev. and exp. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2008), 29.

[10] McIntosh contends, "What most pastors and church leaders know of church growth comes from popular authors who sometimes derive their ideas from sources other than the Bible. McGavran, on the other hand, was a biblical missiologist. He coined the term *church growth* as a synonym for effective evangelism, which he believed included winning converts to Christ and helping them become responsible members of local congregations. While he used modern research to enhance his understanding, the core of his insights arose from his understanding of God's authoritative Word." Gary McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 9. See also Gary McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 13.

[11] McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 16.

[12] Tom Cheyney, *Practical Tools for Reinventing the Dying Church* (Orlando: Renovate Publishing Group, 2017), 94.

[13] Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 22–23. Rainer further identifies the three sources of

growth alone cannot be a measure of spiritual health. Some of the unhealthiest churches in the nation are characterized by the false doctrine of the prosperity gospel, but they are huge and growing numerically."[14] While the movements have different origins and popular representations, the two movements do overlap as the traditional core of the church growth movement shares the same goal as the church revitalization movement: the return of biblical vitality and growth to God's churches.

An emphasis on individual transformation as a catalyst for congregational revitalization. While church revitalization literature emphasizes both church health and numerical growth, the literature also identifies individual transformation as a catalyst for congregational revitalization. This characteristic manifests itself in two related ideas in the literature. First, the idea that church revitalization begins with a single leader, pastor, or a very small group of leaders undergirds the anecdotal side of the literature. In the most basic assumption, authors assume that one or two people interested in helping or revitalizing their church are reading the book. Speaking directly to this, Davis writes, "It is my prayer that God will use this book to give you hope that he can do amazing work before your eyes. The revitalization of your church could end up being the most significant act of service you will ever render to Christ."[15] Mark Clifton issues a warning to his reader: "Replanting churches is still not easy. As you read this book, you will quickly discover that replanting a dying church isn't for the faint of heart."[16] In a similar fashion, Brian Croft encourages the reader to "read this book and consider this biblical

church growth are biological growth of babies born within the congregation, transfer growth when one church grows at the expense of another, and conversion growth when a person makes a commitment to Jesus Christ. Church growth can also be classified into four types of growth: internal growth focusing on spiritual maturity, expansion growth focusing on numerical participation, extension growth by planting churches, and bridging growth by planting churches in unevangelized cultures.

[14] Davis, *Revitalize*, 19.

[15] Davis, *Revitalize*, 28.

[16] Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 20.

approach. Consider as the Holy Spirit balances God's mighty power at work in faithful, persistent, yet broken jars of clay to build His church and make Christ gloriously known."[17] Church revitalization begins as a yearning in the heart of one who desires for God to bring a church back to life.

An individual pastor also becomes the source of congregational revitalization as he follows the leading of God and directs the creation of a new vision of the church. Preparation for leading the revitalization effort recurs frequently in the literature with chapters devoted to this important concept.[18] C. Peter Wagner notes the importance of the pastor in church growth: "In America, the primary catalytic factor for growth in a local church is the pastor. In every growing, dynamic church I have studied, I have found a key person whom God is using to make it happen."[19] This pastor will carry the vision and direct the path of revitalization in a very specific role as the primary teacher and preacher of the church. "True church revitalization can never take place and be maintained unless it is the product of a biblical pulpit."[20] However, before revitalization can emanate from the preacher, through the pulpit, and to the congregation, the preacher must allow God to spiritually revitalize himself.[21] Cheyney aptly states the importance of the pastor

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[17] Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2016), 19.

[18] Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 33–42; Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 115–38; Reeder and Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame*, 107–26; R. Albert Mohler, "Christ Will Build and Rebuild His Church: The Need for 'Generation Replant,'" in *A Guide to Church Revitalization*, ed. R. Albert Mohler (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2015), 18–25; McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 93–106; William David Henard, *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 115–28.

[19] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 61. Wagner's leadership and influence in the church growth movement was immense. Shortly after Wagner's death, Ed Stetzer summarized Wagner's enigmatic career. He writes, "If you knew Peter Wagner, people would often ask, 'Which Peter Wagner?' They asked not because he was two-faced, but because he changed his views so much. If you showed up in the 80's, you met a very different (non-charismatic, for example), Peter Wagner who led the church growth movement. In the new millennium, he largely is known for what would be called the New Apostolic Reformation . . . and writing a book (and named a new movement) called The Third Wave." Ed Stetzer, "C. Peter Wagner (1930-2016), Some Thoughts on His Life and Passing," *The Exchange with Ed Stetzer*, October 22, 2016, https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2016/october/in-memory-of-c-peter-wagner.html. The quote from Wagner above predates his emphasis on and contributions to the charismatic movement.

[20] Ross, *Preaching for Revitalization*, 19.

[21] Tom Cheyney and Larry Wynn, *Preaching towards Church Revitalization and Renewal!*

preparing for revitalization as, "Prepare yourself spiritually and then prepare your leaders spiritually. Then begin preparing your church spiritually for renewal."[22]

The second idea revolves around dealing with past conflict in the church in a specific and biblical manner. The basic assumption of church revitalization is that a church suffers from spiritual disease. Croft crystalizes the idea: "If there are two primary marks of churches needing revitalization it would arguably be the absence of spiritual life and the presence of hostile division among those in the church."[23] Henard also draws attention to dealing with the past, noting, "One of the primary reasons that a church turns inward comes from present or past conflicts within the congregation."[24] If the past issues of disagreement, sin, and conflict remain unresolved, the individual issues will prevent the congregation from moving forward. Therefore, both Henard and Robert Stuart devote specific chapters to guiding prospective revitalizers through the process of forgiveness on an individual basis.[25] Dealing with the past is not limited to conflict, though. McIntosh stresses the need for individual repentance that leads congregational renewal: "Based on my experience, few churches need to repent from sexual or ethical sins (although some do). Most need to repent from a lack of love for the lost, a loss of passion for God's mission, and bitterness toward their fellow Christians."[26] Individual renewal necessarily precedes congregational renewal. How this individual renewal occurs is the focus of the final theme of the church revitalization literature.

(Maitland, FL: Xulon Elite, 2015), 39–40.

[22] Tom Cheyney, *The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization and Renewal: Biblical Foundations for Church Revitalization* (Orlando: Renovate Publishing Group, 2016), 39.

[23] Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 30.

[24] Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*, 138.

[25] Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*, 137–46; Robert D. Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016), 185–94.

[26] McIntosh notes, "Revitalization begins with prayers of contrition and confession and also acts of restitution for ills perpetrated in the past. Revitalization begins when church members admit they have a problem." McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church*, 60.

An emphasis on spiritual renewal rather than programmatic planning.

Davis summarizes the role of spiritual transformation in church revitalization as "nothing less that the transformation of individual human hearts—by either conversion or sanctification—on a church-wide scale."[27] The literature bears this theme out in two specific ways. The first is a focus on individual spiritual growth within the context of revitalization. The second is a conscious decision to focus programming of the church to allow for spiritual growth.

Dever maintains that a mark of a healthy church is spiritual growth that leads to numerical growth.[28] Reeder and Swavely devote an entire chapter to personal gospel transformation, emphasizing the spiritual disciplines and church discipline.[29] The goal of the transformation, though, is to bring the congregation into a deeper sense of God's working in the revitalization process and devoted, holy lives. Davis emphasizes this idea as well, observing that "a healthy church will embrace both levels of God's holiness: first they will have deep abiding awe at God's infinite majesty; second, they will come out from "Babylon" and live pure and holy lives, putting sin to death by the Spirit."[30] Within a chapter devoted to emphasizing discipleship as a necessary component of church growth, McIntosh warns of focusing too much and too long on spiritual renewal. McIntosh writes, "Leaders who desire to see biblical church growth in their church must be careful not to allow an inward focus on renewing the health of their church to become an excuse for a lack of numerical growth."[31]

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[27] Davis, *Revitalize*, 79.

[28] Dever maintains, "A healthy church has a pervasive concern with church growth—not simply growing numbers but growing members. . . . Growth is a sign of life. Growing trees are living trees, and growing animals are living animals. When something stops growing, it dies." Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 225.

[29] Reeder and Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame*, 83–93.

[30] Davis, *Revitalize*, 66.

[31] McIntosh provides this explanation for the warning: "An overemphasis on renewing the spiritual health of a church can actually make that church sick. When a church focuses on spiritual renewal for too long, it becomes self-centered and loses a sense of mission . . . . In contrast, churches that pursue a biblical church growth develop a centrifugal (outward) force that focuses on making disciples." McIntosh,

The second way spiritual renewal is emphasized is through the programming choices of the church. Rather than propose new programs that compete for time on the church calendar, the literature suggests that church life be viewed with a new focus. Rainer and Eric Geiger studied churches that take a simple approach to programming and those that take a complex and cluttered approach. They concluded that "churches with a simple process for reaching and maturing people are expanding the kingdom . . . and effectively advancing the movement of the gospel. Conversely, complex churches are struggling and anemic…and not alive."[32] Clifton sees this principle as an imperative for revitalization: "Simplifying your church structure will have multiple benefits throughout the replanting process, but maybe the most important benefit is to give young families the needed margin to live the Christian life."[33] Kevin Harney and Bob Bouwer share the concern with over programming at the expense of spiritual growth. They observe, "When a church is guided by a crystal-clear vision, we find ourselves doing less instead of more . . . . Wise churches learn to do less busy stuff so they can do more of what matters most."[34]

This section has established a definition for church revitalization and examined three significant themes that surface in the literature. These themes emphasize church health, individual transformation, and spiritual renewal. The following section examines the biblical basis for church revitalization found within the literature.

The Biblical Basis for Church Revitalization

One of the challenges in revitalization research is the ambiguous use of the

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Biblical Church Growth, 74.

[32] Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2006), 14.

[33] Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 67.

[34] Kevin Harney and Bob Bouwer, *The U-Turn Church: New Direction for Health and Growth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 51.

term. Hudson notes, Terms like r*eplanting*, *revival*, and *renewal* are often used as equivalents with revitalization."[35] When the term *church revitalization* is used in a generic, conceptual manner, it begins to overlap with these other general biblical themes. For example, Bobby Jamieson defines revitalization as a concept that overlaps with biblical themes. He writes, "Church revitalization—bringing to life dying churches by dealing with the causes of decline and building toward faithfulness—is a biblical burden."[36] This is the approach many authors take in establishing the biblical foundation for revitalization.[37] As such, three specific passages common to the revitalization literature will be considered. First, Ezekiel 37 will be examined, then the book of Acts (specifically Acts 14 and 15) will be considered, and finally the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 will be explored.

Ezekiel 37: The Valley of Dry Bones. The graphic nature of God resurrecting a valley of skeletal remains back to life portrays the nature of church revitalization. It is easy to see that church revitalizers draw inspiration from this passage for their calling to bring dead churches back to life. Ezekiel's words, spoken to the captives in Babylon, serve as a summary of God's miraculous ability to bring His people not only back from physical captivity, but also from a state of spiritual death and decay. "Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause

[35] Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization," 22.

[36] Bobby Jamieson, "The Bible's Burden for Church Revitalization," *9Marks Journal*, (December 2011): 19.

[37] The following authors appeal to Ezek 37: Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 13–15; Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 23–33; Davis, *Revitalize*, 31; Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*, 1–2; Brandon Keith Moore, "A Biblical and Theological Vision for the Revitalization of Churches" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 128. The following authors appeal to the book of Acts: Brandon Edward Conner, "Church Revitalization: Insights from the Ministry of the Apostle Paul" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 42–43; Jamieson, "The Bible's Burden," 20; Moore, "A Biblical and Theological Vision," 130–31; Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 34–67; Tom Cheyney, *The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization and Renewal: Biblical Foundations for Church Revitalization* (Orlando: Renovate Publishing Group, 2016), 7–10. The following authors appeal to Rev 2-3: Cheyney and Wynn, *Preaching*, 174–96; Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 14; Davis, *Revitalize*, 62; Jamieson, "The Bible's Burden," 21; Mohler, "Christ Will Build," 8–9; Moore, "A Biblical and Theological Vision," 132–41; Robert D. Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016), 200.

flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek 37:5-6). Clifton identifies the cause of institutional death in the passage: "Whether it's sixth century BC or twenty-first-century North America, spiritually dead institutions of faith die for one reason and one reason only: they stop loving what they once loved and stop doing what they once did."[38] Croft sees that Ezekiel 37 "reveals that God is powerful enough to do what a dying and divided church needs: breathe life where there is not life and unite those who cannot be united."[39] Finally, Henard, titling his book after the passage, identifies two essential ingredients for church revitalization in the passage: the necessity of preaching God's Word and the necessity of God's Spirit.[40] Each of these authors sees Ezekiel's description of God's power to bring Israel back from physical exile and spiritual death as the foundation for church revitalization.[41]

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[38] Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 14.

[39] Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 24.

[40] Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*, 2.

[41] Cooper reminds readers of Ezekiel's vision that "Ezekiel's primary purpose was not to teach a doctrine of the resurrection. The main purpose of the vision was the restoration of Israel." Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 320. Three features of the passage are relevant for church revitalization. First, the situation seems hopeless. God asks the question, "Can these bones live?" Block notes that "the question is ridiculous! Ezekiel's own tradition knows of people coming back to life, but only in cases of recent death." Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 374. Alexander notes that the bones "were dry, an obvious condition of bones from people who have been dead a very long time." Ralph H. Alexander, *Ezekiel*, in vol. 6 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1990), 925. Second, Ezekiel plays an important role as the agent through which the Lord works. Allen notes, "A recurring element in the vision, which is both resumed in the interpretation and reflected on in the supplement of v14, is the prominent role played by Ezekiel as an agent of renewal. He functions not merely as an observer but as a participant." Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 188. Third, the role of the Spirit is essential in the renewal process. Cooper states that "the enabling power of the Holy Spirit is also portrayed in the passage. The Spirit empowered the dead, dry bones and gave them life and animation." Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 325. Alexander sees an important role of the Spirit as well. The resurrection was "in two stages; first physical (or national) restoration and then spiritual renewal (keeping in mind that the word for breath, wind, and spirit is the same in Hebrew). Alexander, *Ezekiel*, 925; Finally, the passage offers hope beyond the return of national Israel. Block observes, "It also holds out hope for a defeated and moribund church. Revival cannot be worked up from within; it will occur only as God, by his grace, breathes on us again and brings us back to life. After all, Ezekiel had witnessed, as as he had heard on dozens of occasions, the Lord is Yahweh. He has spoken, He will make good on his word." Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 392.

Paul in Acts: Revitalization in action. Moving to the New Testament, other revitalization authors view the account of the early church in the book of Acts as a pattern for church revitalization. Rainer uses the leadership pattern of Acts 1-7 as a paradigm for church leadership in revitalizations (table 1 displays his model).[42] After seeing these leadership characteristics in his research of breakout churches, Rainer questions if all leaders can attain the highest level of Acts 6/7 leadership. While acknowledging that people are born with certain gifts that lean toward leadership, he concludes that "after hearing from these breakout church leaders, that many of the traits can be learned and sharply honed."[43]

Table 1. Rainer's Levels of Leadership in Acts[44]

Level of Leadership	*Description*	*Percentage of Senior Pastors Who Have Attained This Level*
Acts 1: The Called Leader	Knows of God's call to ministry and has responded to that call	98
Acts 2: The Contributing Leader	Takes time to do well the basics of Christian ministry such as preaching, teaching and prayer	22
Acts 3: The Outwardly Focused Leader	Seeks to lead church and self to ministry beyond the walls of the church	14
Acts 4: The Passionate Leader	Exudes a contagious enthusiasm for ministry; others gladly follow	6
Acts 5: The Bold Leader	Is willing to take risks, where success is only possible in God's power	3
Acts 6/7: The Legacy Leader	Has a burden for a successful ministry beyond his own lifetime	> 1

Later in Acts, Luke recounts Barnabas and Paul's returning to Lystra, Iconium,

[42] Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 35–67.

[43] Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 65.

[44] Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 44–45.

and Antioch "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). On his second missionary journey, Paul went through Syria and Cilicia, "strengthening the churches," (Acts 15:41). Again, in Acts 18:23, Paul "went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples." In his dissertation, Brandon Conner views Paul's strengthening ministry as a ministry of revitalization.[45] His conclusion is that "whether churches today are relatively healthy or gravely ill, Paul's ministry offers insights for church leaders and revitalization agents who are working to improve or maintain church health."[46] While disagreeing with Conner's specific application of proactively strengthening of churches as revitalization, Moore agrees that "Paul's revitalization of churches exhibits the continuing need for ongoing renewal in the life of God's people, especially in the form of intense revitalization efforts. His efforts also provide an apostolic pattern that not only includes church planting but also church revitalization."[47] Thus, revitalization researchers view Paul's ministry of strengthening established churches as a biblical example of revitalization.[48]

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[45] Conner, "Church Revitalization," 43–53.

[46] Conner, "Church Revitalization," 57.

[47] Moore, "A Biblical and Theological Vision," 131–32. Speaking of Conner's view, Moore notes, "The proactive approach is clearly a valid endeavor . . . . Yet, proactive strengthening of already healthy churches is simply not revitalization." Moore, "A Biblical and Theological Vision," 131.

[48] The use of the concept of "strengthening" the churches is tied to the use of ἐπιστηρίζω. Two considerations should be kept in mind. First, the importance of "strengthening" in the ministry of Paul is noted by Schnabel. Of Acts 14:22 he writes, "The two missionaries "strengthened" the disciples, i.e. they helped the Jewish and Gentile believers to become stronger in their commitment to Jesus, Israel's Messiah, and Savior. The present participle used here suggests a sustained effort, certainly carried out through teaching the congregation and counseling individuals." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 613. Of Acts 15:41, he writes, "They 'strengthened' the churches, i.e., they helped the believers to become stronger in their commitment to Jesus, Israel's Messiah and Savior. The present tense of the participle emphasizes the importance of this aspect of Paul's ministry." Schnabel, *Acts*, 663. Second, the strengthening in Acts 14:22 is tied to enduring persecution. Peterson observes, "Persecution has been reported as a regular feature of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas and now the warning about enduring such hardship is implicitly given to Christian readers." David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009), 414. Longernecker notes this element, stating, "They encouraged them to remain in the faith, telling them that many persecutions must necessarily be the lot of Christians in order to enter the Kingdom." Richard N. Longernecker, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 438. Harder notes that ἐπιστηρίζω, "presupposes that the aim of strengthening is the impregnability of Christian faith in spite of the troubles which have to be endured." Gunther Harder, "Στηρίζω, Ἐπιστηρίζω, Στηριγμός, Ἀστήρικτος." *Theological Dictionary of the*

Revelation 2-3: Christ's Messages to the Churches. Turning to the final book of the New Testament, Christ's letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2-3 are a frequent appeal to the root issues leading to the need for revitalization in the literature. Moore, while presenting an extended treatment of revitalization themes in Revelation, notes,

> The cosmic conflict just discussed in this present reality in which the churches in Revelation 2-3 were living and churches today now exist, and this local reality is what leads to the need for church revitalization. Thus, the connections between the cosmic scope of spiritual warfare and the need for church revitalization will begin to be drawn. Revelation 2-3 presents letters to seven churches of which five are in need of revitalization due to the spiritual conflict in which they live.[49]

The messages to the churches called them out of their spiritual malaise. Jesus said to the church in Ephesus, "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first," (Rev 2:4-5.) Reflecting on Christ's message to the church in Ephesus, R. Albert Mohler writes, "that congregation needed a reformation. At some point, declining churches actually need to be replanted."[50] Clifton also sees the words of Jesus to the church in Ephesus as a paradigm for revitalization, "The pathway to new life for a dying church is repentance and remembering."[51]

Ephesus is not alone, though. Christ's words to the church at Sardis are telling. "I know your works. You have the reputation for being alive, but you are dead. Wake up and strengthen what remains and is about to die," (Rev 3:1-2). Cheyney and Larry Wynn see the need for revitalization in the letter to the church at Sardis. "The church at Sardis

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New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittle, Gerhard Fredrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 656–57. Given the context and linguistic evidence, it seems that Paul's ministry of strengthening, as important and good as it was, does not fit the narrow definition of "church revitalization." Rather, Paul's ministry was aimed at encouraging Christians to remain faithful in the face of persecution, not reestablishing numerically declining churches.

[49] Moore, "A Biblical and Theological Vision," 141.

[50] Mohler, "Christ Will Build and Rebuild His Church," 9.

[51] Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 14.

was the “has been” dying church. It is an example of a church that needs to utilize the restart strategy for church revitalization. It was crippled in its practices.”[52] Davis also notes about the church in Sardis, “Perhaps no church of the seven so clearly fits into the pattern of revitalization as that one.”[53] Revitalization authors and researchers frequently see the need for revitalization in the Christ’s letters to the seven churches in Revelation.[54]

Church revitalization researchers and authors look to the Bible for both theological foundations and practical paradigms. They draw inspiration that God can bring the spiritually dead back to life from Ezekiel 37. They look to the record of the early church in Acts for leadership principles and Paul’s ministry to churches as revitalization models. Finally, they see the need for church revitalization revealed in the book of Revelation, specifically in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. Next, we will move from the biblical foundation for church revitalization to the current situation of the modern American church.

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[52] Cheyney and Wynn, *Preaching*, 187.

[53] Davis, *Revitalize*, 15.

[54] The appeal to the letters in Rev 2-3 as presenting the need for revitalization is well founded. Beale notes that “at the conclusion of each letter there is a wider address 'to (all) the churches.' Although each letter is addressed to the particular situation of a particular church, it is relevant for the needs of all 'seven' of the churches, and consequently for the universal church.” He also notes that at the very center of the chapters is a general statement that “all churches will know” that Christ is the omniscient judge of his unfaithful followers (2:23). “This statement is conspicuous as the only thing said in the letters about all “churches” other than at the conclusion of each letter.” G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 226–27. Regarding the church of Sardis, Smalley notes a paradox: “The Sardians have a reputation for being spiritually alive, but in fact their actions show them to be spiritually 'dead' . . . . So serious is the state of the disciples that the normal pattern in the seven letters of preceding condemnation with commendation is abandoned. The oracle is one of judgement, and the great of names being erased from the book of life is imminent.” Stephen S Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 81. Mounce also notes the horrid state of the church in Sardis: “The church . . . comes under the most severe denunciation of the seven. Apparently untroubled by heresy and free from outside opposition, it had so completely come to terms with its pagan environment that although it retained the outward appearance of life, it was spiritually dead. Like the fig tree of Mark 11:20 it had leaves but no fruit.” Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), part 2 "Text, Exposition, and Notes," sec. II, "Letters to the Seven Churches," sec. E, "Sardis," para 4, Kindle. The descriptions of the churches in Rev 2-3 certainly resemble the description of the church in current-day America.

The Need for Church Revitalization

When surveying the literature on church revitalization, three specific factors arise that give need for church revitalization in today's churches. First, the state of American culture is becoming more non-religious. Second, the state of the church is becoming more ineffective. Last, stewardship of resources (physical, financial, and human) demands more attention to helping churches revitalize. Each of these factors will be examined in this section.

The state of the American culture. As a whole, America is becoming less religious at an increasingly alarming rate. The Pew Research Center has published *The Religious Typology*, which is a new way to categorize Americans by religion. The authors note, "This new typology sorts Americans into seven groups based on the religious and spiritual beliefs they share, how actively they practice their faith, the value they place of their religion, and the other sources of meaning and fulfillment in their lives."[55] The study found that 39% of Americans are "highly religious," 32% are "somewhat religious," and 29% are "non-religious." While this study paints a bleak picture of religious devotion of any kind in America, the outlook for Christianity is not better. Researcher George Barna states that 46% of adults in America are unchurched, which is an increase from 35% in 2005.[56] The Pew Research Center also corroborates the

[55] The study identifies seven religious typologies in America. In the highly religious group (39%) are three categories. The Sunday Stalwarts are religious traditionalists actively involved with their faith and engaged in their congregations (17%). The God-and-Country Believers are socially and politically conservative and most likely to view immigrants as hurting American culture (12%). The Diversely Devout group is traditionally religious, but majorities also believe in psychics, reincarnation, and that spiritual energy can be located in physical objects (11%). Two typologies comprise the second group of somewhat religious people. The Relaxed Religious say it's not necessary to believe in God to be a moral person. Religion is important to them, but few engage in traditional practices (17%). Of the Spiritually Awake, few practice religion in traditional ways, but most believe in heaven and hell, and subscribe to New Age beliefs (15%). The final category of non-religious includes two typologies. The Religion Resisters think organized religion does more harm than good and are politically liberal and Democratic (12%). The Solidly Secular hold virtually no religious beliefs and reject New Age beliefs (17%). Pew Center Research, "The Religious Typology," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), August 29, 2018, http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/29/the-religious-typology/.

[56] George Barna, *America at the Crossroads: Explosive Trends Shaping America's Future and*

declining numbers of Christians in America: "The percentage of adults (ages 18 and older) who describe themselves as Christians has dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years, from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014."[57] Simply stated, the church is losing ground rather than taking ground as Americans find other ways to practice their faith rather than regular church attendance.[58] Barna predicts that "the coming decade will be the first time in modern American history that the proportion of Americans who are churchless will exceed the 50% mark."[59]

Included in the declining population of Christians in America are two important trends. First the number of those who describe themselves as unaffiliated is growing. The Pew Center records that from 2007 to 2014, "the percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated—describing themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular"—has jumped more than six points, from 16.1% to 22.8%."[60] Second, the number of young people who identify as Christians is also declining. Barna notes that "59% of Americans disconnect from church life either permanently or for a prolonged period of time between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine."[61] In a separate report, Barna provides two additional aspects of the decline of faith in young people: the percentage of teens who identify as atheists is double that of the general population while just 59% identify as Christians as opposed to 75% for Boomers.[62] These snapshots of the state of

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What You Can Do about It (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 41.

[57] Pew Center Research, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), May 12, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/.

[58] The Pew Center notes, "Overall, the single most common answer cited for not attending religious services is "I practice my faith in other ways," which is offered as a very important reason by 37% of people who rarely or never attend religious services." Pew Center Research, "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), August 1, 2018, http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-services/.

[59] Barna, *America at the Crossroads*, 43.

[60] Pew Center Research, "America's Changing Religious Landscape."

[61] Barna, *America at the Crossroads*, 41.

[62] George Barna, "Atheism Doubles Among Generation Z," Barna Group, accessed September

American culture call for a church revitalization movement.

The state of the church in America. Not only are Americans less religious than before, the church is struggling to maintain those who do attend. According to Rebecca Randall, from 2006 to 2012, 30,000 congregations closed their doors for the final time.[63] Not only are churches closing at a rapid pace, many surviving churches struggle as well. Church researcher Thom Rainer notes that 65% of churches need revitalizing.[64] Along with that general assessment of the church, Rainer also notes reports that 61% of churches run less than 100 in average weekly worship attendance.[65] He also identifies a direct correlation exists between the rate of decline of a church and the size of the church: "The smaller the church the greater rate of decline in attendance."[66] While

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3, 2018, https://www.barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/.

[63] Rebecca Randall, "How Many Churches Does America Have? More Than Expected," Christianity Today, September 14, 2017, https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/september/how-many-churches-in-america-us-nones-nondenominational.html.

[64] Following is Rainer's explanation for his claim: "Here are the results of our research. We used average worship attendance as our metric rather than church membership. Unfortunately, church membership is fast becoming a meaningless metric. [The statistics are . . .] 56% of churches are declining, 9% of churches are plateaued, and 35% of churches are growing. So, here is the new and correct statement of reality: 65% of churches are declining or plateaued. There is a huge statistical difference between 80%, the myth, and 65%, the reality." It must be noted, though, that Rainer does not provide the metrics for a declining, plateaued, or growing church. The rationale for his assertion spans several sources. The quote above appeared in a blog post on June 28, 2017 with forthcoming blog posts to reveal the study specifics. The next blog to address the study appeared on July 10, 2017 that offers to clarify the previous post that mentions the study. In this second blog, which is based on a 1,000 church random sample, he notes that the attendance to baptism ratio for all churches in the study was 19:1 with the same ratio for growing churches in the study was 17:1. His conclusion is that growing churches are only marginally more effectively evangelistic that the average church, which means their growth comes from other churches rather than the unchurched. He also notes that only 6 to 7.5% of churches are effectively evangelistic (meaning that church has a membership to baptism ration 50% better than the average). Rainer, "Dispelling the 80% Myth of Declining Churches," ThomRainer.com, June 28, 2017, https://thomrainer.com/2017/06/dispelling-80-%-myth-declining-churches/; Rainer, "Five Sobering Realities about Evangelism in Our Churches," ThomRainer.com, July 10, 2017, https://thomrainer.com/2017/07/five-sobering-realities-evangelism-churches/; "Effective-Evangelistic-Churches.Pdf," http://evangelismrenewal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Effective-Evangelistic-Churches.pdf.

[65] Thom Rainer, "Is there a Church Death Spiral?" ThomRainer.com, July 3, 2017, https://thomrainer.com/2017/07/church-death-spiral/.

[66] Rainer explains, "Simply stated, the smaller the church, the greater the rate of decline in attendance. Perhaps these three statements will clarify my point: 1) A declining church with an attendance of 200 or more declines at a rate of 4% each year, 2) A declining church with an attendance of less than 100 declines at a rate of 7.6% per year, and 3) A declining church with an attendance of less than 50 declines at a rate of 8.7% a year. It's a death spiral. Declining smaller churches decline much more rapidly than larger churches. Once the declining church goes below 100 in attendance, its days are likely numbered. Here is the sad summary statement of this portion of the research: *Once a church declines below 100 in worship attendance, it is likely to die within just a few years.* The life expectancy for many of these churches is ten

those statistics describe congregations across the denominational spectrum, Southern Baptist churches are also declining. Mark Clifton, senior director of Replanting and Revitalization for the North American Mission Board, reported that 10-15% of SBC churches are at risk of dying with about 900 closing each year.[67] Of those that close, 70% are located in growing neighborhoods.[68] Barna notes the majority of churches in America are in a state of decline and churches tend not to recover from such a steep decline.[69] The sad reality is the majority of churches in America are struggling while many are headed toward closure.

Table 2. SBC Annual Church Profile data 2010-2013[70]

Data	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*
Churches	45,737	45,765	46,034	46,125
Membership	16,436,044	15,978,112	15,872,404	15,735,640
Baptisms	331,008	333,341	314,956	310,368
Membership to Baptism Ratio	50:1	48:1	50:1	51:1
Weekly Worship Average	6,195,449	6,155,116	5,966,734	5,834,707
Attendance to Membership Percentage	38	39	38	37
Attendance to Baptism Ratio	19:1	19:1	19:1	19:1

years or less." Rainer, "Is there a Church Death Spiral?"

[67] Ezell reports the number of SBC churches that close each year to be approximately 1000. Kevin Ezell, "Breathing New Life into Dying Churches," in *A Guide to Church Revitalization*, ed. R. Albert Mohler (Louisville, KY: SBTS Press, 2015), 13.

[68] Margaret Colson, "Legacy Church Planting Revitalizes Dying Churches," accessed September 3, 2018, http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc15/newsroom/printfriendly.asp?ID=61. The quote from Clifton is from a panel discussion at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting Columbus, Ohio, in 2015.

[69] Barna notes, "When a church takes a nosedive in attendance or membership, it generally does not make a comeback." George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 17.

[70] "LifeWay Report: SBC Baptisms and Churches Increased in 201, Membership Declined," PRWeb, accessed November 26, 2018, https://www.prweb.com/releases/LifeWay/6/prweb9599113.htm; "Baptism, Worship Declines Prompt Southern Baptist Leaders' Prayers for 'Renewed Passion,'" Baptist Press, accessed November 26, 2018, http://www.bpnews.net/42659/baptism-worship-declines-prompt-southern-baptist-leaders-prayers-for-renewed-passion.

The Southern Baptist Convention embodies the declining state of the church in America. Tables 2 and 3 display key metrics from the Annual Church Profile from the years 2010 to 2017.[71]

Table 3. SBC Annual Church Profile data 2014-2017[72]

Data	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Churches	46,499	46,793	47,272	47,544
Membership	15,499,173	15,294,764	15,215,978	15,005,638
Baptisms	305,301	295,212	280,773	254,122
Membership to Baptism Ratio	51:1	52:1	54:1	59:1
Weekly Worship Average	5,674,469	5,577,088	5,200,716	5,320,488
Attendance to Membership Percentage	37	36	34	35
Attendance to Baptism Ratio	19:1	19:1	19:1	21:1

The following observations can be made concerning the SBC as a whole during this period.

1. The number of reporting churches rose by 4%.
2. Total membership fell by 9%.
3. Total baptisms fell by 23%.
4. Membership to baptism ratio rose from 50:1 to 59:1.

[71] "Annual Church Profile & More of the SBC Story," Baptist Press, accessed November 25, 2018, http://www.bpnews.net/51932/annual-church-profile-and-more-of-the-sbc-story. This report acknowledges two important facts concerning ACP data. First, not all SBC churches submit data. The report estimates that 29% of congregations did not participate. To compensate for this non-participation rate, Lifeway Research produced another 2017 ACP Report that used estimates to project data for the entire SBC rather than actual reporting data. Tables 1 and 2 use data from actual reporting rather than projections, as projections are not available for 2010-2016.

[72] "Southern Baptist Membership Shrinks for 9th Straight Year," World Religion News, June 10, 2016, https://www.worldreligionnews.com/religion-news/christianity/southern-baptist-membership-shrinks-for-9th-straight-year; "ACP: Worship Attendance Rises, Baptisms Decline," Baptist Press, accessed November 25, 2018, http://www.bpnews.net/51000/acp-worship-attendance-rises-baptisms-decline; "ACP: Churches up in 2016; Baptisms, Membership Decline," Baptist Press, accessed November 25, 2018, http://www.bpnews.net/49005/acp--churches-up-in-2016-baptisms-membership-decline.

5. Weekly worship average fell by 14%.
6. Percentage of weekly worship average attendance of total membership fell from 38% to 35%.
7. Ratio of weekly worship average attendance to baptisms rose from 19:1 to 21:1.

The following observations can be made concerning the average SBC church from 2010 to 2017 (based on the total number of reporting churches each year).

1. Total membership fell from 359 to 316 (12% drop).
2. Total baptisms fell from 7.2 to 5.3 (26% drop).
3. Weekly worship average fell from 135 to 112 (17% drop).

Whether assessing the convention as a whole or an "average" SBC church, neither meet the criteria for growth (attendance growth of 10% or more and attendance to baptism ration of 20:1). While the attendance to baptism ratio has held steady, the weekly worship average is declining at a rate of 1 to 3% per year. The data suggest that while evangelism remains strong, retention of new members is not, and evangelistic growth is not translating into regular worship attendance.

Barna sheds light on this phenomenon. He reports that participation in key spiritual indicators are lower for all adults than those identifying as born-again evangelicals. However, participation by born again evangelicals in those same key spiritual indicators is declining over the previous decade.[73] Fewer people in America are attending church, and those who do are participating less.

The demand of stewardship. Along with the state of American culture and decline of churches, a third factor that encourages church revitalization is the stewardship of the physical and human resources that currently exist in declining churches. Mohler

[73] Barna notes that the seven spiritual indicators are weekly prayer (down 97% to 95%), weekly church attendance (down 65% to 56%), weekly Bible reading (down 67% to 59%), weekly volunteer service at church (down 38% to 30%), weekly small group participation (down 36% to 21%), weekly Christian education participation (down 36% to 25%), sharing faith once in the previous year (down 55% to 35%). Barna, *America at the Crossroads*, 35.

identifies this aspect of revitalization. He states, "At some point, declining churches actually need to be replanted. In one sense, this is just a matter of stewardship . . . . Somehow, at some time, for some reason or combination of reasons, they lost that first love and the ministry was endangered."[74] It would be a daunting task to consider the amount of financial resources currently invested in church building of declining churches that could once again become effective. This concept also applies for the human resources currently residing in declining churches. Mohler continues, "There is also the fact that millions of Christians remain in these declining and decaying congregations. These Christians represent a wealth of experience and an army of workers."[75] To simply abandon declining churches for lack of vision or leadership does not bring glory to God.

Challenges to Revitalization

The challenges to church revitalization are very real. In fact, the challenges are so difficult that some acknowledge that it is easier to plant a new church than to resurrect a dying one.[76] The literature reveals three common challenges to church revitalization: lack of vision, lack of leadership, and lack of motivation.

Lack of vision. Mohler sums up the need for a new vision for church revitalization: "One of our central tasks in the present generation is to be bold in our vision of replanting churches—helping existing churches to find new vision, new strategic focus, new passion for the gospel, new hunger for preaching the Word, new love for their communities, and new excitement about seeing people come to faith in Jesus."[77] This vision must come both from corporate church leadership and individual pastors. Davis aptly summarizes the need for vision in revitalization: "Visionary leadership is

[74] Mohler, "Christ Will Build and Rebuild His Church," 9.

[75] Mohler, "Christ will Build and Rebuild His Church," 9.

[76] Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 9.

[77] Mohler, "Christ Will Build and Rebuild His Church," 10.

vital in all churches in order for them to bear maximum fruit for the glory of God."[78] In developing a vision for the ministry of revitalization at a local church, Reeder and Swavely identify four considerations: (1) the pastor's strengths, weaknesses, and calling, (2) the congregation's opportunities, (3) the ministries of other local churches, and (4) the needs of the community.[79]

Lack of leadership. Not only is a lack of vision a challenge to revitalization, the deficiency of leadership runs deep through the literature. Mark DeVine and Darrin Patrick lay the blame for church failure on poor leadership.[80] Mohler admits the central deficiency of many church revitalizations is their lack of "visionary, courageous, and convictional pastors and leaders."[81] Barna identifies the lack of pastoral leadership as not only a primary reason for decline, but changing pastors as the first step toward revitalization.[82] Mike McKinley summarizes the view that poor leadership predicates a need for revitalization: "There's usually a good reason why a church needs to be revitalized. Churches often dwindle in size and effectiveness because of a traumatic event or years of poor leadership.[83] Both church decline and revitalization cannot be understood apart from the role of church leadership. The assessment of Stetzer and Dodson regarding leadership in church revitalization reveals the challenge of leadership well: "We believe all comeback churches need a new pastor—either one brought in from the outside or one changed from the inside."[84]

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[78] Davis, *Revitalize*, 105.

[79] Reeder and Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame*, 134–37.

[80] Mark DeVine and Darrin Patrick, *Replant: How a Dying Church Can Grow Again* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2014), 47.

[81] Mohler, "Christ Will Build and Rebuild His Church," 9.

[82] Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 34, 47, 62.

[83] Mike McKinley, "The Pros and Cons of Planting and Revitalizing," *9Marks Journal*, (December 2011): 26.

[84] Stetzer and Dodson note, "Every movement needs a leader, and we discovered that God led comeback churches to call a new pastor, or God renewed the pastors who were currently leading the

Lack of motivation. Barna identifies the final and most prevalent obstacle to renewal as "people's resistance to change . . . the acceptance of new ways for new outcomes is critical to a church comeback."[85] This lack of motivation to change may manifest itself in apathy, resistance, or even outright hostility. Overcoming a lack of motivation to renew and change can be a long and difficult process. Mann summarizes this obstacle succinctly, "The new pastor will experience (or often collude with) the congregation's two most destructive illusions: the fantasy that growth can occur without change, and the fantasy that change can occur without conflict."[86]

This section has explored the aspects of church revitalization and built a foundation for this study. The characteristics of the revitalization movement have been examined along with the biblical basis for undertaking church revitalization. The need for revitalization exists within the churches in America although there are significant obstacles. Most important, the importance of leadership in the revitalization process has been established. The following section will take up the topic of how leaders engaged in church revitalization can transform church culture.

Transforming Church Culture

The very nature of revitalization involves transformation of a congregation, which includes its culture and the people who comprise that culture. The process of transformation, or change, is intimately tied to leadership and vision. Barna notes, "Without vision, there is no reason to change, there is no path upon which change can be managed intelligently."[87] The process, mechanics, and approaches to change are well

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church. We believed that all the pastors were new pastors, just not all of them changed jobs. Some of them changed their leadership approach." Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 176-177.

[85] Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 88.

[86] Alice Mann, *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999), 11.

[87] Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 37.

studied and chronicled. This section will examine the definition of church culture, how that culture can change, the obstacles to change, and the role change plays in revitalization efforts.

Organizational and Church Culture

The following section addresses three aspects of organizational culture relevant to church revitalization. First, definitions of culture will be considered. Second, congregational culture will be examined. Finally, characteristics of culture as they related to revitalization will be investigated.

Defining organizational culture. Arriving at a consensus on the definition of organizational culture is akin to agreeing on a definition of barbeque. Just as every region and cook has a definition of what constitutes barbecue, every writer has his or her own spin on the concept of culture. Peter Northouse defines culture as "the learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people. It is these qualities of a group that make them unique. Culture is dynamic and transmitted to others."[88] Edgar Schein offers a lengthy definition of culture that expands on the idea of Northouse:

> The culture of a group can now be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.[89]

Paul Bustrum offers perhaps the most succinct and simple definition of culture as "culture is how one views reality."[90] In *Christ and Culture Revisited*, D. A. Carson

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[88] Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2015), 428.

[89] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed., The Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 18.

[90] Paul Bustrum, "Culture," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony et al., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 187.

observes that "inevitably, any Christian belongs to and embodies in some sense, the broader culture of his or her tribe or language or group."[91]

In reviewing the definitions of culture, five common themes become apparent. First, culture includes all that is visible and invisible, including thoughts, actions, ideas, concepts, and language. Second, culture is dynamic and changing. As new members come into the group, they bring new nuances that subtly change the culture. Next, culture is transmitted and taught to new members of the group, either formally or nonformally.[92] Fourth, culture defines reality and provides identity for a group.[93] Whether it comes from a name badge in the workplace, shared experiences on a mission trip, or knowing technical lingo, we collectively see reality through our own cultural lenses. Finally, each person is member of many cultures simultaneously, some of which may be in conflict with one another.

Understanding the concept of culture is crucial for the process of transformation in a congregation. Schein notes that grasping the dynamics of culture will help leaders when we encounter the "unfamiliar and seemingly irrational behavior of people in organizations, and we will have a deeper understanding not only why various groups of people can be so different but why it is so hard to change them."[94] Culture is what every group perceives to be normal patterns of thinking and behaving.

Congregational culture. While culture can be viewed on multiple levels—national, city, ethnic, sports team affinity, organization, or family—each church

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[91] D. A Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), 98.

[92] Bustrum notes, "Culture then, comprises ideas and concepts as well as actions and behavior. Culture is transforming and transmissive. That is, it is constantly changing and is passed on from one generation to the next by means of formal and nonformal education." Bustrum, "Culture," 187.

[93] Schein contents that "cultures tell their members who they are, how to behave toward each other, and how to feel good about themselves. Recognizing these critical functions makes us aware why "changing" culture is so anxiety provoking." Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 29.

[94] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 9.

congregation also has its own unique culture. This culture is shaped by the congregation's leaders, past, theology, context, and denominational affiliation. Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon Penfold define a church's congregational culture as "its unique expression of the interaction of its shared beliefs and values, which explain its behavior in general and display its unique expression of its shared values and beliefs."[95] Thus, two congregations will never exhibit the same culture. Dever, however, issues a warning for churches to have a culture that is distinct from worldly culture, specifically in the areas of leadership and defining success. He warns, "Simply put, we need churches that are self-consciously distinct from the culture. We need churches in which the key indication of success is not evident results but persevering biblical faithfulness."[96] Leaders need to understand each congregation's specific culture and ensure it is a biblically influenced rather than secularly influenced culture.

Malphurs and Penfold also emphasize the importance of understanding congregational culture.[97] One of their reasons, as it relates to change, is that culture adapts to change. The external culture of the world can pose a threat to the church. The authors notes, "Thus it is critical to the church that it learn how to cope with that constantly changing external environment."[98] In their view, churches that pay attention to and adjust to external culture will survive and grow. Church leaders, then, must constantly be aware of the interplay of the external culture of the world and the internal culture of the church and how those two interact and affect one another. The following section examines characteristics of organizational change that church leaders must be

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[95] Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 172.

[96] Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 32.

[97] Malphurs and Penfold's seven reasons church leaders need to understand and acknowledge the importance of culture include: (1) culture affects everyone, (2) culture is vital to effective ministry, (3) culture affects the way we do church, (4) culture recognizes ethnic diversity, (5) culture cannibalizes strategy, (6) culture impacts churches differently, and (7) culture adapts to change. Malphurs and Penfold, *Re:Vision*, 166–69.

[98] Malphurs and Penfold, *Re:Vision*, 169.

aware of to lead well.

Characteristics of organizational culture. In *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Schein explores the ideas of culture and change extensively. Three specific features of organizational culture are relevant to the topic of congregational transformation and revitalization. First, Shein discusses four characteristics of culture.[99] The first characteristic of culture is structural stability. To acknowledge something as "cultural" is to ascribe a level of stability to it. Culture is difficult to change because it provides the stability that the group values. The second characteristic of culture is the depth at which it resides in the subconsciousness of the group. Deeply embedded culture is difficult to change. The third characteristic of culture is breadth as it infiltrates and pervades every part of an organization. The final aspect of culture is the patterning or integration. Culture provides the raw material that members of an organization use to create a coherent whole as it relates to understanding the group or organization.

Next, Schein describes the three levels of culture within an organization.[100] The first level of culture is the artifacts of the group. Artifacts are the observable characteristics of the group. While artifacts are easy to observe, they are difficult to decipher as the observer can infer his or her own biases.[101] The second level of culture is the espoused beliefs and values. These beliefs and values include goals, ideologies, and rationalizations that may or may not be congruent with one another. The final level of culture is the basic underlying assumptions of the organization. Schein notes that these assumptions have been "so taken for granted that you find little variation within the

[99] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 16–17.

[100]Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 24–32.

[101] Schein notes, "Artifacts include the visible products of the group, such as the architecture of its physical environments; its language; its technology and products; its artistic creations; its style, as embodied in clothing, manners of address, and emotional displays; its myths and stories told about the organization; its published list of values; and its observable rituals and ceremonies." Schein, *Organizational Leadership*, 23.

unit."[102] These ideas are just simply assumed to be true.

Finally, Schein considers the three sources from which culture springs.[103] First, the culture of an organization comes from the beliefs, values, and assumptions of the founders of the organization. This is the most important source of culture as the founders set the mission and players who will carry out the mission. The second source of culture is the learning experiences of group members as their organization evolves. Every member of the group adds to the cultural whole of the organization as they work, interact, succeed, and fail. Third, culture originates from new members and leaders as they bring their own beliefs, values, and assumptions into the organization. These new values and beliefs merge with the existing ones to from amalgamations of a new culture.[104]

Taken together, Schein's descriptions of culture are vital to understanding church revitalization. An astute leader will work to understand, decipher, and mold the culture of a congregation toward revitalization. These descriptions also help leaders understand how difficult the challenge of changing culture is.

Changing Organizational and Church Culture

Given the importance of change in church revitalization, understanding the processes and obstacles to organizational change is paramount for church leaders. Barna notes the importance of this concept: "One of the most prevalent obstacles to renewal is people's resistance to change . . . the acceptance of new ways for new outcomes is critical to a church comeback."[105] This section will consider three components to understanding

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[102] Schein, *Organizational Leadership,* 28.

[103] Schein, *Organizational Leadership,*219.

[104] Schein notes, "Though each of these mechanisms plays a crucial role, by far the most important for cultural beginnings is the impact of the founders. Founders not only choose the basic mission and the environmental context in which the new group will operate, but they choose the group members and thereby shape the kinds of responses that the group will make in its efforts to succeed in its environment and to integrate itself." Schein, *Organizational Leadership,* 219.

[105] Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 88.

organizational and church change: the process of leading change, the role of change adopters, and the change equation.

Process of leading change. Kurt Lewin, writing shortly after World War II, aptly summarizes the relationship to organizational culture and change: "Change and constancy are relative concepts; group life is never without change, merely differences in the amount and type of change exist."[106] While many sources in the literature offer systems, flowcharts, or processes for leading change in churches, their commonality reveals the influence of Lewin. Schein acknowledges his own dependence upon Lewin's writings and notes that "few people have had as profound an impact on the theory and practice of social and organizational psychology as Kurt Lewin."[107]

Lewin provides the conceptual foundation and language for current change theory and practice in *Frontiers in Group Dynamics: Concept, Method and Reality in Social Science; Social Equilibria and Social Change*. His theory of change can be summarized in the following statements.

1. Social interactions must be viewed in "a totality of coexisting social entities, such as groups, subgroups, members, barriers, channels of communication."[108]

2. The current social setting of a group or organization is viewed as a "quasi-stationary equilibria" that maintains its level through the strength of opposing forces.[109]

[106] Kurt Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics: Concept, Method and Reality in Social Science; Social Equilibria and Social Change," *Human Relations* 1, no. 1 (June 1947): 13.

[107] Referencing his own early work with prisoners of Chinese Communists during the Korean War, Schein states, "I found contemporary theories of attitude change to be trivial and superficial when applied to some of the profound changes that the prisoners had undergone, but I found Lewin's basic change model of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing to be a theoretical foundation upon which change theory could be built solidly." Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 59.

[108] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 14.

[109] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 17.

3. These force fields are the key to change. The quasi-stationary equilibria level can be changed by "adding forces in the desired direction or by diminishing resisting forces."[110]

4. A third force field is the social habit theory, which strives to keep the present level.[111]

5. Group standards and expectations also seek to keep the equilibria level stationary.[112]

6. All change is not the same. Leaders are better off to diminish a resisting force rather than simply applying additional moving force.[113]

7. A successful change includes three aspects: "unfreezing the present level, moving to the new level, and freezing group life on the new level. Permanency implies that the new force field is made relatively secure against change."[114]

Table 4 illustrates the commonality in the proposed change processes. The table includes procedures from Lewin, Schein, Malphurs and Penfold, John Kotter, and Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James Furr.[115] Lewin, Schein, and Kotter write for secular leaders while Malphurs and Penfold and Herrington et al. write for churches. From the following, four common components are vital to the change process. First, creating a compelling vision. Second, leaders should work to create a sense of urgency related to the proposed changes. Third, creating a solid strategy for communicating vision. Last, leaders should involve other leaders and empower them to lead change.

[110] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 26.

[111] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 32.

[112] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 33.

[113] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 34.

[114] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 35.

[115] Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," 35; Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 300; Malphurs and Penfold, *Re:Vision*, 177–82; John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 12; Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James Harold Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 13.

Table 4. Influence of Kurt Lewin's theory

Lewin (1947)	*Schein (2010)*	*Malphurs and Penfold (2014)*	*Kotter (1996)*	*Herrington, et al. (2000)*
Unfreeze	Unfreezing: creating the motivation to change	Read the culture	Establishing a sense of urgency	Making personal preparation
			Creating the guiding coalition	Creating urgency
		Thaw the culture	Developing a vision strategy	Establishing the vision community
				Discerning the vision and determining the visionpath
Move	Learning new concepts, new meanings for old concepts and new standards for judgement	Transition the culture to a new level	Communicating the change vision	Communicating the vision
			Empowering the employees for broad-based action	Empowering the change leaders
			Generating short-term wins	Implementing the vision
Refreeze	Internalizing new concepts, meanings, and standards	Reform the new culture at the new level	Consolidating gains and producing more change	Reinforcing momentum through alignment
			Anchoring new approaches in the new culture	

Change adopters. Exactly how do people adopt to change, though? An oft quoted concept of change concerns categories of change adopters.[116] The categories cited were developed by Everett Rogers in 1958 and published in his first edition of *Diffusion*

[116] McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church*, 130-34; James Emery White, *Rethinking the Church: A Challenge to Creative Redesign in an Age of Transition*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 145-47.

of Innovation in 1962 (see table 5).[117] He developed his typology after studying how farmers in Iowa and doctors in Illinois adopted new methods. Rogers noticed that adoption of innovation occurred in a normal distribution over time.

Table 5: Change adopter categorizations[118]

Category	*Percentage*	*Description*
Innovators	2.5	Venturesome. This group introduces innovation to the system.
Early Adopters	13.5	Respect. This group has the highest degree of opinion leadership in most systems.
Early Majority	34	Deliberate. This group makes up one third of a system.
Late Majority	34	Skeptical. This group adopts out of necessity and peer pressure.
Laggards	16	Traditional. This group possesses almost no opinion leadership.

While predicting a standardized response to innovation and change in a population, Rogers also notes three important features of this view of change. First, he notes, "Innovativeness is a continuous variable and there are no sharp breaks or discontinuities between adjacent adopter categories (although there are important differences between them)."[119] Thus, leaders must note that there are not exact numbers of each category. Second, Rogers notes, "The important differences among these adopter categories suggest that change agents should use a different approach with each adopter category, or audience segmentation."[120] Leaders should tailor their message to each

[117] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003), 279.

[118] Rogers, *Diffusion,* 281–84.

[119] Rogers, *Diffusion,* 282.

[120] Rogers, *Diffusion,* 291.

segment as each category is motivated by different ideas and needs. Finally, Rogers notes what he terms the "Innovativeness/Needs Paradox" in which the "individuals in a system who most need the benefits of a new idea (the less educated, less wealthy, and the like) are generally the last to adopt an innovation."[121] His observation is that change agents begin with the path of least resistance and might consider beginning with those who need the innovation most rather than simply focusing on those who will adopt it first.

The change equation. One final consideration for how change occurs is the change equation. Richard Beckhard and Reuben Harris describe the change process as an equation of C=(ABD)>X. C=change, A=level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, B=a clear desired state, D=a practical first step toward the desired state, and X=the cost of the change.[122] In other words, change will occur when the combination of dissatisfaction with the current state, a clear vision for a better state, and a practical first step is greater than the cost of the change. In the context of church revitalization, this equation helps leaders understand what they should focus on when formulating their change process. Without a sense of urgency (A), a vision for what God can do in their church (B), and a clear path for moving forward (C), members of the church will not adopt the change. Also, leaders must help members calculate the cost of the change to them personally, corporately, and eternally. The specific obstacles that people face when encountering change are considered in the next section.

Obstacles to Changing Church Culture

Joes Ellis correctly observes, "One might expect that change would be natural to an institution that deals in change (both in individuals and in the world) and exists in a world where the only certainty is change. But this has not been the case with the

[121] Rogers, *Diffusion,* 294.

[122] Richard Beckhard and Reuben T. Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*, 2nd ed., Addison-Wesley OD Series (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1987), 98–99.

church."[123] To lead change in a church is to face resistance to change. This section will focus on obstacles that church revitalizers commonly face when leading change.

Resistance by church age. First, the age of a church may be an obstacle to change. McIntosh recommends conducting a change response analysis as a way to look at the change dynamics of a church.[124] His view is similar to the innovator categories of Rogers, but with a different twist. A church is comprised of four types of people. Radicals are on the cutting edge of new ideas, always positive, good at starting new things, but typically burn out quickly. Progressives anticipate growth needs before others see it. They like planning and see things through and are not afraid of risk. The conservatives prefer the status quo, like to question things, and are averse to risk. The fourth group is the traditionalists who rarely accept change and tend to make emotionally charged statements. They are the opposite of the radicals.

McIntosh draws the connection to change with these groups as the church ages. A first-generation church will have 90% radicals and progressives and only 10% conservatives and traditionalists. By the time a church reaches its third generation (around the fortieth year), radicals are completely gone. Now 90% of the church is made up of conservatives and traditionalists with progressives only 10%. McIntosh advises, "By conducting a change response analysis, a revitalization leader is able to determine the likelihood that a new direction for the church will be adopted. The more radicals and progressives in a church, the greater the potential for a new vision to be embraced."[125] The change response analysis can be a helpful tool to understand resistance to change for a revitalization leader.

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[123] Joe S. Ellis, *The Church on Purpose: Keys to Effective Church Leadership* (Cincinnati: Standard Pub, 1982), 176.

[124] McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church*, 135–40.

[125] McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church*, 139.

Types of change resistance. A second obstacle to change is the types of resistance to change people display. W. Warner Burke notes, "People are not simply and naturally resistant to change. What comes closer to a universal truth about human behavior is that people resist the imposition of change."[126] Dealing with the topic of resistance to change, Burke notes that it is important for change leaders to consider the kind of resistance rather than view all resistance in the same way. He notes three kinds of resistance.[127] First, some people are simply intolerant of change and offer blind resistance. Leaders should understand that this type of resistance is usually a reflex and will be overcome with time. Second, some people resist for political reasons. They have something of value to lose in the change, whether it is power, position, convenience, income, etc. He argues for responding with negotiations or reemphasizing the long-term gains of the change. Last, some respond to change with ideological resistance and genuinely believe the proposed change is doomed to failure or violates some deeply held belief. For these people, leaders should counter with facts and data rather than argue from a position of simple persuasion.[128]

Types of change loss. The final obstacle people experience during change is loss of some measure. Burke observes, "The phenomenon of resistance to change is not necessarily that of resisting the change per se, but is more accurately a resistance to losing something of value to the person."[129] McIntosh offers five types of loss that people will experience in a revitalization.[130] First is a loss of identity. When people change roles, positions, or leadership opportunities, they will lose their identity in the change. Second,

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[126] W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018), 111.

[127] Burke, *Organization Change*, 111.

[128] Burke, *Organization Change,* 112.

[129] Burke, *Organization Change,* 110.

[130] McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church*, 141–43.

some lose control. Change that was thrust upon people will create a sense that things are out of their control. Next, some may experience a loss of meaning. People draw meaning from names, places, buildings, etc., as their past may be wrapped up in those things that change. Fourth, people may experience a loss of belonging. A revitalization will bring new people, and those may outnumber the previous members. Finally, some may feel a loss of a future. A change may create a sense that they will be forgotten as the church grows and continues to change. Leaders should keep these types of loss in mind as they face resistance to change.

This section on transforming church culture has revealed several key principles for church revitalization. Organizational and congregational culture runs deep and encompasses every aspect of the church. However, the process of leading change is well established, and many examples exist. The obstacles to changing church cultures, while numerous, have been identified and as well as processes for leading churches through the change process. The final section of this literature review will look at leadership and leadership development within the context of church revitalization.

Leadership Development

Mary Ann Glynn and Rich DeJordy rightly observe, "Leadership is one of the most enduring—and elusive—constructs in the organizational behavior literature."[131] The author of Ecclesiastes very well could have been referring to works on leadership with the words, "Of the making of many books there is not end," (Eccl 12:12). The definitions of leadership equal the number of authors of leadership books. Despite the lack of precision in defining leadership, we know it is vital to church revitalization. Christopher Aiken's study on the role of pastoral leadership in church revitalization concludes, "While no one would argue that revitalization can occur apart from the supernatural work

[131] Mary Ann Glynn and Rich DeJordy, "Leadership through an Organization Behavior Lens," in *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice: An HBS Centennial Colloquium on Advancing Leadership*, ed. Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010), 119.

of the Holy Spirit in the church, neither would anyone argue that churches without leaders experience revitalization."[132]

This section will examine the role of leadership and leadership development as it relates to church revitalization. First, organizational leadership in general will be considered as definitions, components, and models of leadership are examined. Second, leadership development components, spiritual aspects, and models are considered.

Organizational Leadership

Leadership can be examined from any number of angles. Gary Bredfeldt, noting the difficulty of arriving at one understanding of leadership, writes, "The nature of leadership differs from situation to situation. What is required of a leader on the battlefield is quite different from what is required on the ball field or mission field. Leadership is not a one-size-fits-all formula."[133] While this idea is borne out in the literature as a whole, two facets of leadership literature be will considered: definitions, and models of leadership. Finally, leadership as it relates to the pastoral church context will be examined.

Definitions of leadership. Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby note that nearly 1,000 definitions of leadership have been published, each one attempting to add something unique.[134] Confusion surrounds the role, purpose, and characteristics of leadership in our culture. Northouse lists four essential components to a definition of leadership: (1) leadership is a process, (2) leadership involves influence, (3) leadership

[132] Christopher Michael Aiken, "Church Revitalization and the Role of Pastoral Leadership: A Mixed-Methods Study" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 103.

[133] Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006), 14.

[134] Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, rev. and exp. ed. (Nashville: B & H Pub. Group, 2011), 33.

occurs in groups, and (4) leadership involves common goals.[135] This assessment explains the myriad of definitions of leadership. Bernard Bass, on the other hand, sees the definition of leadership as context specific: "The search for the one and only proper and true definition of leadership seems to be fruitless. Rather, the choice of an appropriate definition should depend on the methodological and substantive aspects of leadership in which one is interested."[136] One thing is for certain in the leadership literature: a consensus does not exist on a standardized definition.[137]

One method for understanding the myriad of leadership definitions is to examine common themes.[138] Michael Wilder and Timothy Jones provide a helpful matrix for assessing the definitions of leadership. They note that "most definitions of leaders and leadership over the past century or so have fallen into one of three categories: leader centered, leader directed, or leader/follower focused."[139] Leader-centered definitions focus on the leader's capabilities and qualities. Leader-directed definitions focus on the

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[135] Northouse, *Leadership*, 6.

[136] Bernard M. Bass and Ruth Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), 23.

[137] Rost summarizes the current situation with leadership definitions: "There are almost no arguments about definitions in the literature on leadership. There are almost no critiques of other scholar' definition, and what little there is appears in the literature of the 1980's. There have been no criteria established to evaluate leadership definitions . . . . There is an impression that one picks up from reading a leadership book, chapter, or journal article: Giving a definition of leadership will not do any good, since nobody will pay attention to it. Or, giving a definition will not matter, since most scholars ignore their definitions after they give them, so why should I give a definition and then ignore it in the rest of the book?" Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 6.

[138] Northouse describes six components of leadership that serves as lenses for the way one defines leadership. First, leadership can be defined as a focus of group process. This understanding is leader-centric as he or she interacts with the group to accomplish the will of the group. Next, leadership can be seen through the personality of the leader, or special traits possessed by the leader. This approach focuses on identifying and developing the special abilities of the leader. Third, leadership can be viewed through the lens of the behavior of the leader. This view focuses on the things that a leader does to enable change in the group. Fourth, power can serve as the defining characteristic of leadership. This approach focuses on how the leader uses various types of power to bring about change in the group. Next, leadership can be viewed as a transformational process. This approach seeks to identify how a leader takes followers and changes their expectations to transform the situation. Finally, leadership can be viewed through the skills of the leader. In this view, leaders employ specific abilities to bring about change within the group and context. Northouse, *Leadership*, 5–6.

[139] Michael S. Wilder and Timothy P. Jones, *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 13–14.

tasks a leader performs. Leader/follower definitions focus on how the leader and followers interact with one another.[140] Table 6 demonstrates both the variety and similarity of definitions of organizational leadership.

A significant concern for the Christian leader is how, or even should, these "secular" definitions of leadership apply in his or her situation. How does a Christian worldview and Scripture form leadership for the Christian and the church? Malphurs notes that the lack of a distinctive Christian philosophy and theology of leadership leads to trouble. He observes:

> When many Christian writers and speakers address the leadership topic, I've observed that, for too often, the subtle assumption is that we're all talking about the same thing. I'm not convinced that we are. They grasp the importance of leadership, but few are pausing long enough to define what they're talking about. When they do, their definitions are often based more on the leader's subjective experiences or anecdotal observations than on Scripture or good research.[141]

Wilder and Jones echo this alarm. While secular research and observations may provide useful insights for Christian leaders, they state that "unless our foundational vision for leadership is grounded in the metanarrative of Scripture that culminates in the kingdom inaugurated through Jesus Christ, we will not be able to separate the wisdom of the world from the wisdom of Christ."[142] Table 7 presents representative definitions that approach leadership from a distinctly Christian perspective.

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[140] For a summary of the development of leadership through the past century in the literature, see Bass and Bass, *The Bass Handbook*, 81–135; Keith Grint, "A History of Leadership," in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011), 3–14; Northouse, *Leadership*, 2–4; Rost, *Leadership*, 13–66.

[141] Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 10.

[142] Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You*, 8. They add, "When it comes to leadership, there *is* much to be learned from empirical research and from the intuitive reflections of marketplace leaders—but, without the whole of canon of Scripture as our supreme and sufficient authority, flawed views of divine purposes and human capacities will skew our view of leadership."

Table 6. Organizational leadership definitions[143]

Author	*Definition*
Barna	"Someone who effectively motivates, mobilizes resources, and directs people toward the fulfillment of a jointly embraced vision."[144]
Bass	"Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and of the perceptions of the members. Leaders are agents of change; whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them."[145]
Burns	"Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, or other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers.[146]
Greenleaf	"The servant-leader is servant first . . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead . . . to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served."[147]
Northouse	"Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group or individual to achieve a common goal."[148]
Rost	"Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes."[149]
Winston and Patterson	"A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower . . . and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission."[150]

[143] This table provides representative examples of leadership works. The authors are widely published (Barna), write compendiums of leadership literature (Bass, Northouse, and Rost), are regarded as a seminal voice of a leadership model (Burns with transformational leadership and Greenleaf with servant leadership) or a scholarly approach to defining leadership (Winston and Patterson).

[144] George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: Word Pub., 1998), 106.

[145] Bass and Bass, *The Bass Handbook*, 25.

[146] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, Harper Perennial Political Classics (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 18.

[147] Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Atlanta: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2008), 15.

[148] Northouse, *Leadership*, 6.

[149] Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, 101.

[150] Bruce E. Winston and Kathleen Patterson, "An Integrative Definition of Leadership,"

Table 7. Christian leadership definitions[151]

Author	*Definition*
Barna	"Leadership is the sum of the Spirit and activity generated by the person who seeks to do the right things at the right time for the right reasons to achieve a specific, predetermined set of outcomes."[152]
Blackaby and Blackaby	"Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda."[153]
Henard	"Instead of needing leaders, the church needs servant-leaders, ones who model the mind-set of Christ."[154]
Malphurs	"Christian leadership is the process whereby servants use their credibility and capability to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction."[155]
Sanders	"Spiritual leadership requires superior spiritual power, which can never be generated by the self. There is no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader."[156]
Stetzer and Dodson	"A person involved in a process of influencing and developing a group of people in order to accomplish a purpose by means of supernatural power."[157]
Wilder and Jones	"The Christ-following leader-living as a bearer of God's image in union with Christ and his people—develop a diverse community of fellow laborers who are equipped and empowered to pursue shared goals that fulfill the creation mandate and the Great Commission in submission to the Word of God.[158]

It is not surprising to see the literature of leadership within the Christian

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[151] This table provides representative examples of Christian leadership writings. The authors were chosen for being influential and widely published (Barna, Blackaby and Blackaby, Malphurs, Stetzer and Dodson), a "classic" work (Sanders), writing in the field of church revitalization (Henard) or approaching the topic from a biblical/theological perspective (Wilder and Jones).

[152] Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 50.

[153] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 36.

[154] Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*, 16.

[155] Malphurs, *Being Leaders*, 10.

[156] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 13.

[157] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 37.

[158] Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You*, 16.

context draw a sharp distinction between secular and Christian leadership.[159] Mark Dever advocates that "instead of searching for leaders with secular qualifications, we are to search for people of character, reputation, ability to handle the Word, and demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives."[160] Kenneth Gangel brings this idea to the forefront: "Scripture tells us that Christian leadership must be different from leadership in the world (Luke 24:22). Leaders do many important things, but the character of the Christian leader is always more important than any activity."[161] Reeder and Rod Gragg also distinguish between secular and Christian leaders with four components of Christian leadership: "(1) existence of a divine call, (2) godliness is more important than giftedness, (3) develop a grace-driven and disciplined lifestyle, and (4) be position-bearers, not position-wearers."[162] Malphurs also provides eight qualities of the Christian leader that distinguish him from a secular leader: "(1) a Christian, (2) a committed Christ-follower, (3) source of truth is divine revelation, (4) emphasizes godly character, (5) understands the importance of motives, (6) serves through the power of the Holy Spirit, (7) practices godly servant leadership, and (8) may have the gift of leadership."[163]

While Wilder and Jones provide the most robust and biblically based definition of leadership, for the purposes of this study Stetzer and Dodson's definition works best for understanding the role of leadership specifically within church revitalization.[164] Their

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[159] While any attempt to represent an entire field of study, especially one as broad as Christian leadership, with a limited number of representatives is inherently insufficient, these works represent the view that a distinction exists between Christian leadership and secular leadership.

[160] Dever, *Nine Marks*, 243.

[161] Kenneth O. Gangel, "Leadership," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony et al., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 410.

[162] Harry L. Reeder and Rod Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic: A Biblical Model for Raising Effective Leaders* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 55–57.

[163] Malphurs, *Being Leaders*, 14–21.

[164] Wilder and Jones clarify their stance: "This definition is not meant to stand as 'the one and only proper and true definition of leadership.' Our goal is far more modest. What we plan to present is a distinctly Christian definition of the role of a pastoral leader based on specific leadership dynamics that have emerged through a study of the Scriptures." Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You,* 13.

definition provides a succinct and workable understanding of the description of a leader within a church setting. Definitions of leadership though, do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, leadership definitions grow into models of leadership that exist in real world organizations and churches. These models are the subject of the following section.

Models of leadership. The leadership literature provides multiple models of understanding and approaching leadership with each model emphasizing a different aspect of the leadership process.[165] Blackaby and Blackaby observe that "the trend among many Christian leaders has been toward an almost indiscriminate and uncritical acceptance of secular leadership theory without measuring it against the timeless precepts of Scripture."[166] How do these secular models of leadership influence and inform leadership in the church? In particular, how might these models influence our understanding of leadership development in church revitalizations? Three models of leadership will be briefly considered: transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership.[167]

First for consideration is transformational leadership. This model rose to prominence with the writings of James MacGregor Burns and then Bernard Bass.[168] Bass specifies that the transformational leadership model "refers to the leader moving the

[165] Bass and Bass, *The Bass Handbook*; Northouse, *Leadership*; Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*. While the terms model, style, approach, philosophy, school, type, etc. each overlap and can highlight a slightly different aspect of leadership, the term "model" is used here as a general term that refers to a particular approach to leadership that includes all the above terms. Authors tend to use the terms interchangeably when referring to leadership. As such, authors who provide overviews of leadership do not adhere to a standardized list of leadership models. Bass and Bass list twelve, Northouse lists eleven, and Rost covers eight.

[166] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 19.

[167] Four considerations inform the inclusion of these particular models. First, each model has been written about in both scholarly and popular circles. Second, each model has been written about at the popular level within Christian circles (i.e. popular books, periodical articles, blogs, etc.) Third, influential Christian authors have endorsed the ideas or themes of each model. Finally, the language and terminology (transformation, authenticity, servanthood) are themes that emerge in the revitalization literature.

[168] Burns, *Leadership*; Bernard M. Bass, "Two Decades of Research and Development in Transformational Leadership," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 6, no. 1 (1999): 9.

follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration."[169] Burns contrasted transformational leadership (concerned with end-values) with transactional leadership (concerned with modal values).[170] Leighton Ford succinctly summarizes the theory as "transactional leaders work within the situation; transformational leaders change the situation."[171]

Christian leaders have not only embraced the concept of transformation but have also adopted the term "transformational" and applied it to elements of church life such as discipleship, group life, and leadership studies.[172] An appeal of the model for Christian leaders is the overlap of conceptual vocabulary with elements of the gospel (personal transformation, group transformation, leadership qualities, etc.) Transformational leadership has also been researched in relationship to church revitalization.[173]

A dark side of transformational leadership has been observed, however. Timothy Brubaker presents criticisms of the model from a biblical/theological perspective. He notes, "First, implicit within transformational leadership theory is the

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[169] Bass, "Two Decades," 11.

[170] Burns clarifies, "Both forms of leadership can contribute to human purpose…The chief monitors of transactional leadership are modal values, that is values of means…Transformational leadership is more concerned with end-values. . . . Transformational leaders "raise" their followers up through levels of morality, though insufficient attention to means can corrupt the ends." Burns, *Leadership*, 426.

[171] Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values & Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 22.

[172] Ford, *Transforming Leadership*; Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2012); Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups: Creating a New Scorecard for Groups* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2014); Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2010); Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, "Ten Traits of Jesus as Transformational Leader," Lewis Center for Church Leadership, September 2, 2015, https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/ten-traits-of-jesus-as-transformational-leader/.

[173] Michael John Shanlian, "Transformational Leadership in Church Revitalization: A Study of Heights Church in Beech Island, South Carolina" (PhD diss., Tennessee Temple University, 2013). This quantitative study examined the effect of one transformational leader in the revitalization of one church and found a positive correlation between the pastor's transformational leadership and the church's revitalization.

assumption that a moral human leader can overcome self-interest and selfish ambition. Second, the charismatic charm of transformational leadership mixed with the selfish instincts of human nature is an explosive combination."[174] He then offers three corrective guiding principles for Christians desiring to reframe the theory from a theological perspective:

> First, God alone is the only authentic legitimate transformational leader. Second, although devastatingly tragic, Christians must interpret the world and its inhabitants in the dark shadow of the fallenness of humankind. Third, a Christian reframing of transformational leadership must recognize the absolute supremacy of God's will for humanity as the starting point, ultimate goal, and fixed point of reference for every other vision within human endeavors.[175]

Taken solely on its own, transformational leadership falls short of an adequate model of leadership from a biblical perspective. When reframed with a solid biblical and theological perspective, transformational leadership theory can positively speak into the church revitalization process.

A second leadership theory to consider is authentic leadership. Walumba, et al. define authentic leadership as "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate."[176] The model came to prominence in the previous two decades as leadership crises in the business, religious, and societal sectors gained national notoriety. Business leader Bill George issued a charge for a new direction in leadership: "We need authentic leaders, people of the highest integrity, committed to building enduring organizations. We need people with a deep sense of purpose and who are true to their core values."[177] The four components of

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[174] Timothy Brubaker, "Spirit-Led Followers: Rethinking Transformational Leadership Theory," accessed November 28, 2018, https://missionexus.org/spirit-led-followers-rethinking-transformational-leadership-theory/.

[175] Brubaker, "Spirit-Led Followers."

[176] Fred O. Walumbwa et al., "Authentic Leadership: Development and Validation of a Theory-Based Measure," *Journal of Management* 34, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 94.

[177] Bill George, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 5.

authentic leadership are self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective.[178] Each of these four components can bring strength to the calling of leading a church revitalization as the leader brings his full range of experience and personhood to the context.

As with every leadership model, authentic leadership ultimately fails when it is not moored to a strong biblical and theological foundation. When a Christian leader does not see himself or herself in the light of the new creation, an inadequate view of self will turn authenticity into self-deception. However, when authentic leaders understand who they are in the light of their relationship with God, they can truly offer their transformed selves as leaders.

The final leadership model to examine is servant leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf popularized the concept with *The Servant as Leader* and subsequent works.[179] Jeremiah Ole Koshai notes that servant leadership "emphasizes the desire to humbly serve without expectation to be served by those who follow. The model establishes service as the gift that attracts followers who in turn pass along this same gift…two key notions underlie the various definitions of servant leadership: service and other-centered."[180] According to Northouse, the goal of servant leadership is to "create healthy organizations that nurture individual growth, strengthen organizational performance, and, in the end, produce a positive impact on society."[181]

As with transformational leadership, the appeal of servant leadership to Christian leaders stems from an overlap of conceptual vocabulary. Jesus was a servant

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[178] Bruce J. Avolio, Fred O. Walumbwa, and Todd J. Weber, "Leadership: Current Theories, Research, and Future Directions," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60, no. 1 (February 2009): 424.

[179] Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader*, 10. Greenleaf acknowledges the inspiration and source of the concept came from *Journey to the East* by Herman Hesse.

[180] Jeremiah Ole Koshai, "Servant Leadership Theory: Application of the Construct of Service in the Context of Kenyan Leaders and Managers," in *Servant Leaders Roundtable* (Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University School of Leadership Studies, 2005), 2.

[181] Northouse, *Leadership*, 236.

and called his disciples to lead through serving (Matt 20:25-28). Christian authors and leaders have embraced and remade the concept in an attempt to find compatibility with a biblical view of leadership.[182] Chris Huff employs Greenleaf's principles as a paradigm for developing leaders in the church.[183] Similar sounding concepts draw Christian leaders to use servant leadership principles and practices in their church ministries.

Similar sounding terminology does not equal similar models, though. Tim Cochrell offers a comprehensive critique of the servant leadership model from a biblical and theological perspective. Taking note of servant leadership's extremely optimistic view of human nature, he writes that "servant leadership's humanistic anthropology is directly connected to its humanistic teleology, in which the leader's primary goal is to serve the highest-priority needs of followers to facilitate their own self-actualization."[184] Rather than simply modify Geenleaf's servant leader model to sound more in line with Scripture, Cochrell offers a corrective model of biblical servant leadership based in the slave metaphor of Luke-Acts.

While secular definitions of leadership abound, they are not drawn from a uniquely Christian worldview and the eternal truth of the Bible. These definitions grow into models of leadership that eventually find their way into church leadership. The need for biblically-based leadership models is paramount for church revitalization. At this point, the literature begins to exhibit a void. The following section will examine

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[182] Charles Stone, "Servant-Leadership: Have We Gotten It All Wrong?," Charles Stone, November 4, 2018, https://charlesstone.com/servant-leadership-gotten-wrong/; Daniel Im, "How to Develop Servant Leaders," *Daniel Im* (blog), October 9, 2018, https://www.danielim.com/2018/10/09/servant-leadership/; John Baldoni, "Mike Matheny: Servant Leaders Know How to Play Ball," Forbes, accessed November 28, 2018, https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnbaldoni/2015/05/21/mike-matheny-servant-leaders-know-how-to-play-ball/. The Baldoni article describes how former St. Louis Cardinals manager Mike Matheny (an outspoken Christian) managed his teams according to the servant leadership model. Matheny spoke at a men's conference at my church and described how this model helped him succeed as a major league manager.

[183] Chris Huff, "The 10 Keys of Servant Leadership," *ChurchLeaders* (blog), March 27, 2013, https://churchleaders.com/worship/worship-articles/166014-chris-huff-10-keys-servant-leadership.html.

[184] Tim Cochrell, *Slaves of the Most High God: A Biblical Model of Servant Leadership in the Slave Imagery of Luke-Acts* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), chap. 1, "Servant Leadership: A Flawed Foundation," sec. 5, "The Goal of Servant Leadership," para. 1. Kindle.

leadership development in the church, concentrating on definitions, spiritual aspects, models, and the relationship between leadership development and church revitalization.

Leadership Development in the Church

Leadership development can refer to three separate, but related concepts of leadership. First, leadership development can refer to developing new leaders, i.e. increasing the number of leaders. Second, leadership development can refer to the quality of existing leaders, i.e. helping current leaders be more effective. Third, leadership development can refer to growing current leaders to take on greater responsibilities or higher roles within an organization. Many times, the term encompasses all three facets without distinguishing between them. For example, Stetzer and Dodson write, "Comeback leaders were not just leaders—they were developers and leaders of leaders."[185] Cheyney, though, notes the multiple facets of leadership development, "Currently our conventional methods and established approaches of leader development simply have not delivered either the quantity or quality of leaders that today's plateaued churches need."[186] Generally speaking, the literature seems to mix the facets together into one concept of leadership development that implies both quality, quantity, and upward mobilities of leaders.

Defining leadership development follows the emphasis one puts into the process. Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini focus their definition on church ministry, stating leadership development is "an intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every level of ministry to assess and develop their Christian character and to acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills."[187] Their definition encompasses the breadth and scope of the process and will serve as the

[185] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 51.

[186] Cheyney, *The Seven Pillars*, 45.

[187] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 23.

definition of leadership development for this study.

Spiritual aspects of leadership development. What specific spiritual aspects of leadership development are important? Davis addresses the spiritual aspect of leadership development: "Identify and develop men as leaders in the reformation. This is no mere strategy, but it is the will of God for the leadership of the church."[188] As such, the literature on the spiritual foundation for leadership development draws on two biblical motifs: the model of Jesus with His disciples and the model of the early church.

Malphurs and Mancini elaborate on the method of Jesus in developing leaders.[189] Jesus employed a four-step process: (1) recruitment, (2) selection, (3) training, and (4) deployment of leaders. In the recruitment phase, leaders should seek out prospective leadership who demonstrate promise just as Jesus sought out his disciples (Mark 1:16-19; John 1:43). During the selection step, they can follow the example of Jesus as he prayed all night before selecting those to be His closest followers (Luke 6:12). Leaders should also continue to pray for those we are developing just as Jesus did in John 17:9-19. Next, the third training step follows the example of Jesus as he provided teaching and ministry opportunities for his followers (John 13-17; Matt 10). It is vital for church leaders to provide real opportunities for emerging leaders to attempt and even fail at ministry as they learn. The final development step is deployment, which Jesus modeled after His resurrection as he sent the disciples into the world to serve as fishers of men (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Jesus did not commission them until they had been adequately trained for the ministry He gave them. Thus, church leaders today can follow the step-by-step process of leadership development modeled by Jesus in the Gospels.

Jesus not only developed his discipleship as leaders through an intentional process, He also developed the first disciples through his example. Wilder and Jones

[188] Davis, *Revitalize*, 17.

[189] Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 68–72.

comment that "Jesus formed the first shepherds of his church by modeling leadership through submission to the father, dependence on the Spirit, and servanthood among his followers."[190] They point to Jesus modeling submission to the father in the garden (Matt 26:38), his reliance on the Spirit throughout His ministry (John 14:15-31), and his example of serving them by washing their feet (John 13:1) as intentional aspects of his leadership development.[191]

Reeder and Gragg lean on the example of Paul for a scriptural foundation of leadership development. Specifically, they see Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:1-2 as a model of leadership development.[192] Paul instructed Timothy to entrust the message to faithful men who would also entrust it to other faithful men. In the authors' view, this example of leadership development suggests four levels of leaders who are investing in subsequent levels of leaders. The top level is Paul, the principle leader. Paul develops Timothy and others, who are proven leaders. Timothy and those others then develop faithful men, who are potential leaders. Finally, those faithful men develop other faithful men, who are potential leaders. Thus, church leaders today can follow the same principles of leadership development modeled by Paul through Timothy.

Leadership development models. As with definitions of leadership, models and methods of leadership development in the church shift and change with each author. Despite the variety, commonality does exist. Three models will be considered. First, Barna's *The Second Coming of the Church*, then Mancini and Malphur's *Building Leaders,* and finally Geiger and Kevin Peck's *Designed to Lead*.[193]

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[190] Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You*, 137.

[191] Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You*, 139–49.

[192] Reeder and Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic*, 142–45.

[193] Three considerations inform the inclusion of these particular models. First, each model has been written about at the popular level within Christian circles. Second, each author has established an influential writing and teaching platform within the church. Finally, the works span the previous three decades. Barna's *The Second Coming of the Church* was published in 1998. Malphurs and Mancini's *Building Leaders* represents the 2000's (published in 2004). Finally, Geiger and Peck's *Designed to Lead*

In *The Second Coming of the Church*, Barna reports on the exodus of leaders from the church.[194] In an effort to encourage leadership development, he provides nine leadership development principles: (1) Personalize the process, (2) development is a continual process, (3) the emerging leaders should push the process, (4) maximize leader growth by creating a positive learning environment, (5) specify the importance of a biblical worldview before the training begins, (6) intentionally escalate the prospects of success, (7) pace the process appropriately, (8) never underestimate the power of positive reinforcement, and (9) demand evidence of growth.[195] Barna's research on leadership development emphasizes the importance of four facets of leadership development: (1) the personal development of the leaders, (2) a clear concept of leadership, (3) actionable and reliable feedback, and (4) skill building.[196]

Malphurs and Mancini address the topic of leadership development in the church in *Building Leaders*. They offer a highly detailed five-step process for developing leaders: (1) discover new leaders for development, (2) launch new leaders into their positions of leadership, (3) develop new and current leaders for ministry in the church, (4) regularly evaluate your leadership-development process, and (5) regularly reward those in the leadership-development process.[197] Two specific components of step three are of particular interest. Malphurs proposes four training types. Type 1 is Learner-Driven Training and focuses on individual activities the learner undertakes on his own initiative. Type 2 is Content-Driven Training and focuses on the transfer of knowledge as

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represents the 2010's (published in 2016).

[194] Barna notes, "Many pastors feel threatened by the presence and abilities of true leaders, consequently make it impossible or uncomfortable for laity to lead . . . . Since the middle of 1995 our data have shown a consistent flight of lay leaders form the church, largely because they are appalled by the inferior existing leadership, and frustrated by the inability to contribute their leadership know-how to the church." Barna, *The Second Coming*, 149–50.

[195] Barna, *The Second Coming,* 153–59.

[196] Barna, *The Second Coming,* 159–60.

[197] Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 127–236.

someone else has structured the path of learning. Type 3 is Mentor-Driven Training and occurs when an emerging leader intentionally partners with a more experienced leader for guidance and modeling. Type 4 is Experience-Driven Training and emphasizes real-world experience designed to implement knowledge in practical contexts.[198]

In *Designed to Lead*, Geiger and Peck advocate for the church serving as the locus of leadership development for both the church and society.[199] In their model, "Leaders are developed as knowledge (truth), experiences (posture), and coaching (leaders) converge. All three are essential for leaders to be developed."[200] The importance of establishing a leadership development pipeline is also critical to their model, and it must be done with intentionality and intensity. Their pipeline model includes four levels: (1) lead yourself (be in a group), (2) lead others (lead a group), (3) lead leaders (shepherd a group of leaders), and (4) lead ministries (direct a ministry area).[201]

A review of the representative models of leadership development reveals four points of commonality. First, one single approach will not suffice. Every context, established leader, and emerging leaders is unique. Every church will need to create a unique process that works for that context. Next, one size does not fit all. One element missing from the literature is how the size of the church or organization affects the leadership development process. A church of one hundred will create a process necessarily different from a church of one thousand. Third, a defined process will achieve optimal results. While the process will look unique for each context, creating a process that defines the leadership development pipeline is imperative. Finally, some combination

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[198] Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 152–56.

[199] Geiger and Peck clarify their position: "Notice we are not saying that the locus of the Church is leadership development, but that the locus of leadership development is the Church. Please do not miss the difference . . . . The center of the Church is the gospel, but the center of leadership development must be the Church—meaning, that the leaders who will ultimately transform communities and change the world come from the church." Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2016), 4.

[200] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 163.

[201] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead,* 186–87.

of content, experience, and mentoring will achieve optimal results.[202]

Leadership development and church revitalization. How does leadership development intersect with church revitalization? Two recent studies address this question. First, Hudson's Ph.D. dissertation *A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study* established a competency model for pastoral leadership in church revitalizations.203 Second, Christopher Aiken's EdD thesis "Church Revitalization and the Role of Pastoral Leadership: A Mixed Methods Study," examined how various leadership structures and competencies influenced church revitalization.[204]

Table 8. Hudson's Competency Model[205]

Traits	*Knowledge*	*Motives and Self-Concepts*
Desire to be a pastor	Biblical knowledge	Love for God
Above reproach	Teaching ability	Love for the Bible
Husband of one wife	Organizational Awareness	Humility
Sober-minded	Team Leadership	Passion for Evangelism
Self-control	Initiative	Glory of God
Respectable	Missional Focus	Godly
Hospitable	Gospel orientation	Perseverance
Well-managed household	Church discipline	Biblical centrality

[202] Leyda offers a slight variation on the components of leadership development with character, knowledge, skills, and emotions. Richard Leyda, "Developing Leaders," in *Management Essentials for Christian Ministries,* ed. Michael J. Anthony and James Riley Estep Jr. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005) 303–5.

[203] Hudson, "A Competency Model."

[204] Aiken, "Church Revitalization."

[205] Hudson, "A Competency Model," 159.

Hudson used Behavior Event Interviews with church revitalizers and the Delphi method with a panel of experts to construct a competency model for pastoral leadership in church revitalizations. His methodology initially produced 129 competencies and were narrowed to twenty-four competencies in three categories. Table 8 displays his proposed model.

Two aspects of his research are significant for this study. First, his model of competencies provides the foundation for portions of this study that will be detailed further in chapter 3. Second, Hudson suggests that "the most obvious application of this research is in pastoral training."[206] Specifically, he advocates using the competencies as a baseline in the selection process of potential leaders and the basis for curriculum design. He notes, "Any formal or informal church revitalization training program must develop a set of experiences designed to develop pastors who can lead churches to change their culture and practice in such a way that leads to church health and growth."[207] Hudson's work provides a foundation for this research to build upon to investigate how the competencies can be instilled into current and emerging churches leaders in revitalization contexts.

Hudson's research also produced lists of job competencies common to church revitalization leaders. Theses competencies are a combination of the most frequently occurring coded job competences for superior performance and the most frequently occurring emerging competencies recording during his phase 1 behavior event interviews of church revitalization leaders.[208] The following table displays the most frequently occurring from each category.

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[206] Hudson, "A Competency Model," 161.

[207] Hudson, "A Competency Model," 162.

[208] The coded competencies are taken from Lyle M. Spencer and Signe M. Spencer, *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance* (New York: Wiley, 1993), 17-90. The emerging competencies are taken from Hudson's phase 1 interviews.

Table 9. Frequently occurring competencies[209]

Rank	*Coded Competencies*	*Relative Frequency %*	*Emerging Competencies*	*Relative Frequency %*
1	Organizational Awareness	17.8	Missional Focus	20.63
2	Team Leadership	16.6	Gospel Orientation	15.87
3	Initiative	8.6	Willingness to Confront/Church Discipline	14.29
4	Conceptual Thinking	8.0	Building Momentum	9.52
5	Information Seeking	7.4	Getting Members Engaged	9.52
6	Relationship Building	7.4	Individual and Corporate Repentance	7.94
7	Interpersonal Understanding	5.5	Transparency	7.94
8	Developing Others	4.9	Contextual Awareness and Planning	4.76
9	Teamwork and Cooperation	3.7	Membership Standards and Accountability	4.76
10	Concern for Order, Quality, and Accuracy	3.1	Optimism	4.76

Aiken's research investigated the role of leadership in church revitalizations.[210] Regarding the role of leadership development in church revitalizations, two insights emerged from the qualitative phase of his research. First, he notes that "every leader articulated a desire for greater effectiveness in leadership development."[211] This is an area that pastors engaged in the process of revitalization acknowledge is lacking. Second, while anticipating leaders would articulate a specific approach or philosophy of leadership development, Aiken found that "leaders were functioning pragmatically rather

[209] Hudson, "A Competency Model," 97.

[210] Aiken's EdD thesis was one component of this larger research project. His research group began their research one year before the second group, of which this study was part. Like this study, his research also employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, with the same quantitative component as all group member employed. The qualitative components of each study were individually completed.

[211] Aiken, "Church Revitalization," 110.

than philosophically."[212] Leaders in revitalization take a more intuitive approach to leadership development rather than relying on a set or rigid approach.

This final section has revealed a void in the literature regarding leadership development within the specific context of church revitalization. The need to develop spiritual leaders is apparent. The Bible also provides methods for developing church leaders in general. However, while the competencies that revitalization leadership need to be successful are examined, the literature ends at this point. If church revitalization is driven by spiritual leaders, how does developing those leaders contribute to revitalization?

Conclusion

Stetzer and Dodson conclude from their research that "comeback leaders were not just leaders—they were developers and leaders of leaders . . . leaders who cannot reproduce can lead a squad, but never an army."[213] From the perspective of an anecdotal source, Reeder and Swavely emphatically state, "For your church to go from embers to a flame, you must develop leaders, and then deploy them in the church and society around you."[214] This chapter has established the need for revitalization in American churches and identified a clear connection between church revitalization and developing leaders. A void has also been identified in the specifics of the role leadership development plays in the revitalization process. This current study seeks to fill that void in the literature where church revitalization, congregational transformation, and leadership development intersect. Chapter 3 will introduce and develop the methodology and rationale for this study on the role of leadership development in church revitalization.

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[212] Aiken, "Church Revitalization," 111.

[213] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 51–52.

[214] Reeder and Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame*, 151.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The existing literature on church revitalization reveals not only the need for church revitalization but also identifies leadership as a key component of the revitalization process. However, a need exists in the literature to not only obtain quantitative results relating to church revitalization, but to explain the results in more detail in terms of participant perspectives relating to the role of leadership development.[1] This study seeks to fill that need.

This chapter describes the methodology employed in this study. The state of existing literature on the role of leadership in church revitalization recommends an explanatory sequential mixed methods design.[2] Specifically, this study will utilize the participant-selection variant of the explanatory mixed methods design. John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark note, "This variant is used when the researcher is focused on qualitatively examining a phenomenon but needs initial quantitative results to identify and purposefully select the best participants."[3] Figure 1 illustrates this design structure while the following two sections state the purpose of the study along with a synopsis of the research questions.[4]

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[1] John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2011), 151.

[2] Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting,* 82. "This design is most useful when the researcher wants to access trends and relationships with quantitative data but also be able to explain the mechanism or reasons behind the resultant trends."

[3] Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting,* 85–86. The authors note two variants of the explanatory mixed methods design. The "follow-up explanations variant" is most common and places a priority on the quantitative phase and uses the qualitative phase to explain the quantitative results. However, the less common participant-selection variant places a priority on the second qualitative phase.

[4] Figure 1 adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting*, 69.

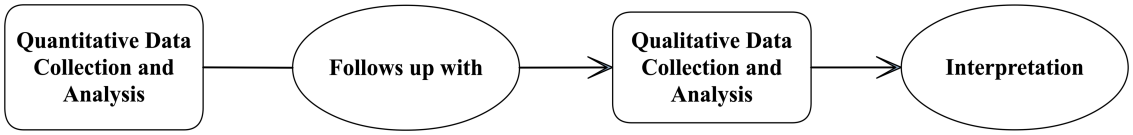

Figure 1. Explanatory sequential mixed methods

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study is to use qualitative interviews to explain the role of leadership development for church revitalization in churches that are members or affiliates of the Southern Baptist Convention.[5]

Research Questions Synopsis

1. What percentage of SBC churches are plateaued or declining?
2. Of those churches that have experienced decline, what percentage have experienced revitalization?
3. Of those SBC churches experiencing revitalization, what percentage emphasized leadership development in the process of revitalization?
4. In what ways does intentional leadership development contribute to church revitalization?
5. What changes to the church's organizational culture facilitated effective leadership development?
6. What principles and best practices of leadership development can be identified for use in other church revitalization contexts?

Design Overview

This study was conducted as one component of a larger study with seven other

[5] Creswell notes, "The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach is a design in mixed methods that appeals to individuals with a strong quantitative background or from fields relatively new to qualitative approaches. It involves a two-phase project in which the researcher collects quantitative data in the first phase, analyzes the results, and then uses the results to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase. The quantitative results typically inform the types of participants to be purposefully selected from the qualitative phase and the types of questions that will be asked of the participants. The overall intent of this design is to have the qualitative data help explain in more detail the initial quantitative results." John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 224.

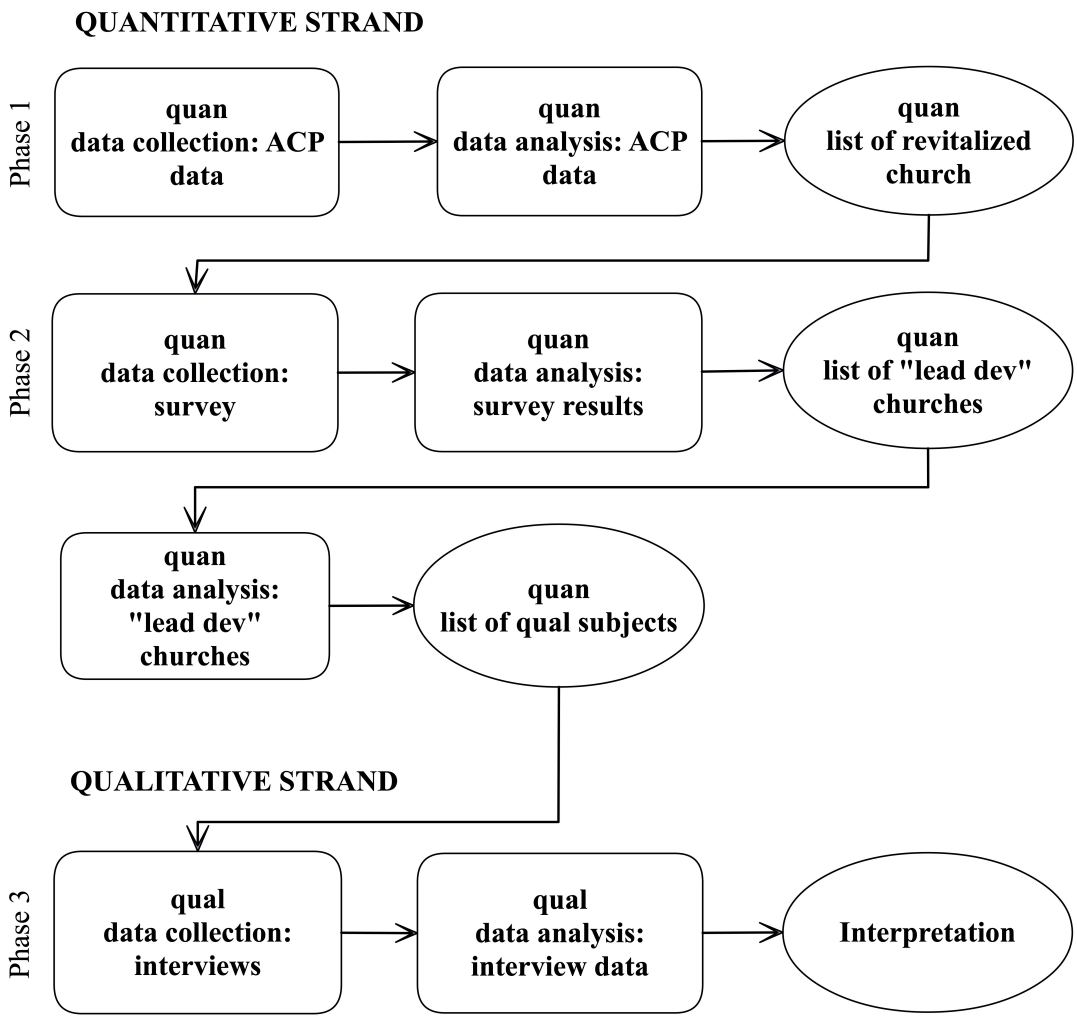

Figure 2. Design overview

studies investigating the factors contributing to church revitalization. This mixed methods design consisted of two components. The first component was the quantitative strand consisting of two phases. Phase 1 collected and analyzed data on churches in the Southern Baptist Convention to produce a list of churches that have experienced revitalization. Phase 2 utilized a survey to discover churches that identify leadership development as a contributing factor to revitalization. The qualitative strand was the second component of the study. A select number of churches that identify leadership development as contributing to revitalization were invited to participate in interviews.

These interviews further investigated the role leadership development played in the revitalization process for each church. The qualitative interviews provided further understanding and insight into the relationship between leadership development and church revitalization. The following sections detail the purpose and design of each component and strand of the study.

Quantitative Strand

The entire research team jointly conducted the quantitative phases of the study. In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the purpose of the quantitative strand is to identify types of individuals (or churches in this case) to be selected for the qualitative strand.[6] The first three research questions were addressed in the quantitative strand. The purpose and specifics of each quantitative phase follows.

Phase 1. The purpose of phase 1 was to collect data on SBC churches and identify the churches that meet that criteria of revitalization. The data for this phase was drawn from the Annual Church Profile submissions for Southern Baptist Churches in the United States. The data analysis for this phase consisted of applying the revitalization criteria to the ACP data. The product was a list of churches in the SBC that have experienced revitalization. This list of revitalized churches provided the sample for phase 2.

Phase 2. The purpose of this phase was to discover churches from phase 1 that identified leadership development as a significant factor in the church's revitalization. For this phase, the research team administered a survey to the churches from phase 1 that met the criteria for revitalization.[7] This survey included items relating to church

[6] Creswell, *Research Design*, 224.

[7] All of the instruments in this research were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the thesis research.

demographics, a respondent's role in the revitalization, and sections specifically related to each of the team members emphasis. Data analysis for this phase consisted of compiling survey responses to measure and rank churches in each of the categories of emphasis. The product of the analysis was a list of churches that rated leadership development as a significant factor in the revitalization process. This list of "leadership development" churches provided the sample for the following qualitative strand.

Qualitative Strand

The third phase was conducted individually by each research team member and focused on the specific emphases of revitalization. In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the qualitative data is drawn from participants identified in the quantitative strand and helps explain in more detail the initial quantitative results.[8] The following section details the purpose and components of the qualitative strand.

Phase 3. The purpose of this phase was to explore how leadership development contributed to the revitalization of churches from phase 2. This qualitative strand employed a phenomenological approach in an attempt to understand the shared experience of leadership development in a church revitalization.[9] For this phase, the data collection was the administration of semi-structured interviews from the "leadership development" churches list produced in phase 2. The data analysis consists of transcription, coding, and content analysis of the interviews. The product of this phase is findings represented by themes and categories in the form of models of leadership development in churches that experienced revitalization.

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[8] Creswell, *Research Design*, 224.

[9] Creswell notes, "Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence . . . . The inquirer then collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals. This descriptions consists of 'what' they experienced and 'how' they experienced it." John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 76.

This section provided an overview of this study. The research design allowed for the qualitative strand to inform the results of the quantitative strand. Table 10 correlates the research design components with corresponding research questions.

Table 10. Research design and research questions

Design Components	*Corresponding Research Questions*
QUAN	
Phase 1	1, 2
Phase 2	3
QUAL	
Phase 3	3, 4, 5

Interpretation

The final component of the study is the interpretation of the findings. Both the quantitative and qualitative results are summarized and interpreted as well as research questions answered. Creswell and Clark notes that the purpose of this components is to "discuss to what extent and in what ways the qualitative results help to explain the quantitative results."[10]

This section has provided an overview of the survey design and a description of the individual components. The following section describes the population of the study.

Population

The population for this study was member or affiliate churches of the Southern Baptist Convention within the United States who have experienced revitalization. Three

[10] Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting*, 84.

specific characteristics of this population provided the rationale inclusion in this study. First, the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest protestant group within the United States.[11] This allows the study to begin with the largest potential population. Second, the Southern Baptist Convention archives extensive data on member churches. This data is collected for each church through the submission of the Annual Church Profile, which is stored and analyzed by Lifeway Research. Finally, churches within the SBC share a common culture and confessional context, which allows for greater commonality in the sampling. The following section describes the process of delimiting the population in each phase of the study.

Delimitations and Sampling

The research design included four specific points of delimitation to arrive at the population and sample for this study. The first delimitation occurred prior phase 1. To be eligible for the study, a church must had been a member or affiliate of the Southern Baptist Convention and have completed the ACP in the years of 2006 through 2016. Therefore, churches that did not submit ACP data for every year in the timeline were excluded from consideration in the population.

The second delimitation occurred during phase 1 in which churches must have met this definition for revitalization to be included in the population. The definition included three criteria.[12]

1. In 2011, the congregation had declined 10% or more as compared to 2006 (five years prior) and in 2016 the congregation had grown 10% or more as compared to 2011(five years prior).

[11] "American Religious Data: 1952-2010 | U.S. Religion Census," accessed November 12, 2018, http://www.usreligioncensus.org/compare.php. Group size is counted in three categories: congregations, adherents, and attendees. For number of congregations the SBC ranked first with 50,816 congregations while non-denominational Christian Churches was second (35,496). For adherents, the SBC ranked first with 1,9896,279 while non-denominational Christian Churches was second (1,2241,329). For attendees, the SBC ranked second with 6,263,277 while non-denominational Christian Churches was first (8,621,258).

[12] This definition of revitalization was determined by the larger research group in consultation with the group's doctoral thesis supervisor.

2. From this group, churches will be excluded that had less than two of the last five years with one-year worship attendance growth of 10% or more, or had less than two of the last five years with higher than a 20:1 attendance to baptism ratio.

3. Finally, a church must have both two years of 10% worship attendance growth per year and a 20:1 baptism to attendance ratio or better.

Churches that met these three-criteria definition of revitalization served as the population of the study. This number of churches experiencing revitalization was used to calculate the percentage of SBC churches that were experiencing revitalization, plateaued, or declining (Research Questions 1 and 2).[13]

The third delimitation occurred in phase 2 in which the list of churches experiencing revitalization was surveyed to produce a list of churches that emphasized leadership development as a contributing factor to revitalization. The specifics of the survey are provided below in the section on instrumentation and the entire survey is listed in appendix 1. The goal for the statistical significance of the survey was a 95% confidence interval. Once the survey collection was completed, the criteria for inclusion into the sample of "leadership development" churches was applied to the survey responses.

To be included in the list of churches that emphasize leadership development as a contributing factor to revitalization, a church must have met the following criteria.

1. Completed and submitted the survey.

2. On item 8, rated "leadership" as "significant," or "highly significant," OR

3. On item 23, provided an answer that described how changes in leadership development contributed to revitalization, OR

4. On item 24, rated either bulleted statement as "agree," or "strongly agree."

[13] The answers to Research Questions 1 and 2 will be necessarily be calculated as percentages based on the total number of SBC churches (47,544 in 2017) versus the number of churches that completed the ACP. "Southern Baptist Convention > Fast Facts about the SBC," accessed November 14, 2018, http://www.sbc.net/BecomingSouthernBaptist/FastFacts.asp.

The product of this delimitation was a list of churches that emphasized leadership development as a contributing factor to revitalization. This list provided the answer to Research Question 3.[14] The participants for the qualitative strand of the study were selected from this list in the next phase.

The final delimitation occurred in phase 2 in which the list of churches emphasizing leadership development as a contributing factor to revitalization was reduced to produce the sample for inclusion in phase 3 of the study. Initially, a respondent must have agreed to participate in a follow-up interview (question 6 on the survey) to be eligible for the sample. This purposeful sampling employed maximal variation to produce a diverse sample based on the demographic categories of church context (rural, suburban, and urban).[15] This delimitation produced a list of 12 churches that were invited to participate in the qualitative strand of the study in phase 3 (semi-structured interviews).[16] The data analysis of the interviews provided the answers to Research Questions 4, 5, and 6.

This section has detailed the delimitations of study and methods for sampling the population. The next section will identify the limits of generalization of the study beyond the population.

Limitations of the Generalization

The population and sample were derived from Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches in North America. The quantitative attributes are generalized to SBC

[14] The answer to Research Question 3 (number of churches that experienced revitalization that listed leadership development as a significant fact in the revitalization) will be calculated as a percentage based on the number of churches that have experienced revitalization (from the second delimitation).

[15] Creswell notes, "This approach consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the sites or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different on the criteria. This approach is often selected because when a researcher maximizes differences at the beginning of the study, it increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives—an ideal in qualitative research." Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 156–57.

[16] Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 11th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2016), 255; Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting*, 186; Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 155. The number of recommended participants in qualitative phenomenological interviews varies from author to author, but consensus is between 5-25. The key is for all participants to have the experienced the same phenomenon.

churches experiencing revitalization.[17] The qualitative attributes are only generalized to the participants in phase 3 of the research. While there may be limitations in direct application of these findings, depending on the cultural context of a given church, the combined quantitative and qualitative findings may be transferable to other church contexts due to commonality of leadership development theme and practices. These themes and practices are generally mirrored in other evangelical congregations beyond SBC churches.

Instrumentation

This study employed two primary data collection instruments. During phase 2 of the quantitative strand, the research team administered an online survey. During phase 3 in the qualitative strand, the researcher administered interviews. The following sections detail the content and rationale for each instrument.

Church Revitalization Survey

Phase 2 in the quantitative strand employed a survey ("Church Revitalization Survey,") as the data collection instrument. The purpose of the survey was twofold: (1) to provide an answer to Research Question 3, and (2) to provide the data from which the sample for phase 3 in the quantitative strand will be drawn.[18] The details of the Church Revitalization Survey follows.

Design. The research team chose a self-administered, web survey as the mode. This design leveraged three advantages. First, using a website survey service (specifically, www.surveymonkey.com) maximized the technology for question sequencing and skip logic.[19] Second, data collection was automatic, and a certain amount

[17] Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting*, 9.

[18] Research Question 3: Of those SBC churches experiencing revitalization, what percentage emphasized leadership development in the process of revitalization?

[19] Andres notes, "Web surveys have the advantage of being able to program skip questions so that that the respondent is automatically directed to the next relevant question." Lesley Andres, *Designing*

of data analysis was queried by the website. Last, the speed of collection provided a significant saving in terms of time.[20]

Content. The survey was comprised of 32 items in ten sections (see appendix 1 for specific questions). The first section was comprised of six demographic questions related to the role the respondent held with the church in relation to the revitalization. The second section was one question for contact information. The third section covered the revitalization process in general with three questions. Sections four through nine consisted of questions relating to the specific factors that may have contributed to the revitalization (discipleship, evangelism, missions, leadership, prayer, and primary worship gathering). The final section was one open ended question for general comments.

Section seven of the survey focused specifically on leadership and leadership development. Each item addressed a unique facet of leadership or leadership development in relation to the revitalization process and was drawn from the research questions or precedent literature. Items 21 and 24 allowed for open-ended responses.[21] Items 22 and 24 used six-point Likert rating scales.[22] Items 22 used 16 leadership practices for revitalization developed by Joseph Hudson.[23]

& Doing Survey Research (London: SAGE, 2012), 86.

[20] Andres also notes three disadvantages that accompany a self-directed web survey. First, because the link to the survey will be embedded in an email invitation, churches without accurate or complete email information will not receive the invitation. Second, self-administered surveys inherently include an inability for respondents to ask follow-up or clarification questions. Last, the most qualified person to complete the survey may not receive the invitation or be the one actually responding. Andres, *Designing*, 50–51.

[21] Survey item 21: Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership structures which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process. Survey item 23: Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership development processes which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

[22] Andres notes, "If there is no midpoint, individuals are not allowed to sit on the fence." Andres, *Designing*, 74. For this project, all questions with rating scales had no midpoint. The nature of the question recommended that respondents choose a side. Survey item 22: Indicate how important each of following leadership practices have been in the revitalization process in your ministry context. Survey item 24: Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the leadership development processes. Prior to the revitalization process, a culture of effective leadership development existed within the church. Leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process.

[23] Joseph Stephen Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern

Administration. The entire research team participated in collecting data for the survey. Collection protocol occurred as follows:

1. The research team divided up the list of churches that experienced revitalization. Each member was assigned a number of churches to check and validate contact information. This check will be done through website searches.

2. An email invitation (appendix 3) was sent to the primary email address at the church (either the general office email or the pastor, if available). The email invitation explained the purpose of the survey and included a link to access the survey via a web browser. For an incentive, respondents that submitted the response within seven days and agreed to a follow-up interview were entered into a drawing for a $250 gift card.

3. Follow-up phone calls were made by the research team to churches that did not respond after seven days. Hard copies of the survey were provided for churches that did not have email or internet access.

Validation and reliability. Three protocols for validation and reliability were built into the survey design. First, the survey was submitted to an expert panel for feedback and approval. The expert panel included experienced church revitalizers, denominational leaders, and researchers in the field.[24] Second, the survey was field tested among the research team and select pastors to ensure deliverability, functionality, and clarity.

Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 96–97; Lyle M. Spencer and Signe M. Spencer, *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance* (New York: Wiley, 1993), 17-90. The 16 practices listed in item 22 are a combination of the most frequent job competencies from Spencer and Spencer and the most common emerging competencies recorded during his phase 1 behavioral event interviews of church revitalization leaders.

[24] The expert panel consisted of Mark Clifton, Senior Director of Replanting/Revitalization for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the SBC and author of *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016); Brian Croft, Senior Fellow at the Mathena Center for Church Revitalization and author of *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches* (Fearn, Scotland: Christin Focus Publications, 2016); Andrew M. Davis, author of *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017); Philip Nation, revitalization pastor and co-author of *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2012); and Joseph Stephen Hudson, author of "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).

Leadership Development Interviews

Phase 3 in the qualitative strand employed semi-structured recorded interviews as the data collection instrument ("Leadership Development Interviews").[25] Whereas the Revitalization Survey was conducted with the entire research team, the Leadership Development Interview was conducted individually. The purpose of the interviews was to collect data to formulate answers to Research Question 4 ("In what ways does leadership development contribute to church revitalization?"), Research Question 5 ("What changes to the church's organizational culture facilitated effective leadership development?"), and Research Question 6 ("What principles and best practices of leadership development can be identified for use in other church revitalization contexts?") The specifics of the Leadership Development Interviews follow.

Table 11. Qualitative research questions and interview questions

Research Question	*Corresponding Interview Questions*
4. In what ways did leadership development contribute to church revitalization?	1, 7, 8, 10, 11
5. What changes to the church's organizational culture facilitated effective leadership development?	2, 3, 4, 5, 6
6. What principles and best practices of leadership development can be identified for use in other church revitalization contexts?	3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12

Content. The interview questions were combined demographic information and open-ended questions (appendix 2).[26] The first section was comprised of six

[25] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 160.

[26] Creswell and Clark note, "…The researcher connects to a second phase. . . by identifying specific quantitative results that call for additional explanation and using these results to guide the development of the qualitative strand. Specifically, the researcher develops or refines the qualitative research questions, purposeful sampling procedures, and data collection protocols so they follow from the quantitative results. As such, the qualitative phase depends on the quantitative results." Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 83. The interview questions in appendix 2 consist of anticipated questions. However, the nature of the explanatory mixed method design anticipates some adjustment in the qualitative strand based on the analysis of the quantitative strand.

demographic questions. The second section asked twelve questions related to leadership development and revitalization. Each open-ended question correlated to one or more research questions. Table 11 displays the correlation of questions to research questions.

Administration. The timeline for each interview included seven points of contact between the researcher and participant. The following list details these points of contact.

1. Initial email alerting the participant to the initial phone call.
2. Phone call to set up the interview.
3. Email containing the list of questions and instructions for the video interview along with confirmation of the interview time.
4. Video interview.
5. Thank you email with instructions for transcript verification.
6. Email containing the interview transcript.
7. Email containing the preliminary conclusions with instructions for verification.

Each interview was conducted according to the following protocols.[27]

1. The interview was facilitated using a video conferencing software (www.zoom.com) that allows for recording the entire interview.
2. Read the informed consent statement and asked the participant to agree/disagree.
3. Conducted the interview
4. Thanked the participant and previewed the remaining points of contact.
5. Informed the participant of the transcript validation process.
6. Informed the participant of the preliminary interpretation validation process.

[27] Interview protocol sequence adapted from Stacy A. Jacob and S. Paige Furgerson, "Writing Interview Protocols and Conducting Interviews: Tips for Students New to the Field of Qualitative Research," *The Qualitative Report* 17, no. T&L Art. 6 (2012): 7–10.

Following the interview, the data was processed according to the following protocols.

1. Each interview was transcribed.

2. Each interview was coded using emerging codes and themes from the precedent literature.

3. The qualitative data was analyzed into themes.[28] Themes centered around the content and ideas contained in the research questions.

Validation and reliability. Six specific protocols were followed to ensure validation and reliability in this phase of the study. First, the interview questions were submitted to an expert panel for feedback and approval. The expert panel included experienced church revitalizers, denominational leaders, and researchers in the field.[29]

Second, the researcher kept a research journal of each step taken with dated entries, completed tasks, and observations. Third, both the interview content and process were triangulated through supervisor and peer reviews. Members of the research team audited the content and process, along with the project supervisor. Fourth, two pilot interviews were conducted to ensure the video software and transcription process worked properly.

The fifth protocol involved member checking.[30] First, interview participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure accuracy. After the interview was transcribed, each participant was provided a transcript to review and

[28] Creswell notes, "Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea." Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 186.

[29] The expert panel consisted of Brian Croft, Senior Fellow at the Mathena Center for Church Revitalization and author of *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches*, 2016; Bill Henard, Executive Director of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists and author of *Can These Bone Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization*, 2015; Joseph Stephen Hudson, author of "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017); Kenneth Priest, Director of Convention Strategies for the Southern Baptists of Texas and co-author of *Rubicons of Revitalization: Overcoming 8 Common Barriers to Church Renewal*, 2018.

[30] Creswell explains, "In member checking, the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations. This technique is considered to be the most critical technique for establishing credibility." Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 252.

correct. After ten days, if no revisions were recommended by the participant, the researcher proceeded with the understanding that the transcripts are accurate and valid. Second, the preliminary interpretation of the study was provided to interview participants for their reflection and feedback. As with the interview protocol, a period of ten days was allowed for responses regarding the preliminary interpretation.

The final protocol for validation involved clarifying researcher bias.[31] The researcher acknowledged three primary areas where bias has the potential to influence the interpretation of the data. First, while the researcher is a student at SBTS, he is not a member of the SBC or had ever been a member of a Southern Baptist church. Second, the researcher currently serves as a pastor with nearly 30 years of local ministry experience. Finally, the researcher has served in a growing megachurch for the past 20 years in various ministry roles.

Procedures

Finally, the methodology for this research project was reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary before any surveys or interviews were conducted with human participants. A risk assessment profile was created for research involving human subjects, as well as the assessment of risk to human subjects in research. All interview participants were provided with an informed consent statement before participating in an interview.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the purpose and design of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study. The following chapter details the findings of the study while chapter 5 addresses conclusion.

[31] Creswell explains, "In this clarification, the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study." Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 251.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explain the role of leadership development for church revitalization in churches or affiliates of the Southern Baptist Convention. This chapter provides a detailed explanation and analysis of the findings of the research design, the demographics of the research participants, and the results of both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research. The strengths and challenges of the research design will also be considered.

Compilation Protocol

This research employed a participant-selection variation of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design.[1] The quantitative strand consisted of two phases. Phase 1 collected data on Southern Baptist Churches, applied the revitalization criteria, and produced a list of churches that had experienced revitalization. Phase 2 used a survey to collect data on the revitalized churches and produced a list of churches that rated leadership development as significant in the church's revitalization. The qualitative strand consisted of one phase. Phase 3 contacted select churches from the phase 2 leadership development churches and conducted interviews with church leaders from those churches. A detailed description of protocol and participants for each phase follows.

[1] Six doctoral research students, under the supervision of Michael Wilder, conducted the research protocol for phase 1 and phase 2. The students worked together as a team by dividing the duties to develop, compile, and analyze the data collected in phases 1 and 2.

Phase 1 Delimitations

Data collection began by contacting Lifeway Research to obtain Annual Church Profile data on SBC churches. The first delimitation of participation occurred at this point. To be eligible for participation in phase 1, churches must had submitted ACP data for 2006-2016. This initial data was obtained in June 2018. At that time, 28,046 churches had submitted sufficient data for inclusion in the study.[2] In analyzing the five-year worship attendance records of those 28,046 churches, 25.60% (7,180) were growing, 25.71% (7,211) were plateaued, and 48.69% (13,656) were declining. Only churches that were in need of revitalization were eligible for participation (declining or plateaued churches.) Thus, 7,180 (26%) were excluded because they were growing churches in 2016. This left a population of 20,867 (74.40%) as declining or plateaued churches.

After this number of eligible churches had been determined, the second delimitation occurred. At this point, criteria 1 and 2 for being considered a "revitalized" church were applied. This first step in the second delimitation looked at the decline and growth rates of the church. For the first criterion, a church must have in 2011 declined 10% or more as compared to 2006, and in 2016 grown 10% or more as compared to 2011. The second criterion excluded churches that had less than two of the last five years with one-year worship attendance growth of 10% or more, or had less than two of the last five years with 20:1 or higher attendance to baptism ratio. This left 3,364 churches eligible.

The second step in the second delimitation applied a third criterion for being considered a "revitalized" church. This third criterion excluded churches that did not have both two years of 10% worship attendance growth per year and a 20:1 baptism to attendance ratio or better. The final result of the second delimitation identified 716

[2] The total number of churches reported as participating in the SBC in 2016 was 47,272. Thus, only 59.3% of SBC churches had submitted sufficient data to initially be considered for participation. "ACP: Churches up in 2016; Baptisms, Membership Decline," Baptist Press, accessed November 25, 2018, http://www.bpnews.net/49005/acp--churches-up-in-2016-baptisms-membership-decline.

churches (5.24% of the churches that were in decline) that met the criteria of revitalization and eligibility for participation in phase 2.

Phase 2 Delimitations and Protocol

For phase 2, the 716 "revitalized" churches were invited to participate in a survey (see appendix 1) to investigate the factors and influences of the revitalization. The research team divided up the list of 716 churches to identify and verify contact information. An email invitation (see appendix 3) was sent to the primary email address at the church (either the general office email or the pastor, if available) in June 2018. The invitation explained the survey and provided a link to complete the survey online. An incentive was offered to each participant who completed the survey within seven days and agreed to participate in a follow-up interview (if selected). After this initial seven-day period, team members attempted to contact churches that had not responded. Paper copies of the survey were made available to participants at this time as well. By September 2018, after repeated emails and phone calls to encourage responses, 129 churches had responded to the survey with a confidence interval of 7.82.[3] At that time, the team decided to further limit the sample to churches with worship attendance greater than 50 people in 2016.[4] This resulted in a population of 466 churches.

To encourage more responses, the research team sent paper copies of the survey with a postage paid return envelope to the 466 churches in April 2019. This

[3] The research team was comprised of students from two different cohorts at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Because the 2016 class was scheduled to graduate earlier, two of the students finalized their projects at this point in the study. The remaining students continued to solicit more survey responses over the following year. For the 2016 cohort results, see Christopher Michael Aiken, "Church Revitalization and the Role of Pastoral Leadership: A Mixed-Methods Study" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018) and Aaron Thomas Colyer, "Church Revitalization and Evangelistic Emphasis: A Mixed Methods Study" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

[4] The team decided to exclude churches with 50 or fewer due to the small numeric threshold needed to achieve the percentage increase or decrease. For example, a few people leaving or coming to the church could easily change the designation from growing to declining.

distribution was followed up with additional attempts via email and phone calls to encourage completion of the survey. The final number of completed surveys was 145 of 466 potential respondents, with a resulting confidence level of 6.71.

Using the 145 survey responses, a third delimitation produced a list of churches that emphasized leadership development in the revitalization process. From this group, churches must have met one of three criteria: rated "leadership" as "significant" or "highly significant" on item 8; or provided an answer that describes how changes in leadership development contributed to revitalization on item 23, or rated either bulleted statement on item 24 as "agree" or "strongly agree." [5] This delimitation produced a list of eighteen churches that met the criteria for a "leadership development" church.

Table 12. Delimitations and sampling summary

Phase	*Delimitation*	*Description*	*Number*
		Total SBC churches in 2016	47,272
1	1	Churches with sufficient data	28,046
1	1	Declining churches	13,656
1	1	Plateaued churches	7,211
1	2	Met revitalization criteria 1 and 2	3,364
1	2	Met revitalization criterion 3	716
2	3	Worship attendance >50	466
2	3	Responded to phase 2 survey	145
2	4	Met leadership development criteria	18
2	4	Purposeful maximal variation sample	12

[5] Survey item 8: Rate each ministry emphasis as to the importance it played in the revitalization process. (Highly Unimportant, Unimportant, Slightly Unimportant, Slightly Important, Important, Highly Important.) The ministry choices were discipleship, evangelism, leadership, missions, prayer, primary worship gathering, other. Survey item 23: Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership development process which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process. Survey item 24: Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the leadership development process: (1) Prior to the revitalization process, a culture of effective leadership development existed within the church; (2) Leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process.

Phase 2 Participant Demographics

Pastors were the indented target of the phase 2 survey and they comprised the greatest category of survey respondents with 94% (see table 13). Nothing in the administration protocol prevented non-pastors from completing the survey in phase 2, as some churches may have been without a pastor at the time. Phase 3 interviews, however, were limited to pastors to provide continuity of perspective.

Table 13. Phase 2 respondents' current roles[6]

Role	*Number of respondents*	*Percentage (%)*
Pastor/elder	133	94
Staff	6	4
Deacon	1	1
Volunteer	1	1
Total	141	

Note: Four of the 145 respondents did not answer this item

Respondents were asked about their roles both prior to and during the revitalization process (see table 14). The greatest number were pastors both before and during the revitalization process, with 90% serving as the pastor during the revitalization process and 47% serving as the pastor prior to revitalization. However, 44% of respondents reported not being at the church prior to the revitalization. This indicates they were part of the change made to perhaps facilitate revitalization. A smaller percentage of respondents were on staff prior to and during the revitalization.

[6] Survey item 1, "Your current role with your church: pastor/elder, deacon, staff, or volunteer."

Table 14. Phase 2 respondents' roles related to revitalization[7]

	Respondents	*Role prior to revitalization (%)*	*Respondents*	*Role during revitalization (%)*
Pastor/elder	66	47	127	90
Deacon	—	—	1	1
Staff	10	7	9	6
Volunteer	2	1	1	1
Not at church	62	44	3	2
Total	140		141	

Note: Five of the 145 respondents did not answer this item

Respondents were asked to classify their ministry context as rural, suburban, or urban (see table 15). The majority (53%) were rural with slightly over one-third being suburban (36%). Only 11% were classified at urban ministry contexts.

Table 15. Phase 2 respondents' ministry context[8]

Context	*Number of respondents*	*Ministry context (%)*
Rural	75	53
Suburban	51	36
Urban	15	11
Total	141	

Note: Four of the 145 respondents did not answer this item

The final delimitation occurred at the end of phase 2. Eighteen "leadership development" churches were purposefully selected employing maximal variation to produce a diverse sample based on demographic categories of church context. Also, an attempt was made to avoid selecting churches that were also selected by other researchers on the team. This delimitation produced a list of 12 churches that provided the sample for phase 3. Table 12 illustrates the delimitations and sampling of the study.

[7] Survey item 2, "Your role prior to the revitalization process: pastor/elder, deacon, staff, volunteer, or not at the church." Survey item 3, "Your role during the revitalization process: pastor/elder, deacon, staff, volunteer, or not at the church."

[8] Survey item 4, "Your church context is best described as: rural, suburban, or urban."

Phase 3 Protocol and Participants

"Leadership Development Interviews" were scheduled and conducted with 12 church leaders from the final delimitation of phase 2.[9] Two pilot interviews were conducted in June 2019 to ensure reliability of the protocol and technology.[10] The protocol for interviews included: (1) an initial email; (2) phone call to set up the interview; (3) email with the interview questions and login instructions for the video interview; (4) video interview; (5) thank you email with instructions for transcript verification and a copy of the transcript; and (6) an email containing the preliminary conclusions with instructions for verification. During the interviews, each participant was read and agreed to an informed consent statement (appendix 3). The interviews were recorded using video conferencing software (www.zoom.com). The audio files were submitted for transcription via a transcription service and proofed before being sent to participants for verification. The transcripts were coded using the research questions, precedent literature, and emerging themes via NVIVO software.

The demographics for phase 3 participant churches varied greatly (see table 16). Six of the 12 churches were rural while 5 of the remaining 6 were suburban and 1 was in an urban context. All churches employed a single campus approach. The churches represented 9 different states and 6 different regions. One-half of the churches had less than 100 in worship attendance in 2016, with the other half representing a range from 145 to 556. Finally, 9 of the 12 churches reported increased worship attendance in 2019

[9] The sensitive nature of this specific research topic and the nature of the responses necessitated two additional protocol items for phase 3. Participants were asked pointed questions about past failures, staff, volunteers, and leadership challenges. In order to allow for as much candor and self-reflection as possible, the researcher agreed to two stipulations. First, participant names, church names, and city locations of the participants would not be included with the study. Rather, the respondents are identified by an ID number with their church (see table 16). Second, the complete transcripts are not included in this thesis. At times, direct quotations will be used when deemed impactful. Otherwise, summaries of themes and responses will be used. To ensure anonymity, any personally identifying information will remain confidential. See Lesley Andres, *Designing & Doing Survey Research* (London: SAGE, 2012), 130.

[10] The pilot interview participants were Bryan Fakes, Senior Minister of Connection Christian Church, Dardenne Prairie, MO, and Gustavo Vega, Campus Pastor of Harvester Christian Church Troy Campus, Troy, MO.

verses 2016. Three churches declined in worship attendance during that period while 1 remained plateaued.

Table 16. Phase 3 church participation profile[11]

ID	*Ministry Context*	*Single Campus or Multisite*	*State*	*Region by US Census Division*	*ACP Worship Attendance (2016)*	*Self-reported Average Worship Attendance (2019)*[12]
1	Rural	S	ID	Mountain	64	50
2	Suburban	S	AL	East South	201	220
3	Rural	S	OK	West South	93	125
4	Rural	S	LA	West South	145	150
5	Suburban	S	CO	Mountain	254	300
6	Rural	S	IL	East North Central	83	100
7	Suburban	S	NC	South Atlantic	321	250
8	Suburban	S	OH	East North Central	76	80
9	Urban	S	TX	West South	566	650
10	Rural	S	LA	West South	85	60
11	Rural	S	TX	West South	80	160
12	Suburban	S	LA	West South	475	475

Phase 3 participants represented a wide range of experience and age (see table 17). They averaged slightly more than 25 years of ministry experience, ranging from 4 to 48 years total. The participants also averaged slightly more than 8 years tenure at their current church, ranging from 2 to 23 years total tenure. The age of the participants

[11] The US Census Bureau divides the country into four regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. Each region is further divided into divisions. The diversity of ministry contexts cannot be adequately represented by four regions. Therefore, the regional divisions are provided for further geographical dispersion. "Census Division," accessed July 31, 2019, https://www.easidemographics.com/mdbhelp/html/census_division_1.htm. The ACP Worship Attendance (2016) is from the ACP report. The Reported Worship Attendance (2018) is a self-reported number provided during each interview. Interview demographic item 6, “Describe your church (size, demographics, etc.)”

[12] This number was reported by participants on interview item 6 of the demographic information: “Describe your church (size, demographics, etc.) As the interviews were conducted in June and July 2019, the reported worship attendance was the current quarterly average attendance from January to the time of the interview for 2019.

averaged slightly more than 50 years, with a range from 36 to 71.

The education level of the participants varied between minimal college and doctorate degrees (see table 18). Three pastors had doctorates (2 with a Doctor of Ministry and 1 with a Doctor of Philosophy). Three of the participants were bi-vocational with his primary place of employment outside the church (2 were in education and 1 was in industry.)

Table 17. Phase 3 pastors' age and experience profile[13]

	Minimum	*Maximum*	*Range*	*Mean*	*Median*
Years of Ministry Experience	4	48	44	25.75	27.0
Tenure in Church	2	23	21	8.12	6.0
Pastor's Age	36	71	35	50.83	46.5

Table 18. Phase 3 pastors' education and status profile[14]

Education Level	*Count*	*Percent (%)*
Some College	—	—
Bachelors	3	25
Masters	6	50
Doctorate	3	25
Bi-vocational	3	25

Findings

The findings from phases 2 and 3 of this study follow. The survey instrument employed in phase 2 collected demographic data on respondents (reported in the previous section.) Following the demographic items, respondents were asked three questions regarding the revitalization process in general. Following the revitalization items,

[13] Interview demographic item 2, "How many years have you been in ministry? How many years did you serve prior to the revitalization?" Demographic item 3, "How many years have you served in your current role?" Demographic item 5, "What is your current age?"

[14] Interview demographic item 4, "What is your training and educational background?"

respondents were asked specific questions regarding six ministry areas: discipleship, evangelism, leadership, missions, prayer, and primary worship gathering. This specific study focused on the leadership section while the other studies in the project investigated the other six areas. The leadership section was comprised of five items related to the role of leadership and leadership development in the revitalization process. Finally, respondents were asked one final question related to giving advice to anyone wanting to lead a church in revitalization.

Phase 2

The first general revitalization item asked respondents to rate each of the six ministry emphases on a six-point Likert scale as to the importance it played in the revitalization process (see table 19). The top three emphases were ranked very close together in the order of prayer (5.42 average Likert rating), primary worship gathering (5.39), and leadership (5.35). Discipleship (5.08) and evangelism (5.05) ranked next with missions being ranked as least important to revitalization (4.77). Missions also had the most combined percentage of respondents rank it on the unimportant side of the scale (13.24%), followed by evangelism (6.62%) and discipleship (6.57%). Prayer had the highest combined% of respondents rank it on the important side of the scale (96.35), followed by worship (95.62%) and leadership (94.85%).

Table 19. Phase 2 ministry importance rating

Ministry Area	*Highly Un-important*	*Un-important*	*Slightly Un-important*	*Slightly Important*	*Important (I)*	*Highly Important (HI)*	*Average Likert rating*
Prayer	2.92	0.00	0.73	9.49	22.63	64.23	5.42
Primary Worship Gathering	2.19	0.73	1.46	5.11	32.12	58.39	5.39
Leadership	3.68	0.74	0.74	8.09	25.74	61.03	5.35
Discipleship	4.38	0.73	1.46	16.06	30.66	46.72	5.08
Evangelism	4.41	0.74	1.47	13.24	38.97	41.18	5.05
Missions	2.94	5.88	4.41	17.65	36.03	33.09	4.77

Note: All numbers are stated as percentage of responses except for average Likert rating

Two phase 2 survey items regarding change initiatives that were pursued in the revitalization process revealed areas of member acceptance and member resistance to change (see tables 20 and 21). For member acceptance to change, the two top rated ministry emphases were primary worship environment (23%) and missions (21%). The remaining four emphases ranked closely together in the order of leadership (16%), discipleship (14%), prayer (13%) and evangelism (13%). For member resistance to change, the top four ministry emphases ranked closely together in the order of evangelism (23%), leadership (22%), discipleship (22%), and primary worship environment (19%). Missions (9%) and prayer (5%) were the two ministry emphases that experienced the least amount of member resistance. Note that the ministry emphasis respondents rated as the most important (prayer) is also the one to encounter the least amount of resistance when emphasizing change to facilitate revitalization.

Table 20. Phase 2 acceptability of change initiatives[15]

Area	*Indicating greatest acceptance (%)*
Primary Worship Environment	23
Missions	21
Leadership	16
Discipleship	14
Prayer	13
Evangelism	13

[15] Survey item 10, "Reflecting on the change initiatives you have pursued in your church revitalization context, identify the area in which you have faced the greatest amount of member acceptance."

Table 21. Phase 2 resistance to change initiatives[16]

Area	*Indicating greatest resistance (%)*
Evangelism	23
Leadership	22
Discipleship	22
Primary Worship Environment	19
Missions	9
Prayer	5

Survey items 21-24 focused the role of leadership and leadership development in the revitalization process (see table 22). Respondents were asked to identify changes in the church's leadership structures that contributed to revitalization. The most frequent change that influenced revitalization was a change in pastoral staff, primarily the senior or preaching pastor (12%). The following three changes involved leadership development themes and are separated by only one percentage point: expanding the number of leaders (10%), more mentoring and/or training of volunteer leaders (9%), and empowering current leadership structures (9%). The next three changes revolve around changing the leadership paradigm of the church: moving to a staff led model (8%), redefining current roles to a biblical model (primarily centered around deacons becoming service oriented rather than a decision making body) (7%), and moving to an elder led model (5%). The remaining changes involved improvements and adjustments of leadership structures.

[16] Survey item 9, "Reflecting on the change initiatives you have pursued in your church revitalization context, identify the area in which you have faced the greatest amount of member resistance."

Table 22. Phase 2 leadership structure changes[17]

Theme	*Frequency (percentage)*
Change in pastoral staff	12
Expanded number of leaders	10
More mentoring/training of volunteer leaders	9
Empowered current leadership structures	9
Moved to staff led model	8
Redefined current roles to a biblical model	7
Moved to elder led model	5
Reduced number of leaders	4
Expanded staff	4
Improved leadership health	4
Move leaders to area of gifting	3
New leaders in existing structures	3
Established regular leader meetings	3
All others (14 items with < 3%)	18

Note: Total responses were 173[18]

Survey item 22 asked respondents to rate sixteen leadership practices on a six-point Likert scale as to the importance each practice has been in the revitalization process (see table 23).[19] Four practices received greater than 90% rating of important and highly important: getting members engaged (93%), relationship building (93%), teamwork and cooperation (92%), and developing others (90%). Each of these competencies comprised a component of leadership development. The high rating of these competencies pointed to leadership development as integral to the process of revitalization.

[17] Survey item 21, "Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership structures which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process."

[18] This item allowed for an open-ended response, allowing for responses that covered more than one theme item. Thus, each single theme or item was counted as an individual response.

[19] Joseph Stephen Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 96–97; Lyle M. Spencer and Signe M. Spencer, *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance (New York: Wiley, 1993), 17-90.* The 16 practices listed in item 22 are a combination of the most frequent job competencies from Spencer and Spencer and the most common emerging competencies recorded during his phase 1 behavioral event interviews of church revitalization leaders.

Table 23. Phase 2 leadership practices/competencies rating[20]

Leadership Competency/Practice	*Phase 2 Highly Important (HI)*	*Phase 2 Important (I)*	*Phase 2- HI or I*	*Mean Rating*
Getting members engaged	65	27	93	5.52
Relationship building	62	31	93	5.49
Teamwork and cooperation	61	32	92	5.48
Gospel orientation	58	31	88	5.41
Developing others	55	35	90	5.38
Transparency	53	34	88	5.34
Building momentum	53	34	87	5.32
Initiative	40	42	82	5.15
Missional focus	45	32	78	5.15
Contextual awareness	37	40	77	5.08
Conceptual thinking	31	42	73	4.93
Interpersonal understanding	37	44	71	4.89
Individual and corporate repentance/church discipline	33	35	68	4.85
Organizational awareness	29	35	64	4.80
Willingness to confront	36	26	62	4.71
Information seeking	17	37	54	4.55

Note: all numbers are percentages of total responses, except for mean rating, which reflects average rating of each question on a six-point Likert scale

Survey item 23 addressed the changes in the church's leadership development process that contributes to the revitalization (see table 24). The most frequently reported change by respondents was the development of a leadership development pipeline, or an intentional pathway for people to both become leaders and increase the number of leaders (15%). The other change to receive more than 10% of the mentions was intentional training (11%). All other changes were mentioned in less than 10% of the responses.

[20] Survey item 22, "Indicate how important each of the following leadership practices have been in the revitalization process in your ministry context. (Highly unimportant, unimportant, slightly unimportant, slightly important, important, highly important.)

Table 24. Changes in leadership development process in revitalization[21]

Theme	*Frequency (percentage)*
Leadership development pipeline	15
Intentional training	11
One to one mentoring/discipleship	7
Relationship building	6
Involve new people in leadership	5
Involve others besides the pastor	4
Regular communication	4
Change leadership structures	4
Change pastoral leadership	3
Transition to staff leadership	3
All others (37 items with < 3%)	37

Note: Total responses were 117[22]

The final survey items in the leadership section focused two specific aspects of leadership development related to the revitalization process (see table 25). Participants were asked to select their level of agreement with two statements. The first statement concerned the existence of a leadership development culture in the church prior to the revitalization. An overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) disagreed to some extent with the statement, indicating that an effective leadership development culture did not exist prior to revitalization. Only 19% of respondents agreed to some extent with the statement. For the second statement, 91% of respondents agreed to some extent that leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process. Only 8% disagreed with the statement, indicating that they believed leadership development did not play a significant role in the revitalization process.

[21] Survey item 23, "Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership development process which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process."

[22] This item allowed for an open-ended response, allowing for responses that covered more than one theme item. Thus, each single theme or item was counted as an individual response.

Table 25. Phase 2 leadership development role in revitalization[23]

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*
Prior to the revitalization process, a culture of effective leadership development existed within the church.	38	29	13	13	3	3
Leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process.	3	2	3	13	37	41

Note: All numbers are percentages of total responses

Table 26. Phase 2 respondent advice[24]

Theme	*Frequency (percentage)*
Pray/fast	17
Emphasize strong preaching/teaching	11
Focus on slow organizational change; be patient	10
Love your people	8
Develop leaders	6
Invest in relationships	5
Love/exegete/engage/serve the community	4
Be persistent	4
Look to Scripture	3
Be ready/anticipate resistance	3
Stay and don't leave	3
Trust God	3
All others (23 items with <3%)	23

Note: Total responses were 212[25]

[23] Survey item 24, "Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the leadership development processes (Strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, strongly agree.) (1) Prior to the revitalization process, a culture of effective leadership development existed within the church. (2) Leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process.

[24] Survey item 32, "What advice would you offer to a pastor seeking to lead a revitalization process?"

[25] This item allowed for an open-ended response, allowing for responses that covered more than one theme item. Thus, each single theme or item was counted as an individual response.

The final item on the phase 2 survey posed a question to the respondents as what advice they would offer to a pastor seeking to lead a revitalization process (see table 26). The responses covered a wide range of themes. The most frequent theme was to pray and/or fast (17%). The other two themes mentioned more than 10% were to emphasize strong preaching and teaching (11%) and to focus on slow organizational change while being patient. The theme of developing leaders appeared on 6% of the responses.

Phase 3

Twelve pastors were interviewed for phase 3. Two sets of questions comprised the interviews (see appendix 3). The first set was six demographic questions, and the results were reported above. The second set of questions focused on the leadership development culture of the church, how it came to be, what obstacles were encountered, what resources were helpful, and how the emphasis on leadership development contributed to the revitalization. The transcripts were coded to reflect the perspectives of the participants and developed into broader themes.[26] This coding process identified seven recurring themes from the interviews concerning leadership development culture. A discussion of the seven interview themes follows.

A significant leadership change preceded revitalization. Participants identified two primary types of leadership change: a leadership paradigm change and a leadership personnel change. The paradigm changes involved organizational structure, role expectations, or even changes to the church by-laws/constitution. One particular theme involved changing the role and responsibilities of the deacons. Pastor Seven described "shifting the deacons ministry to a different type of ministry which is very service oriented. That was a very intentional step." Pastor Ten also noted that "the first thing I did was change the organization of the deacons. I had to get them out of the

[26] John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2011), 208.

controlling business because they were part of the problem. I changed the way the deacon leadership was." Speaking on leadership structure changes, Pastor One noted that "we changed the constitution from a congregational led church to a leadership led church." Pastor Eight recounted that "we developed what I called an Admin team. They're really leaders, but I didn't want to step on people's toes who also viewed themselves as leaders. So, I called them an Admin team and we've been meeting every week for three years now." Pastor Two also noted that "we had individual lay members of the church who were very dictatorial and condescending and the church was not being led by the biblical model of church leadership. First thing that it needed was a pastor who was willing to lead the church on the biblical model of church leadership." In every case of participants recounting significant organizational change, they viewed the change as foundational for revitalization.

A second type of leadership change was personnel changing, specifically the senior or lead pastor. Ten of the twelve pastors interviewed noted that the revitalization began soon after their tenure began. One pastor came while the revitalization was already in process and one pastor had served for several years before the revitalization began. In that case, the addition of staff seemed to lead to revitalization. Lay leadership changes also occurred prior to revitalization. Pastor Four recounted that "when I got here . . . I actually had six deacons, and two of them I saw were very inactive. So, I went ahead and basically granted their wish of being inactive." Pastor Twelve also described lay leadership changes: "One thing that we did intentionally was we insisted on every committee or team . . . that the team had to have new people on it. It had to have somebody on there that had come to the church recently within the past year." New leaders, whether pastoral or lay leaders, typically preceded the revitalization process.

A leadership development culture is intentional rather than accidental. Over and over, the participants used the word "intentional" when describing their plans,

decisions, and actions as they related to developing leaders. Specifically, participants related intentionality in two areas: leadership development process and intentionally inviting people to join the process. Pastor Two stated, "You have to train lay people. You have to develop them. You have to be intentional. It's a process that happens not as an accident, but it has to be a very purposeful thing, a very mindful thing." Describing his church's leadership development process, Pastor Twelve commented, "When it came time for larger positions of leadership, we were able to identify those people from that process. So that became a very intentional process for me." Speaking of discipleship, Pastor Five stated, "Our intentional steps have involved, first of all, just helping members of the church grow spiritually." Pastor Eight echoed the intentionality of discipleship, saying, "We do our Sunday's differently to focus on intentional discipleship." Finally, Pastor Eleven reported that for intentional steps for leadership development, "We do a lot of teaching in life groups. I'm doing a study on Sunday night about elder leadership."

Not only is the leadership development process intentional, the people asked to take part in the process is intentional. Pastor One relates, "For leadership development, I took three or four guys and taught them how to prepare a biblical message. For the last two Septembers I'd let them preach." Pastor Three noted that "one of the things that I've done throughout the years is that I intentionally am looking constantly for leaders. I'm not one of those guys what wait for someone to step up; I go to them." Pastor Four described his method of developing leaders: "I immediately started meeting on a Saturday morning with just any men that were willing to come. We started out with probably about eight to nine men and I took them through a discipleship tool I use, and I'm still using it today." Pastor Seven, describing how the former pastor began developing leaders, recounted, "The pastor would take people under his wing and they'd go on a mission trip or if there was a project in the area invite people to come and serve alongside us and help out." Pastors intentionally invited people into the process of leadership development, whether that process was formal or informal.

The senior pastor sets the pace for transforming the leadership development culture. Nine of the twelve participants acknowledged that they (or the previous pastor in the case of revitalization beginning before he arrived) were the primary leader in transforming a leadership development culture at the church. Two participants also acknowledged the role of other pastoral staff in creating a leadership development culture. One bi-vocational pastor viewed the entire church as primarily creating the leadership development culture. This was primarily due to his status. One repeated idea that accompanied this theme was the humility of the pastors when admitting that they were the driving force behind developing leaders. Pastor Twelve summarized the views of the others by acknowledging, "Primarily I had to do that because I was accountable to God for the rest of it. Part of the process is teaching others to follow the lead."

Within the theme that pastors drive leadership development, two other interview items are relevant. Participants were asked to follow up on their answers to phase 2 survey item 22 (appendix 1). This item asked participants to rank leadership practices as they related to revitalization. The two practices that appeared most frequently from the twelve participants were building momentum and developing others.[27]

Pastor Eleven expounded on why building momentum was important for leadership in revitalization: "I'll tell you it's hard, number one, it's hard to get momentum and it's hard to keep momentum." Pastor Three shared this view, stating, "If you cannot build that momentum in [your people], it's like Newton's Law. It's hard to take something that is stationary and get it moving." Speaking in terms of practical experience, Pastor Twelve related that "in terms of building momentum I do think that practically, experientially, people want wins. They need wins. If you're going to move people in a direction, they need to have the hope and promise of a win." Pastors who

[27] Both building momentum and developing others was rated as "Important" or "Highly Important" by six of the twelve pastors. Teamwork and cooperation and building relationships were rated by two of the twelve. Conceptual thinking, getting members involved, and organizational awareness were each rated by one of the twelve.

consistently develop leaders view momentum as an essential to keep the process going.

Developing others was the second leadership practice that participants most frequently rated as important. Pastor Nine noted, "So leadership development is crucial . . . . So there's got to be some way of attracting high capacity people, developing them, keeping them, empowering them, and making that a priority." Developing others was not limited to purely leadership skills, it was also tied to discipleship and spiritual growth. Pastor Eight, addressed this connection: "Developing others first and foremost, that goes back to discipleship. I think leadership development is really all about discipleship in the Christian context . . . . So everybody who's in leadership is also discipling somebody else." Pastor Twelve summarized the importance of developing others, asking, "Really are you developing others who can win souls or others who can handle construction issues or others who can teach a class?"

Leadership development culture is comprised of three key components. Each participant emphasized slightly different areas of leadership development. As each context is different, this is not surprising. However, three key components of leadership development ran through each of the interviews: (1) expanding leadership, (2) discipleship, and (3) service. Each of these three components will be discussed below.

Speaking on the need to expand leadership, Pastor Two noted, "Although I did not know how to make it happen, I realized it was necessary to bring other leaders in and sort of divide up the leaders of the different ministries . . . so they could receive the proper guidance and the proper direction." Pastor Five shared this view on the need to expand leadership: "That was kind of our biggest thing. Because we know that as a church, if we're going to grow, we have to be able to put people in positions of leadership. Full-time staff can't carry the full load." Pastor Six also spoke about getting more people into ministry leadership: "We continue to have people on those committees that have been there for years, but we also brought new people in. And so you had that

mix, in my opinion, that is a good mix of people." Referring to the financial leadership positions of the church, Pastor Ten related, "There were just some old folks that had been doing it the same way for 20 years and watching the church die. . . . Then I rotated it around allowing different people to serve in those areas so they could get leadership skills." Expanding both the number of people and the number of positions was a key element of creating a leadership development culture.

Many of the participants saw a discipleship as a key component of leadership development as well. Pastor Five stressed this, "We've really tried to focus on discipleship, spiritual growth type issues. That's been our main platform for leadership development at this point. And yes, those are still in and they will continue to be." Pastor Twelve also changed programing to allow for discipleship opportunities: "One of the things that we did was very specifically restructured Sunday nights to where it really was a process of giving people options in terms of learning and training. . . . Then we were able to put people in place who demonstrated some early signs of leadership." Pastor Ten saw Sunday School as a tool for discipleship and leadership development. He stated, "I'm really big on promoting Sunday School and getting people in Sunday School and then trying to develop them in other areas." Pastor Three recounted that when he found someone with leadership potential, "We begin involving them in some discipleship. Either I will or someone that I've already trained will begin to walk with them through a discipleship process of the general basics." For those interviewed, growing people spiritually was a key component of developing them as leaders.

A final key component of leadership development identified by the participants was serving. Pastor Ten observed, "We continue to ask people to step out and [serve]. We've got new people involved and new ways of doing things. People are stepping up wanting to serve more and to lead like that." Speaking of the serving mindset of his church, Pastor Ten continued, "I've just seen the fruit of it here at this church, that the people here just serve in so many ways in our community and beyond." Pastor Six

echoed the sentiment: “There’s a lot of work to be done and every person has a different job within it. And so, it’s just helping people understand what it truly means to serve; what it truly means to be a leader.” One church used serving as an intentional component of their leadership development process. Pastor Three elaborated, “We have in our church a plan of action where you start at hospitality or welcoming. If you serve faithfully there for six months and go through our discipleship class, then you can take your next step and move forward.”

A leadership development culture empowers leaders. The pastors interviewed emphasized that leadership development must not be about filling spots on a roster or sitting in meaningless meetings. Pastor Five addressed the problem: “Sometimes the obstacle for us has just been giving some freedom to lead, to those who say, ‘Hey I think I’m ready to lead.’” Pastor Six shared the same view, noting that “we’ve intentionally tried to allow those committees to be developed into leaders, and to have a vital role within the church. . . . and not just be a committee that meets for the sake of meeting to just have a committee on paper only.” Reflecting on challenges with this issue in the past, Pastor Eight commented, “Leaders need something to lead. They need the freedom to go in a direction, and the biggest hurdle that we had to overcome was not actually creating an environment of leadership development.” Pastor Nine provided a good summary of the theme, stating, “We created a culture where as they would lead their ministry they would develop leaders within their ministry through their own training and their own meetings with their volunteers to raise up future leaders within that.” Participants believed that church leaders must provide real empowerment as the goal of leadership development.

A leadership development culture fuels church revitalization. Participants were asked to describe how they believed leadership development contributed to the

revitalization process.[28] Pastor One described the confidence that leaders shared and exhibited as they grew. Pastor Two saw that the church began to see that the leaders had a plan for development and growth, which encouraged them to commit more. Pastor Three noted that the church began to "catch the fire and vision of ministry." Pastor Six saw a connection with leadership development and sharing their faith as they grew more confident. Pastor Twelve saw that leadership development "helped people to trust the direction that the church was going." Overall, the pastors viewed leadership development as an avenue to instill confidence, create ownership, and disseminate vision for the direction of the church.

Complacency and contentment are obstacles to a leadership development culture. Participants saw that people were generally satisfied with where they were spiritually and did not want to be challenged. Pastor Two observed, "I would have to say the obstacle you most frequently encounter are people who are content with who they are and content with where they are. They're content with where the church is, and they don't really see the need to be more involved or engaged." Pastor Three shared a similar comment: "There is a counterculture. . . that are traditional Christians being in the church for generations. They're just obstinate to be a leader and they're not going to do it. They're very complacent and very set in their ways." Pastor Six reflected that groups also become content and resist change, specifically committees that have been together for a long time. Resistance from long-time members to change becomes an obstacle to developing leaders as they do not see the need for either new leaders or new methods.

Summary of Findings

The objective of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to investigate the influence of leadership development on church revitalizations within the

[28] Interview item 10: "How did the emphasis on leadership development contributed to the church's revitalization?"

SBC. The study consisted of two strands in three phases. The first strand was the quantitative component that examined revitalized churches. In phase 1, examination of the ACP data resulted in the identification of 716 churches that met the criteria of revitalization from 2006 to 2016.

Phase 2 of the quantitative strand invited the 716 revitalized churches to participate in a 32-item survey to investigate the factors and influences of revitalization. From these invitations, 145 churches responded to complete the survey, resulting in a confidence interval of 6.71. The demographic composition of the respondents was analyzed along with responses to survey items. From these 145 respondents, twelve churches were purposefully selected and invited to participate in an in-depth interview related to the subject of transforming the leadership development culture in church revitalizations.

The second strand of the study consisted of qualitative interviews with twelve pastors who rated leadership development as a significant factor in their church's revitalization. The interview consisted of an 18-item questionnaire that asked questions related to leadership development culture, organizational change, and leadership development processes. Participants were also asked to share obstacles to leadership development and solutions that were useful. The interviews were transcribed and coded for analysis.

The interviews in phase 3 provided clarity on the importance of leadership development for church revitalization from the perspectives of leaders in revitalization contexts. Specifically, the interviews revealed seven themes related to relationship between leadership development and church revitalization. First, a significant change in leadership preceded revitalization. Second, leadership development culture transformation was intentional, not accidental. Next, the senior pastor sets the pace for leadership development. Fourth, leadership development is comprised of three key components: expanding leadership, discipleship, and serving. Fifth, a leadership

development culture empowers leaders. Sixth, a leadership development culture fuels revitalization. Finally, complacency and contentment are obstacles to leadership development.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer six specific research questions. After collecting and analyzing the data, the following answers are provided for each research question.

Research Question 1

RQ 1: What percentage of SBC churches are plateaued or declining?

As stated in the research protocol earlier, during the year 2016, of the 47,272 total churches in the SBC, 28,046 SBC churches existed having sufficient data to calculate their five-year worship attendance trend. Among this reporting group, 7,211 (25.71%) were plateaued, and 13,656 (48.69%) were declining for total of 20,867 (74.40%) churches plateaued or declining in the SBC (see table 12 above).[29]

Research Question 2

RQ 2: Of those churches that have experienced decline, what percentage have experienced revitalization?

As stated earlier, 716 churches met the criteria for church revitalization as defined by this research design. Narrowing of the sample churches was completed according to the following criteria: (1) worship attendance in 2011 had declined 10% or more compared to 2006 (5 years prior) and (2) worship attendance in 2016 had grown 10% or more over 2011 levels (5 years prior). The field was then narrowed by eliminating congregations that (1) had less than 10% annual growth for 2 of the last 5 years and (2) had less than 2 of the last 5 years with a minimum worship attendance to baptism ratio of 20:1. The number was narrowed further by requiring that the turnaround

[29] This percentage is calculated on the number of churches that had sufficient data (28,046).

churches had to have both 2 years of 10% worship growth per year and 20:1 baptism ratio. Our actions resulted in the identification of 716 churches who were experiencing revitalization, which was 5.24% of the original churches which were previously in decline.[30]

Research Question 3

RQ 3: Of those SBC churches experiencing revitalization, what percentage emphasized leadership development in the process of revitalization?

Based on the design criteria to define "leadership" (of which leadership development is a component), 86.77% of revitalizing churches emphasized leadership in the process of revitalization (see table 19 above).[31]

Research Question 4

RQ 4: In what ways does intentional leadership development contribute to church revitalization?

After analyzing data from the qualitative interviews, the previously discussed themes arose to inform research question 4:

1. Instills confidence in the church of the current leadership
2. Provides a vehicle to disseminate vision
3. Builds positive momentum
4. Expands the base of leadership
5. Propels people toward spiritual growth

[30] Of the 28,046 churches with reported ACP data, the "growing" churches (25.50%) were removed from this calculation and no longer part of the population in need of revitalization. The above 5.24% was calculated by dividing 716 churches by 13,656 (48.69%), which were in decline in 2016.

[31] This percentage is calculated by adding the "Important" (25.74) and "Highly Important" (61.03) totals for a total rating of 86.77.

Research Question 5

RQ 5: What changes to the church's organizational culture facilitated effective leadership development?

After analyzing data from the qualitative interviews, the following themes arose to inform research question 5:

1. Paradigmatic organizational changes (roles, functions, offices, constitutions, etc.)
2. Personnel changes
3. New leaders in current positions
4. Expanded and new ministries
5. Empowered leaders

Research Question 6

RQ 6: What principles and best practices of leadership development can be identified for use in other church revitalization contexts?

After analyzing data from the qualitative interviews, the following themes arose to inform research question 6:

1. A significant change in leadership preceded revitalization.
2. Leadership development culture transformation is intentional, not accidental.
3. The senior pastor sets the pace for leadership development.
4. Leadership development is comprised of three key components: expanding leadership, discipleship, and serving.
5. Leadership development culture fuels revitalization.
6. Complacency and contentment are obstacles to leadership development.

Evaluation of Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design with multiple researchers. The first phase was a data collection to analyze quantitative data in order to select and target a specific quantitative population for the second phase. The third phase of the research design used qualitative interviews and in-depth analysis to

explain the data from the quantitative phases.[32] The design was sufficient for the stated research purposes.

Strengths

The design and constitution of the research proved to be a strength in many ways. The team shared data, resources, ideas, critique, and encouragement through the project. Rather than having one lone researcher mining for data and distributing surveys, the team leveraged its collective strengths to make for a more accurate and hopefully beneficial project.

The population of Southern Baptist Convention churches also proved to be a strength of the study. As a large protestant denomination, several features of the churches provide continuity of the population (e.g. similar ecclesiastical governance, nomenclature, etc.) Moreover, this study would not have been possible without the data collected by the annual church profile, which tabulates and stores data from the churches. These features of the SBC allowed for a certain ease and depth of analysis. Also, the proliferation of SBC churches allowed for a greater amount of transferability of applications for other churches.

Challenges

The most challenging aspect of the study was the phase 2 survey dissemination and collection. While 716 surveys were distributed, a relatively small number (145) were completed, which significantly impacted the reliability of the data interpretation. Several circumstances seemingly contributed to a low response rate. Despite repetitive and varied attempts, a sufficient number of pastors did not respond to the survey to reach the desired confidence interval.

Confusion as to what constituted a revitalized church presented a challenge for

[32] Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting,* 70-71.

phase 3 participants. While the team had determined the criteria of revitalization, those criteria were never presented to the participating churches. The pastors were confused about the beginning, end, and even continuance of their own revitalization. This led to confusion on questions that asked participants to think in terms of "before" or "during" your revitalization.

The population of small churches also proved to be a challenge. While the attendance numbers may have classified a church with less than fifty in attendance as revitalized, that designation proved problematic for research purposes. The lack of full-time staff contributed to the difficult in securing responses from these churches.

Conclusion

This study collected quantitative data from 716 revitalized churches from SBC churches in North America. In phase 2 of the study, 145 churches completed a survey instrument regarding their experiences in revitalization and discipleship. Finally, in phase 3 of the study, twelve pastors were interviewed providing data, which shaped principles and best practices for churches and pastors seeking to revitalize within their local church context. In addition, this study revealed how pastors transformed the leadership development culture of their church to facilitate revitalization.

These findings represent a comprehensive examination of SBC churches experiencing revitalization in the previous decade. While the study generalizes only to those SBC churches experiencing revitalization, the principles and practices derived from the study represent a wealth of knowledge and experience that may be transferable to churches of similar size in various confessional contexts through the United States. The following chapter discusses both the implications for the literature and potentially transferable principles and practices in-depth.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this explanatory multiphase sequential mixed methods study was to investigate the role of leadership development culture in church revitalizations within the context of the Southern Baptist Convention. Phase 1 examined the SBC as a whole to determine the reality of churches that need revitalization. Phase 2 narrowed the population to 716 churches that experienced revitalization and examined the significant factors of revitalization. Phase 3 identified twelve churches where leadership development contributed to the revitalization. The pastors of those churches were interviewed to identify the common themes and best principles of revitalization. Thus, this study examined the intersection of church revitalization and leadership development. In order to aid future revitalizations, this chapter provides insights which connect the research findings to the existing literature. First, research implications are considered for revitalization in general. Next, research applications are offered for those seeking to transform the leadership development culture. Finally, areas for further research are suggested.

Research Implications

This study opened with the assertion that both empirical research and practical experience validate the view that the current state of church in America is not encouraging. In evaluating the spiritual state of America in 2016, George Barna reports that "the total number of unchurched Americans (including children and teenagers) rose from 112 million in 2005 to 151 million in 2015."[1] The response of the church to the

[1] George Barna, *America at the Crossroads: Explosive Trends Shaping America's Future and What You Can Do about It* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 41. This increase equals an increase from

dramatic increase of unchurched Americans has been disappointing. Thom Rainer acknowledges, "The bad news is that somewhere between 70% and 90% of churches need revitalization."[2] The news is equally discouraging for the Southern Baptist Convention. Mark Clifton asserts that "only 15% of SBC churches are healthy, growing, and multiplying churches."[3] Kevin Ezell notes that an average of 1,000 SBC churches disappear each year.[4] Addressing the release of the 2018 ACP, Kate Shellnutt assessed the state of SBC: "The nation's biggest Protestant denomination isn't as big as it used to be. . . . Membership fell to 14.8 million in 2018 its first time below 15 million since 1989 and the lowest it's been since 1987."[5] Ezell concludes, "Even if we are successful in starting thousands of new churches over the next few years, if less than 10% of established SBC churches are healthy and growing, we cannot hope to keep pace with population growth."[6] The growth of the unchurched population, the increase of church closures, and the declining attendance and health of existing churches affirms that the church in America faces serious challenges.[7] Thus, research into church revitalization is

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25% in 2005 to 46% in 2015. Noting the church's difficulty in reaching the unchurched, Barna notes, "Churches are facing a radically different outreach environment than existed a decade ago, including an antagonistic media that continually portrays churches in a negative light. . . . Given the steady increase in the number of Millennials who become unchurches adults, the coming decade will be the first time in modern American history that the proportion of Americans who are churchless will exceed the 50% mark," 43.

[2] Thom S. Rainer, "7 Most Common Questions about Church Revitalization," *The Christian Post*, May 13, 2019, https://www.christianpost.com/voice/7-most-common-questions-about-church-revitalization.html. Rainer offers an explanation regarding the numbers, "That's a wide range, but revitalization does not always have a precise definition. Regardless, there are a lot of churches needing revitalization."

[3] Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 4-5.

[4] Kevin Ezell, "Breathing New Life into Dying Churches," in *A Guide to Church Revitalization*, ed. R. Albert Mohler (Louisville, KY: SBTS Press, 2015), 13.

[5] Kate Shellnutt, "Southern Baptists Down to Lowest in 30 Years," *Christianity Today*, May 23, 2019, https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/may/southern-baptists-acp-membership-baptism-decline-2018.html.

[6] Ezell, "Breathing New Life," 14.

[7] The latest research by the Pew Research center concludes that, "62% of Christians say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month, which is identical to the share who said the same in 2009. In other words, the nation's overall rate of religious attendance is declining not because Christians are attending church less often, but rather because there are now fewer Christians as a share of the

paramount to overcome the challenges and abate the crisis.

The quantitative data gathered in Phase 1 of this study affirms both the need for church revitalization and the limited occurrences of it as described in the literature. Research question 1 asked, "What percentage of SBC churches are plateaued or declining." This study found that, of the 28,046 churches with sufficient data, 25.60% were growing, 25.71% were plateaued, while 48.69% were declining. Combining the plateaued and declining churches results in 74.40% of SBC churches that were in need of revitalization. These findings are in agreement with Rainer's assertion that 70-90% of churches in general are in need of revitalization.[8] Ezell's study of ACP data from 2007-2012 found similar percentages of SBC churches of 27% growing, 43% plateaued, and 30% declining.[9]

While one component of this study focused on revitalization in general, the primary focus was on the role of leadership development in revitalization. In their extensive research, Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson emphasize the role of both leadership and leadership development in church revitalization. They concluded that "leadership was rated as the number one factor by the churches that experienced revitalization."[10] Stetzer and Dodson do not just stop with better pastoral leadership. They note, "By leadership we do not mean just the pastor. But it does start with the pastor. Pastors have to be leaders and have to develop others to lead."[11] Similarly, Rainer asserts leadership as

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population." Pew Center Research, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), October 17, 2019, http://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace /.

[8] Rainer, "7 Most Common Questions."

[9] Ezell, "Breathing New Life," 13-14. Ezell notes that his study looked at membership rather than worship attendance.

[10] Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B & H Pub. Group, 2007), 34. They expand on the importance of leadership: "Churches that are in a pattern of plateau or decline need strong leaders who will point the way to revitalization. Comeback leaders illustrated the truth that church renewal, in many ways, does occur based on strong, effective leadership," 210-11.

[11] Stetzer and Dodson, "Comeback Churches," 36.

the first and most important factor in a breakout church.[12] Likewise, Robert Stuart links church health with the spiritual health of leadership, stating that "the major illness in most denominations is the same—weak or poor leadership."[13] Thus, the literature promotes a strong connection between leadership, leadership development, and church revitalization.

Research question 3 asked, "Of those SBC churches experiencing revitalization, what percentage emphasized leadership development in the process of revitalization?" Phase 2 of the study surveyed 716 revitalized churches and found that 86.77% of respondents emphasized leadership in the process of revitalization.[14] When asked specifically about the leadership development culture in relation to the revitalization, 80% of respondents disagreed to some extent that a leadership development culture existed prior to the revitalization. Moreover, 91% of respondents agreed to some extent that leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process.[15] These findings confirm the literature's emphasis on leadership and leadership development as integral to the revitalization process. As Stetzer and Dodson note, "Comeback leaders were not just leaders they were developers and leaders

[12] Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 26. Rainer uses the term "Acts 6/7" leader in reference to the leaders of Acts 6-7. "These leaders, like the Twelve in Acts 6, seek to equip others for the work of ministry while deflecting recognition for themselves. Like Stephen in Acts 7, they are not concerned only with the church during their lifetime, but make decisions that will benefit the church after they are gone. . . . All of the breakout church leaders in our findings achieved the Acts 6/7 level," 28.

[13] Robert D. Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016), 14 Stuart continues, "The spiritual health of the local church is directly related to the spiritual health of her leaders. When the health of leaders improves, so too does the health of the church. Ailing churches, however, have a hard time recognizing their illness. Leaders have difficulty hearing that they lead dying or stagnant churches, for it is a reflection on their leadership," 15.

[14] Survey respondents were asked to rank six items as to their importance in the revitalization process: prayer, primary worship gathering, leadership, discipleship, evangelism, and missions. Respondents were allowed to rate any/all of the items at any level of importance, rather than ranking them in order of importance. Thus, having 86.77% of churches rank leadership high does not mean that other items were not high as well. See table 19 for the complete results.

[15] See table 25 in chap. 4.

of leaders."[16]

In summary, the quantitative strand of this research aligns with the literature on two key points relating to church revitalization. First, the need for revitalization is real and ever increasing. Nearly three of every four SBC churches are in need of revitalization. At the same time, only a small percentage (5.24%) are actually experiencing revitalization. Second, the role of leadership and leadership development in church revitalization is significant. Of those churches experiencing revitalization, 91% agreed that leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization while 80% disagree that a leadership development culture existed before the revitalization. The following section turns attention to the research application that arose from the qualitative strand of the research: the role of the pastor in leadership development, the role of leadership structure in leadership development, and the role of intentionality in leadership development.

Research Applications

Phase 3 of the study examined churches that specifically rated leadership development as significant in the revitalization. Qualitative interviews were conducted with pastors from twelve churches (see appendix 2 for interview items.) The pastors represented a range of church sizes, pastoral tenure, and geographical location. Specific themes from the interviews were considered in the previous chapter. The following sections examine three specific research applications that arose from those interview themes in the light of existing literature.

The Role of the Pastor in Leadership Development

Research question 4 asked, "In what ways does intentional leadership development contribute to church revitalization?" This study found that leadership

[16] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 51.

development contributes to church revitalization in five specific ways: (1) instills confidence in the current leadership of the church; (2) provides a vehicle to disseminate vision; (3) builds positive momentum; (4) expands the base of leadership; and (5) propels people toward spiritual growth. The phase 3 interviews revealed that the pastor sets the pace for revitalization in general and leadership development specifically. While this correlates with literature regarding the importance of leadership (as previously discussed), two specific findings came to the surface regarding the pastor and leadership development.

First, pastors are the primary change agent for revitalization. Mark Clifton and Kenneth Priest highlight the importance of the pastor in revitalization and leadership development: "The position of the pastor is crucial to the effectiveness of a local church in revitalization. He is the key to making disciples."[17] One way the pastor initiated change was simply by arriving at the church. Ten of the twelve pastors noted that the revitalization began soon after their tenure began. As simple, and perhaps simplistic, as it sounds, churches need to realize that revitalization is all about change. Without change there is no revitalization. As noted in chapter 4, every pastor interviewed described change as a prelude to revitalization. Yet, change is not easy and leading change is not easy. Alice Mann presents a stern warning about change: "The new pastor will experience (or often collude with) the congregation's two most destructive illusions: the fantasy that growth can occur without change, and the fantasy that change can occur without conflict."[18] Stetzer and Dodson also present a reality of change and revitalization regarding the pastor: "We believe all comeback churches need a new pastor—either one

[17] Mark Clifton and Kenneth Priest, *Rubicons of Revitalization: Overcoming 8 Common Barriers to Church Renewal* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2018), 65. The authors give specific direction as to how the pastor makes disciples via leadership development. "The senior pastor must commit time to developing his leadership team to address what the present greatest need is. Your time as the undershepherd of the church should be spent developing each leader to address specific needs." Clifton and Priest, *Rubicons*, 67.

[18] Alice Mann, *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999), 11.

brought in from the outside or one changed from the inside."[19] Simply stated, churches and pastors who desire revitalization must accept and expect the change necessary for it to occur.

Another way pastors initiated change was simply to view it as part of their calling and identity. Addressing the role of the pastor, Clifton and Priest note, "The pastor must decide to the be the leader. He must be humble in function, but decisive in action. In revitalizing a church, work needs to be done, and the pastor must be the one leading the way."[20] Nine of the twelve pastors interviewed acknowledged that they served as the primary leader in transforming the leadership development culture while two pastors acknowledged other staff as key initiators of change. Pastor Twelve summed it up well: "Well, it may sound immodest, but I believe that's the pastor's role. So, as the pastor I did engage in that and I formed partnerships with other people." Stuart aptly summarizes the literature on the pastor's role in revitalization: "Leaders should not be surprised that churches at various times will require revitalization, or that it begins with them."[21]

Second, pastors leveraged leadership development as the vehicle to transmit vision. Interview item 10 asked participants how leadership development contributed to the church's revitalization. Pastor Eight answered, "When people feel that there's a vision they can get behind and they have the freedom to make that vision happen in their ministry area, they don't just do more, they do better." Pastor Two responded, "I ask God for people who get the vision, and then you share the vision. You say, 'People, this is

[19] Stetzer and Dodson note, "Every movement needs a leader, and we discovered that God led comeback churches to call a new pastor, or God renewed the pastors who were currently leading the church. We believed that all the pastors were new pastors, just not all of them changed jobs. Some of them changed their leadership approach." Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 176.

[20] Clifton and Priest, *Rubicons*, 69. The authors continue, "A pastor who prepares himself in the role of pastor can know with certainty that he is honoring the calling God has on his life and be able to echo the words of Paul in 1 Tim 1:12."

[21] Stuart, *Church Revitalization*, 13.

what God wants us to do.' Then you teach the vision. You develop it, you teach it, and then you see who buys into it." Pastor Twelve also connected vision and leadership development. He stated, "When you develop other leaders you give a stronger voice and more profound voice to the vision and mission that's been entrusted to you." Leadership development, then, becomes the vehicle through which vision is cast and communicated to the church. The church develops leaders who share the vision of community, mission, and evangelism. Part of the development process for leaders, then, is being exposed to and catching the vision, which is of utmost importance when facing a revitalization.

The literature makes a clear connection between vision and revitalization. Stuart notes, "When a church lacks vision, the people will be rudderless and will do what pleases them most. Leaders must direct the vision and discern the will of Christ for their local congregation."[22] Stetzer and Dodson's research concluded that "comeback leaders agreed that having a clear and compelling vision was foundational in the transformation of their church."[23] Kevin Harney and Bob Bouwer emphatically contend that vision must be repeated to the congregation because of the tendency to forget the reasons why the church exists.[24] Bill Henard also notes, "If the church loses its vision, it loses direction and begins to decline. Church revitalization necessitates the establishment of a renewed vision with which the church can unify."[25] Vision is essential to revitalization.

While the literature stresses the need for vision, practical steps for disseminating and communicating vision are absent from those who advocate its importance in revitalization. Stetzer and Dodson typify the literature regarding vision and revitalization. They provide the direction to cast vision but lack the method. They note,

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[22] Stuart, *Church Revitalization*, 201.

[23] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 45.

[24] Kevin G. Harney and Bob Bouwer, *The U-Turn Church: New Direction for Health and Growth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 47.

[25] William Henard, *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 159.

"Comeback leaders are able to explain, both in speech and in writing, what a better future looks like. They convince people that things are not acceptable as they are, and then describe a better future to pursue."[26] However, they offer no practical methods for taking the vision to the people. This research connects the dots between the need for vision and the way it is transmitted to the congregation: through leadership development. Pastors interviewed for this study used their methods of developing leaders, whether formal or informal, as the vehicle for transmitting the vision for revitalization to their congregation.

One other finding related to the role of pastors in developing leaders surfaced. Nine of the twelve pastors interviewed had received at least a master's degree from a seminary. Formalized training in leading churches was part of their background. Yet, on interview item 4, none of the pastors mention any connection to their formal theological education or training in relation to their success as a church revitalizer during any other part of the interview.[27] Given the amount of time, money, and resources devoted to seminary education, the results of this study provide an important implication for formalized theological training in both church revitalization and leadership development. Seminaries might consider distinguishing between the necessary skills and calling of church planters, church revitalizers, and church developers.

In the research implications of his dissertation, Stephen Hudson concludes that "revitalization may require greater and fundamentally different types of leadership than a typical pastorate, church plant, or church replant."[28] When considering the role that both the church and the seminary plays in pastoral training, Hudson concludes, "While seminaries should certainly look to cultivate motives, attitudes, and values, the local church bears primary responsibility for developing men who meet the base qualifications

[26] Stetzer and Dodson, Comeback Churches, 48.

[27] Interview item 4, "Describe your training and educational background."

[28] Joseph Stephen Hudson, "A Competency Model for Church Revitalization in Southern Baptist Convention Churches: A Mixed Methods Study" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 135.

for the pastorate."[29] While that desire may be a worthy long-term goal, what can seminaries do in the short-term to better equip workers for revitalization, since the vast majority of churches are in such dire need of it? Creating a distinction between the skill sets needed for different types of pastoral roles is a potential first step. Just as there are differences between the skill sets for building a house, remodeling a house, and redecorating a house, subtle yet distinct differences exist in the skill sets of the successful church planter, church revitalizer, and church developers. While the skill sets overlap, those training for ministry would benefit from the distinct emphasis each might receive.[30]

In summary, the findings of this research align with the assertion of the literature regarding the importance of the pastoral role in transforming the leadership development culture. These findings also confirm the importance of vision noted in the literature. However, while the literature emphasizes the importance of vision, it lacks practical direction for communicating it. The phase 3 interviews of this study extend the connection between vision and revitalization by finding that leadership development functions as the vehicle to disseminate vision throughout the church.

The Role of Leadership Structure in Leadership Development

Research question 5 asked, "What changes to the church's organizational culture facilitated effective leadership development?" Five themes arose from the phase 3 interviews regarding this question: paradigmatic organizational changes (roles, functions, offices, constitutions, etc.), personnel changes, new leaders in current positions, expanded

[29] Hudson, "A Competency Model," 164.

[30] SBC seminaries are beginning to promote the distinction in the types of ministries. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has established the Methena Center for Church Revitalization and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has announced a new Center for Church Revitalization. Four of the six SBC seminaries offer master or doctoral degrees specializing in church revitalization: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (DEdMin), Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MTS, DMin), Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (MA, MDiv, DMin), and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (DMin, DEdMin). Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will offer degrees (DMin and DEdMin) in church revitalization in 2020. Currently Gateway Seminary and Southwestern does not offer degrees in church revitalization.

and new ministries, and empowered leaders. The following section will consider the paradigmatic changes that facilitated leadership development.

The revitalization literature makes a connection between leadership structure and revitalization. Clifton and Priest boldly state, "Your greatest challenge to revitalize your church may not come from your preaching, your building, or even your prayer life. It may be your own church polity."[31] Harney and Bouwer note, "One systematic roadblock to an effective U-Turn is the existence of rigid committee structures year after year and decade after decade in many churches."[32] Clifton observes, "Many older, dying churches have complex and detailed organizational structures that make the decision-making process slow and unresponsive. . . . Though perhaps well-intentioned, the result is often a governance system that slows down and deters mission/ministry activity rather than encouraging it."[33] Stetzer and Dodson also note, "Some comeback churches discovered that they were not organized for growth, and therefore, had to make some changes in structure to prepare for growth and renewal."[34] Changes to leadership structures and organization, according to the literature, are to be expected to facilitate revitalization.

Interview participants were asked to describe the changes in leadership development that contributed to revitalization. Their responses represented a wide range of changes. Pastor Five, speaking of the previous pastor who had begun the revitalization, recounted, "He did some things that sort of simplified structure in the church, meaning [reducing] the required business meetings per year. He just kind of changed all that in a

[31] The authors elaborate further: "Your church's governance may torpedo your revitalization before you even start. . . . I can tell you with absolute certainty that polity is one of the primary Rubicons we have to cross in order to revitalize our churches. Most churches at the end of their lives have completely convoluted polities." Clifton and Priest, *Rubicons*, 79.

[32] Harney and Bouwer, *The U-Turn Church*, 93-4.

[33] Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 68.

[34] The authors elaborate: "Sometimes that involved getting the right people in the right places. Sometimes that mean doing things differently. Sometimes that meant comeback churches had to stop expending time and energy on ineffective ministries." Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 197.

good way where the staff had a little more freedom to lead." Noting the need for empowerment of leaders, Pastor Six stated, "We've intentionally allowed committees to be developed into leaders and to have a vital role within the church." Pastor Ten noted, "The first thing I did was change the organization of the deacons. I had to get them out of the controlling business because they were part of the problem."[35] Finally, Pastor Twelve noted how the composition of committees changed: "We intentionally insisted on every committee or team, if we were to join in together to make a decision on moving the church forward, that the team had to have new people on it. There had to be somebody on there that had come to the church recently within the past year." The pastors spoke of the need to involve more people in leading ministries of the church rather than a few leaders overseeing every detail. The pastors assessed how their leadership structure had become a hindrance to developing more and more effective leaders.

In summary, the pastors interviewed in phase 3 recounted numerous types of changes to the leadership structures of their churches that contributed to revitalization. Specifically, the pastors saw these changes to leadership structures as encouraging the development of new leaders, more leaders, and empowered leaders, which in turn contributed to the church's revitalization. These findings agree with the assertions of the literature that ineffective leadership structures are inhibitors to church revitalization.

The Role of Intentionality in Leadership Development

Research question 6 asked, "What principles and best practices of leadership development can be identified for use in other church revitalization contexts?" While six

[35] Aiken addresses the issue of moving from a deacon-led church to a pastor/staff-led church. His study found that most of the declining churches were led by deacons during the period of declines. He concludes, "This study does not imply that the deacon-led structure caused the decline; however, it does indicate that shifting the structure was essential in the church's revitalization." He continues to offer three reasons to explain this implication. First, the biblical offices of pastor and deacon are complementary. Second pastors are more consistently present and better trained to lead in revitalization. Third, pastors typically bring an "outsider's perspective" to the church, promoting greater objectivity. Christopher Michael Aiken, "Church Revitalization and the Role of Pastoral Leadership: A Mixed-Methods Study" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 104-5.

themes arose from the phase 3 interviews, one specific theme will be considered. Specifically, leadership development culture transformation is intentional, not accidental.

Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini contend that "few churches have informal leadership development programs in place. Fewer still have established formal, intentional systems for developing leaders through the organization."[36] Participants in phase 3 were asked about the intentional steps they took to develop leaders and their responses demonstrated the existence of intentional leadership development strategies in revitalized churches.[37] Interview participants used the word "intentional" forty-eight times in their responses when referring to leadership development. Pastor Two asserted, "You have to be intentionally working forward, realizing that this training is just a small part of the larger vision." Pastor Six stated, "I think the intentional step is, first of all, making sure people understand, 'Look, you've been given a gift that you have an expectation to use now.'" Pastor Eight commented, "It's really an intentional process and it really started with me working with people one on one, and other people experiencing the value of that, and so it's just a part of what we do now." While each pastor described a different process, they each described a process of identifying, training, and equipping leaders. Some described very simple steps that involved a membership class, small group leadership, and then ministry leadership. Others described much more detailed processes that moved potential leaders from entry level volunteer areas to group leaders to ministry leaders to eventually being hired on the church staff. Regardless of the exact details of each ministry context, the interviews revealed that revitalized churches developed intentional leadership development pipelines and pathways.[38]

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[36] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leaders at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 11.

[37] Interview item 4: What intentional steps were implemented to develop leaders? See chapter 4 findings for a detailed discussion of the interview responses related to intentionality.

[38] Geiger and Peck define a leadership pipeline as "a helpful construct that aids in systematically and intentionally developing leaders." Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2016), 186. They distinguish between a pipeline and a pathway. "A pipeline is for the whole organization; a pathway is an individual

From a programmatic perspective, pastors at smaller churches spoke of leadership development in terms of specific individuals with whom they had invested time in, both formally and informally. Pastors from larger churches, when speaking about leadership development, referred to the processes in place at their churches. An inference can be drawn that as the church grows numerically, the ways in which leaders are developed moves from: (1) one on one time with the pastor to (2) participation or leadership in existing programs to (3) involvement in specifically designed leadership development programs. The intentionality of leadership development remains the same, but the methods change depending on the size of the church.

The literature emphasizes intentionality as an essential characteristic of leadership development. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck discuss the necessary ingredients to building a leadership development pipeline. They contend, "It really takes two disciplines: intentionality and intensity. You must intentionally think about how your church or ministry will develop leaders, and you must continue down that path with great intensity, intensity expressed in persistence and not just being loud."[39] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini's definition of leadership development emphasizes the intentional nature of the undertaking: "Leadership development is an intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every level of ministry to assess and develop their Christian character and to acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills."[40] Stetzer and Dodson concluded that "comeback leaders multiplied themselves. It

development plan within the pipeline. A pipeline focuses on the flock; a pathway focuses on individual sheep." Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 200.

[39] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 190. The authors offer a model for a leadership pipeline in the local church. First, lead yourself (be in a group). Second, lead others (lead a group or team). Third, lead leaders (shepherd or coach a group of leaders). Finally, lead ministries (direct a ministry area). Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 187.

[40] Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 23. The authors list five reasons for the importance of leadership development in the church. First, Jesus modeled the priority of leadership development: there is no plan B! Second, the quality of leadership affects the quality of the ministry: the speed of the leader is the speed of the team. Third, leaders expand ministry by making more leaders: the growth curve is the leadership curve. Fourth, leadership development recognizes the value of people: all processes are discipleship processes. Fifth, godly proteges are the leader's ministry legacy: the gospel is

was not just important to be leaders themselves; these comeback leaders had to develop other leaders."[41]

Intentionality as both a strategic goal and a tactical approach appear in the literature of leadership development in general and revitalization specifically. The phase 3 interviews of this research bear out the assertions of the literature. Namely, intentional leadership development is a significant component of church revitalization.

In summary, the qualitative strand of this research aligns with the literature on several key points. First, the role of the pastor is paramount in both revitalization and leadership development both as a change agent and a vision caster. Second, changes to leadership structures promoted leadership development which in turn encouraged revitalization. Finally, intentionality is necessary for churches to develop leadership pipelines to develop more and better equipped leaders. The following section now offers suggestions for further research.

Further Research

This study specifically focused on transforming the leadership development culture in church revitalizations. The population of the study was churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. In the course of the study, several areas surfaced as opportunities for further study.

Church Size and Leadership Development

The size of the churches for phase 3 ranged from 64 to 566 (see table 16).[42] While many of the responses were constant across the sample, there were subtle

always one generation from extinction. Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 23-28.

[41] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 51. Addressing the idea of intentionality, Stetzer and Dodson noted that "comeback leaders intentionally planned to spend more time doing 'people stuff.' They spent more time doing visitation, staff management, mentoring, leadership training, and counseling. They invested in leaders and in the lost." Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 45.

[42] As reported on the Annual Church Profile in 2016.

variations detected along the lines of church size. As mentioned in chapter 4, when the pastors of smaller churches spoke about leadership development, they focused on the personal relationships and interactions with individuals they mentored. When the pastors of larger churches spoke about leadership development, they focused on processes and programs. While each is not exclusive of the other, the variations were noticeable. However, the relationship between church size and leadership development is an area that could potentially yield helpful data to understand how strategies might change as the church increases in size.

Church Revitalization in Other Confessional Contexts

The population for this study consisted of churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. The shared culture and denominational structures greatly enhanced the ability to obtain research data for phases 1 and 2. While the study results can only be generalized to this specific population, churches from other confessional contexts can determine the transferability of the results. However, follow up studies that research populations of other contexts would be helpful to determine how the uniqueness of each context affects both revitalization and leadership development.

Pastoral Education/Vocational Status and Leadership Development

For this study, three of the twelve participants in phase three were bi-vocational pastors. The educational level of the participants also spanned across a range of levels (from bachelors to masters to doctorate). Does a relationship exist between the level of education of the pastor and the amount, style, content, or intensity of leadership development efforts? The same question could be asked in regard to the vocational status of the pastor. Does the vocational status (bi-vocational versus full-time staff) of the pastor have a bearing on the leadership development initiatives of the church? Research in these areas might provide useful insight into the effectiveness, content, and success of

leadership development in church revitalizations.

Conclusion

The study has demonstrated the classic paradox of, "I've got good news, and I've got bad news." The bad news is that the church is facing a serious crisis. As stated in the introduction to this paper, the picture is bleak for the church in North America. Specifically, the Southern Baptist Convention footprint is fading every year as more churches close their doors along with opportunities to impact communities. The good news is that research is helping us understand what it takes for churches to experience revitalization and spring back to life. This research project alone covers a significant number of areas regarding the phenomenon of church revitalization. The more we understand about how churches are revitalized, the better we can equip existing and future leaders with knowledge on how to lead churches into periods of revitalization.

The work of revitalization is not easy though. If it were, more churches would be growing and fewer churches would be closing. The process of leading change and transformation can be difficult, discouraging, and taxing on leaders. The hope for this study on transforming the leadership development culture in church revitalizations can provide data, ideas, applications, and even inspiration for pastors leading church revitalizations.

There is also great news, though. We have reason to be hopeful as we do not have to rely simply on our own research, our own smarts, or even our own determination for churches to revitalize. We believe the power of the Holy Spirit can change the hearts of God's people. Henard's assertion rings true: "Remember this truth: church revitalization occurs because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not just because of our efforts."[43] God can work through whatever means He chooses to accomplish His

[43] Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*16. Henard continues to note other basic qualifications for church revitalization as a consistent spiritual revitalization in your own life, a God-sized vision, a compassion for God's people, and a commitment to integrity, 17-20.

mission, and we are all a component of what God is doing. May God inspire a generation of pastors who are serious about the task of church revitalization and use their skills, knowledge, and faith to lead congregations to a place of spiritual health and expansion of the Kingdom! The Apostle Paul declares our reason for hope. “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.”[44]

[44] Eph 3:20-21 (ESV).

APPENDIX 1

REVITALIZATION SURVEY

The survey was administered via surveymokey.com. Words in bold represent the emphasis in the online survey for participants.

Demographic Information

1. Your current role with your church:
   - Pastor/Elder
   - Deacon
   - Staff
   - Volunteer

2. Your role prior to the revitalization process:
   - Pastor/Elder
   - Deacon
   - Staff
   - Volunteer
   - Not at the church

3. Your role during to the revitalization process:
   - Pastor/Elder
   - Deacon
   - Staff
   - Volunteer
   - Not at the church

4. Your church context is best described as:
   - Rural
   - Suburban
   - Urban

5. Briefly describe what ways your community has changed over the last 10 years and ways your church as sought to adapt.

6. Are you willing to participate in a follow up interview regarding the revitalization process at your church?

- Yes
- No

Interview Participation Contact Information

7. Contact information:
   - Name
   - Church Name
   - Church Address
   - Address
   - City/Town
   - State/Province
   - Zip/Postal Code
   - Church Website
   - Email Address
   - Phone Number

The Revitalization Process in General

8. Rate each ministry emphasis as to the importance it played in the revitalization process. (Highly Unimportant, Unimportant, Slightly Unimportant, Slightly Important, Important, Highly Important.)

   - Discipleship
   - Evangelism
   - Leadership
   - Missions
   - Prayer
   - Primary Worship Gathering
   - Other (please specify)

9. Reflecting on the change initiatives you have pursued in your church revitalization context, identify the area in which you have faced the greatest amount of member resistance.

10. Reflecting on the change initiatives you have pursued in your church revitalization context, identify the area in which you have faced the greatest amount of member acceptance.

Discipleship

11. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's discipleship ministry which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

12. Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the church's discipleship ministry during the revitalization process. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.)

    - The church has a clearly defined discipleship process.
    - The majority of active members were able to explain the discipleship process.

13. Which programmatic elements existed in the church's discipleship approach during the revitalization process? (Select all that apply.)

    - Age-graded Ministry (i.e. children, youth, college, adult)
    - Men's and/or Women's Bible Studies
    - Intergenerational Mentoring
    - Home-based Small Groups
    - Men's Ministry
    - Women's Ministry
    - One-on-one Type Discipleship Groups
    - Traditional Sunday School Model

14. Regarding the discipleship process, select the perspective which most closely represents the majority of active church members at the beginning of the revitalization process.

    - A More Individualistic Mindset (Members expect to select and shape most of their own discipleship process, with an emphasis on personal needs and intentional personal growth.)

    - A More Collective Mindset (Members expect spiritual leadership to guide them in their discipleship process with an emphasis on common needs and intentional relational and community growth.)

Evangelism

15. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's evangelism ministry which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

16. Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the church's evangelism ministry during the revitalization process. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.)

    - There was a demonstrable increase in personal evangelism among active members of the church.
    - The majority of active members could communicate the gospel in a personal evangelism encounter.
    - The active members of the church regularly engaged in gospel conversations for the purpose of personal evangelism.

17. Briefly describe the type and frequency of evangelism training currently offered in your church.

Missions (including national and international efforts)

18. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's missions ministry which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

19. Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the church's missions ministry prior to the revitalization process. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.)

    - The church had a vibrant missions ministry focused on financially supporting short-term and/or long-term missionaries.

    - The church had a vibrant missions ministry focused on sending short-term and/or long-term missionaries from its own membership.

20. Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the church's current missions ministry. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.)

    - The church had a vibrant missions ministry focused on financially supporting short-term and/or long-term missionaries.
    - The church had a vibrant missions ministry focused on sending short-term and/or long-term missionaries from its own membership.

Leadership

21. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership structures which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

22. Indicate how important each of the following leadership practices have been in the revitalization process in your ministry context. (Highly Unimportant, Unimportant, Slightly Unimportant, Slightly Important, Important, Highly Important.)

    - Building Momentum
    - Conceptual Thinking
    - Contextual Awareness and Planning
    - Developing Others
    - Getting Members Engaged
    - Gospel Orientation
    - Individual and Corporate Repentance
    - Information Seeking

- Initiative
- Interpersonal Understanding
- Missional Focus
- Organizational Awareness
- Relationship Building
- Teamwork and Cooperation
- Transparency
- Willingness to Confront/Church Discipline

23. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's leadership development processes which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

24. Select your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the leadership development processes. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.)

    - Prior to the revitalization process, a culture of effective leadership development existed within the church.
    - Leadership development played a significant role in the revitalization process.

Prayer

25. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's prayer ministry which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

26. Rate the following statements. (Highly Unimportant, Unimportant, Slightly Unimportant, Slightly Important, Important, Highly Important.)

    - The church leadership's dependence upon prayer as a vital means for realizing revitalization in your ministry context.
    - The church congregation's dependence upon prayer as a vital means for realizing revitalization in your ministry context.

27. Briefly describe your frequency and pattern of personal prayer during the revitalization process.

28. In what ways were the topic and act of prayer prioritized in corporate worship during the revitalization process?

Worship Gathering

29. Briefly describe the primary changes to the church's primary worship gathering which you perceive have contributed significantly to the revitalization process.

30. Please indicate what the most difficult element was to change in the primary worship gathering during the revitalization process and state the reason it was difficult.

31. Please indicate what the most effective element of change was in the primary worship gathering during the revitalization process and state the reason it was rewarding.

General Comments

32. What advice would you offer to a pastor seeking to lead a revitalization process?

APPENDIX 2

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Information

1. Describe your ministry context (type of community)
2. How many years have you been in ministry? How many years did you serve prior to the revitalization?
3. How many years have you served in your current role?
4. Describe your training and educational background.
5. What is your current age?
6. Describe your church (size, demographics, etc.)

Leadership Development Questions

1. Describe the leadership development culture before the revitalization.
2. Describe the changes in leadership development that contributed to revitalization.
3. Who primarily led and/or affected the change in leadership development culture?
4. What intentional steps were implemented to develop leaders?
5. What obstacles were encountered in developing leaders?
6. How were these obstacles overcome?
7. You ranked the following three leadership qualities as most important. What led to your ranking of these as the three most important?
8. Reflecting back, what would you have done differently regarding leadership development?
9. What resources were most helpful in developing leaders?

10. How did the emphasis on leadership development contribute to the church's revitalization?

11. Have the leadership development initiatives remained in place since the revitalization?

12. What advice would you give to others seeking to revitalize their church?

APPENDIX 3

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to participate as part of the research project on Church Revitalization conducted by the research team under the supervision of Dr. Michael Wilder of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY.

This research is the most current and far-reaching of its kind, involving a study of SBC churches across the convention. You are part of a select, qualifying, group of churches based upon your Annual Church Profile (ACP) submissions in the recent past. Already, you have been helpful in completing the online research questionnaire and you have been selected to participate in a follow-up interview based on the responses you gave in the survey.

Below is the informed consent statement and the general questions that will serve as the backbone of a phone or video conference interview with Donald R. Sanders, Jr., one of the doctoral students conducting the research. His area of focus is specifically in the area of leadership development and its role in influence on the church's revitalization.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify principles and practices that influenced the church's revitalization. This research is being conducted by Donald R. Sanders, Jr., under the supervision of Dr. Michael Wilder, of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for purposes of identifying principles and practices employed by pastoral leaders to influence the church revitalization. In this research, you will be asked to respond to several questions pertaining to your experience in leading your church in revitalization. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this interview, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

[ ] I agree to participate [ ] I do not agree to participate

Thank you for your help. I truly believe that the information we gather will assist thousands of pastors like yourself become more effective in leading their churches to experience revitalization.

Best regards,

Donald R. Sanders, Jr.
Ed.D. Candidate
Leadership Development and Church Revitalization

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ABSTRACT

TRANSFORMING THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CULTURE IN CHURCH REVITALIZATIONS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
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As the church in North America declines, many search for answers to turn the tide. One avenue is church revitalization: turning plateaued or declining churches into growing churches once again. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between leadership development culture and church revitalizations. Phase 1 of the study identified growing, declining, and plateaued churches. In phase 2, churches that met the criteria of revitalization were invited to participate in a survey related to their experiences. In phase 3, select churches that identified leadership development as a significant influence on their revitalization participated in interviews. The interviews examined how churches developed leaders and how this contributed to revitalization. The study identified key factors of how the revitalized churches transformed leadership development environment. The study also identified implications for pastors, churches, and seminaries. Finally, research applications are discussed for pastors and church wanting to experience revitalization.

Key words: church revitalization, leadership development, leadership culture

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