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INCREASING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN THE  
SHEPHERD LEADERSHIP TEAM THROUGH A  
STRUCTURED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
AT JUDSON CHURCH IN JOLIET, ILLINOIS

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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Graham Daniel Rogers  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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SHEPHERD LEADERSHIP TEAM THROUGH A  
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To Jodi.

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## PREFACE

The completion of this project owes a remarkable debt to the many people God has placed in my life. First and foremost, I thank my Savior and King, Jesus Christ. By the loving grace of God the Father, Christ has paid the price I could not pay. By the Holy Spirit, He has blessed me beyond measure through extraordinary people.

Second, I praise God for my beautiful and loving wife and co-laborer, Jodi. Through her patient demeanor, we have grown as a couple and ministry partners. Her example of faith never ceases to inspire me.

Third, I thank the Lord for blessing Jodi and me with three wonderful children: Caleb, Maci, and Cole. Your energetic and curious minds reflect our wise Creator. Being your dad is a privilege that I treasure.

Fourth, I am grateful for the remarkable men and women that have poured into my life by giving up their time, resources, and energies. Creig Zook plays an enormous part in my own spiritual maturity; I thank God for him. Dan and Sara Witthouse continue to serve the Lord with integrity and faithfulness. Matt Nolan, a true friend and believer, who has experienced suffering that few people know; you are an inspiration and testimony to God's faithfulness. Thank you to the professors and fellow students at SBTS for your encouragement and amazing feedback.

Finally, I am grateful to my family at Judson Church. From my time as a middle school student to my honor as serving as your lead pastor, I am thankful for your patience and encouragement. To God alone be the glory!



My prayer is that this project will inspire and guide other pastors to equip leaders carefully and competently within their congregations, so that Christ is exalted throughout the world.

Graham Rogers

Joliet, Illinois

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Judson Church exists to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ. While the mission is carried out by every member, the Shepherd Leadership Team bears responsibility for its direction and execution. The Shepherd Leadership Team oversees the vision to transform lives and communities by gospel through loving God, loving one another, and loving our neighbor. To fulfill its vision, the Shepherd Leadership Team must “equip the saints for the works of ministry” (Eph 4:12).<sup>1</sup> To lead the congregation more effectively, the members of the Shepherd Leadership Team must increase in leadership competencies. For this reason, establishing a training program to develop the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church will help fulfill its mission.

#### **Context**

Judson Church has a history of making disciples and serving the Joliet community. Though weekly attendance had declined in the last decade, its members continued to faithfully meet the needs of one another and their neighbors. The membership and leadership consist primarily of middle-aged adults; however, the number of younger families continues to increase. As leadership team members continue to age or move away, the need for new, qualified leaders grows.

In 2018, Judson Church restructured its government and bylaws to develop existing and recruit new leaders. Consisting of the lead pastor and five unpaid men, the Shepherd Leadership Team was tasked with creating a vision for Judson Church, communicating its values, and collaborating with other ministry teams to fulfill its

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

mission to make disciples. In 2021, the lead pastor retired from Judson Church, forcing other Shepherd Leaders to suspend plans to address leadership development.

The Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church possesses the following strengths: commitment to its staff, willingness to learn new skills, and a servant mentality. There are also weaknesses in Judson Church that require attention, including recruitment of new leaders, the development process, and its cooperation with other ministry teams.

The first strength of the Shepherd Leadership Team is the commitment to its staff. Judson Church has experienced difficulties and hardships in its recent history, including the removal of divisive staff members. However, the leadership has remained committed to the proclamation of the gospel message and the fellowship of the congregation. Leaders and influential members demonstrate extraordinary support for their pastors and staff through generous financial giving, encouragement, and participation in ministry context. As a pastor, I am thankful to be blessed with many personal friendships with the leaders of Judson.

The second strength of the Shepherd Leadership Team is the desire to learn new skills and knowledge to serve the congregation more effectively. Although Judson Church struggles to develop new leaders to serve the congregation, the leaders want to grow in their roles. For example, one Shepherd Leader has been a member of Judson Church for over fifty years. An energetic and wise man with a magnetic personality, this leader consistently seeks knowledge through books, videos, and discussions with more experienced individuals. His teachable spirit attracts the attention of younger men and women within the congregation who seek mentorship under his guidance. Each leader has expressed interest in leadership development in conversations. A unified strategy and organized structure for leadership development will identify and develop future leaders and equip the current leaders.

The third strength of the Shepherd Leadership Team is its commitment to serve in both word and practice. These men care for the congregation through prayer,

encouragement, and meeting physical and financial needs. During church workdays, the leaders often perform the more laborious tasks. When a need arises within the congregation, one Shepherd Leader quietly meets the need. He also spends time and resources serving the Joliet community by caring for neighbors in practical ways. This Shepherd Leader leads by both his words and his actions. The examples of service and teachability set by the Shepherd Leaders continue to attract the attention and imitation of the younger men and women within the congregation.

The first weakness of the Shepherd Leadership Team is the recruiting of its members. Since its inception in 2018, the Shepherd Leadership Team has struggled to recognize its relationship as a team and its responsibility to the congregation. Therefore, the current team members cannot communicate the necessary qualifications and competencies to serve effectively. Likewise, congregation members do not have a clear plan for assessing future nor current Shepherd Leaders.

The second weakness of the Shepherd Leadership Team is the leadership development process. The team members do not understand their role enough to recognize or rectify weak areas of leadership. Since the team does not have a clear, defined set of responsibilities, its members do not have objectives to complete. The Shepherd Leadership Team lacks both a clear picture for leadership development and strategies to realize its goals. New Shepherd Leaders receive minimal resources for their own growth.

The third weakness of the Shepherd Leadership Team is its cooperation with other ministry teams. Judson Church struggles to unite around a common purpose; therefore, the individual ministry teams operate as silos. Each ministry leader communicates well with his or her team; however, cooperation with other ministries occurs rarely. For example, the deacons evaluate prospective members and baptism candidates; however, the Shepherd Leadership Team does not provide direction or guidance for how these individuals are to be assessed. As a result, the deacons do not interview candidates with a structured set of questions or areas. Most interviews require the candidate to simply

share his or her testimony. As outlined in the Judson Church bylaws, the Shepherd Leadership Team oversees the vision of the congregation in cooperation with the ministry staff, but the Shepherd Leaders struggle to articulate a vision for the congregation internally; therefore, they inadequately communicate the vision and strategy to implement the direction to other ministry leaders and the congregation.

Though they have the desire, the Shepherd Leadership lacks knowledge and experience to effectively equip the congregation. Leadership development at Judson Church relies upon the initiative of staff members and unpaid leaders to informally mentor new leaders. While a well-intentioned endeavor, the current leaders do not have a framework to teach the responsibilities of a Shepherd Leader. Therefore, sporadic conversations and monthly meetings are currently the only method of equipping these individuals to lead the congregation.

### **Rationale**

Leadership development is crucial for Judson Church to make disciples within the congregation and outside the community. Therefore, the Shepherd Leaders must increase their competencies to effectively equip the congregation to fulfill its mission. Implementing a training program for the Shepherd Leadership Team will address the qualifications of an elder, emphasize equipping the congregation members for ministry, and highlight the need for each leader to develop other leaders.

The first biblical reason for this project is because the Pauline letters clearly outline the qualifications and competencies necessary for an elder. The apostle Paul prioritizes leadership development and describes qualifications for the elders of the local church. Just as Paul instructed and invested in the life of Timothy, so Timothy must designate and develop men for the congregations.<sup>2</sup> In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul describes the elder qualifications. While he emphasizes the character traits of these leaders, the apostle

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<sup>2</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 190.

lists the ability to teach as well (v. 2). Practically, the Shepherd Leaders must lead by modeling godly character to the members of Judson Church, so the congregation has an example to follow (Heb 13:7). The Shepherd Leaders must also articulate Scripture faithfully and clearly so that the believers can obey and teach others. The Shepherd Leaders are tasked with leading the congregation through teaching, prayer, and vision. The training program will address the competencies necessary for the Shepherd Leaders to fulfill their responsibilities within the church. The Scriptures do not provide an exhaustive list of qualifications for biblical leadership, but this project will research these traits and apply them to the training program. The project will help the congregation and its leaders understand the significance of directly applying biblical qualifications to its leadership. By identifying biblical requirements for a Shepherd Leader, the congregation has a framework to hold their leaders accountable.

The second biblical reason for this project is because the Scriptures instruct church leaders to equip believers within their congregations. The apostle Paul describes church leaders primarily as equippers of believers, not doers of the ministry (Eph 4:11-12). Practically, the Shepherd Leadership Team must equip members of the congregation to make disciples and serve their communities. These leaders cannot complete all the tasks or build relationships with every person or people group; therefore, they must work to develop others to lead and minister in different contexts.

Currently, at Judson Church, leaders generally perform the ministry while many congregation members observe or support through financial giving. This training program will emphasize competencies to increase the Shepherd Leaders' abilities to resource, instruct, and mentor other Christians. Each of the current Shepherd Leaders express strong conviction to serve people and complete tasks. The training program will help redirect their energies toward leadership development as well. Practically, a congregation serving together can more effectively accomplish tasks and develop more relationships than a small group of committed leaders. The training program will multiply

the Shepherd Leaders' efforts to other leaders and the congregation. By identifying and assessing necessary qualifications, Shepherd Leaders can consider specific individuals to be trained.

The third biblical reason for this project is because the apostle Paul defines and outlines the need to develop leaders who develop leaders. Paul commanded Timothy to invest time and resources into others who would multiply disciples and leaders (2 Tim 2:2). Practically, the Shepherd Leadership Team must develop leaders for two reasons. First, as current leaders age or move from the area, qualified individuals must be able to fulfill the leadership responsibilities. Second, to encourage and facilitate the multiplication of disciples and planting of new churches, more qualified leaders are needed to fill these positions. The Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church recognizes the need to recruit and train new leaders, but they have lacked an intentional, structured process. This project addressed the scriptural exhortation while practically extending the mission and ministry of Judson Church through its leadership. As the Shepherd Leaders increased their competencies, their confidence and conviction to teach these skills to others increased as well. The urgency to make disciples with a small number of leaders demanded the creation and implementation of this project at Judson Church.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to increase leadership competencies in the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church in Joliet, Illinois, by establishing an intentional, structured development program.

### **Goals**

To increase leadership competencies in the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church through a leadership development program, I identified relevant competencies and assessed the Shepherd Leadership Team's status on the identified

competencies. Then, I created and implemented a development program to increase the identified competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team.

1. The first goal of this project was to identify appropriate leadership competencies for the Shepherd Leadership Team.
2. The second goal of this project was to assess the identified leadership competencies of the members of the Shepherd Leadership Team.
3. The third goal of this project was to create a curriculum using the assessment data to strengthen the identified competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team.
4. The fourth goal of this project was to increase leadership competencies by implementing the curriculum with the Shepherd Leadership Team.

### **Research Methodology**

The first goal of this project was to identify appropriate leadership competencies for the Shepherd Leadership Team. This goal was measured by an expert panel of internal and external leaders who utilized a rubric to select the leadership competencies.<sup>3</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when 3-5 competencies were identified.

The second goal of this project was to assess the identified leadership competencies of the members of the Shepherd Leadership Team. This goal was measured by administering a survey to each Shepherd Leader.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when all five unpaid Shepherd Leaders completed the survey.

The third goal of this project was to create a curriculum using the assessment data to strengthen the identified competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team. This goal was measured by a panel of both internal and external leaders who used a rubric to evaluate the curriculum's biblical faithfulness, relevance to the ministry context, and responsibilities of the Shepherd Leadership Team.<sup>5</sup> This goal was considered successfully

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 1.



met when 90 percent of the evaluation criterion on the rubric met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The fourth goal of this project was to increase leadership competencies by implementing the curriculum with the Shepherd Leadership Team. This goal was measured by administering a post-survey to assess the identified leadership competencies and utilizing the pre-survey from the second goal. This goal, using a *t*-test, was considered successfully met when each Shepherd Leader demonstrated a positive difference in the pre- and post-survey scores of the identified competencies.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

*Shepherd leadership team.* The *Shepherd leadership team* is a leadership group consisting of the lead pastor and five laymen responsible for overseeing the vision, direction, and ministries of Judson Church.

*Biblical leadership.* *Biblical leadership* will be understood as influencing others to use their gifts to accomplish objectives and build relationships as followers of Jesus Christ to bring glory to God. This project relies on Don N. Howell's description of biblical leaders who take "the initiative to influence people to grow in holiness and to passionately promote the extension of God's kingdom in the world."<sup>6</sup>

*Leadership competencies.* *Leadership competencies* may be broadly understood as a combination of knowledge and skills required to complete an objective. This project relies on the Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck's description: "Leaders are developed in their thinking and in their affections, they must also be equipped with knowledge to serve. They must be taught how to lead, how to serve."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Don N. Howell, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 173-74.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, I restricted the scope of the project to include only current Shepherd Leaders. These leaders oversee the direction of the church; therefore, if the team increases its competencies, then the membership would also benefit. Since the curriculum focuses on increasing competencies of the Shepherd Leaders, I limited the audience to this group. Second, the curriculum was limited to eight weeks. While the pre-assessment, instruction, and post-assessment were completed in eight weeks, additional training programs may be necessary in the future. The full completion of the project included pre-assessment, creation of training program, implementation of the program, post-assessment, and developing a strategic plan for future training.

### **Conclusion**

God has clearly revealed through the Scriptures the necessity of developing leaders in the local church. The following chapters will show how leadership development can occur within the local congregation. Chapter 2 will examine significant Scripture passages related to leadership development. Chapter 3 will explore and evaluate historical and contemporary practices of leadership development within the local church. Chapter 4 will outline the process of increasing the leadership competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church. Chapter 5 will evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the project.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR EQUIPPING ELDERS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The author to the Hebrews exhorts his readers to submit to their leaders and “consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (13:7). Christians should carefully observe and follow the example of belief and behavior set by those in authority over them. All Christians, including leaders, should follow the example of Jesus Christ in their words, attitude, and actions (Phil 2:5-11). Healthy churches require healthy leaders to remain healthy; therefore, these churches must develop leaders with godly character and necessary competencies.

The life and writings of the apostle Paul demonstrate the significance of a Christian leader’s ability to communicate the truths of the gospel and the actions that reflect the character of God. This chapter examines three passages from the New Testament to show the character and competencies necessary for elders to lead the local church. First, the qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 provide a framework for how churches evaluate current and prospective leaders. Second, Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-35 contains significant responsibilities of elders to their congregations. Finally, Paul’s charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 highlights the imperative to develop and multiply future leaders for the continued health and expansion of the church.

#### **The Example of an Elder (1 Tim 3:1-7)**

The apostle Paul opens his lengthy teaching on the qualifications of an elder

with a commendation for those desiring the office of an elder<sup>1</sup>: “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim 3:1). The commitment by an elder and the expectations of an elder require him to want the role.<sup>2</sup> William Mounce suggests the high esteem reserved for aspiring elders is due to the commitment necessary and the consistent confrontation with opponents from those within the church and outside.<sup>3</sup> Robert Yarbrough exhorts Christian leaders to consistently develop new leaders due to inevitable turnover in the local congregation, such as moral failure or moving away, or additional leaders needed because of numerical growth.<sup>4</sup>

The character of an elder must be prioritized because of the high visibility of his office within the congregation. The list is not arbitrary or random, but as Yarbrough writes, it demonstrates the “quality and depth of godliness that are indispensable for the magnitude and gravity of pastoral labor that Paul models, expects of Timothy, and hopes to see replicated in generations to come at Ephesus and beyond.”<sup>5</sup> The presence of godly elders provides a visible example for new and seasoned believers for how they might behave in different facets of life (Heb 13:7). Therefore, Paul lists specific characteristics that an elder must possess.

### **Above Reproach**

First Timothy 3:2 reads, “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.” Paul uses the uncommon word ἀνεπίλημπτος, translated as “above reproach,” to

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 1:5-9 was also consulted extensively for qualifications of an elder.

<sup>2</sup> Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 19.

<sup>3</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Dallas: Word, 2000), 167.

<sup>4</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 190.

<sup>5</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 195.

describe the high standards of conduct necessary for an elder.<sup>6</sup> Alexander Strauch describes above reproach as “free from any offensive or disgraceful blight of character or conduct, particularly as described in in verses 2-7.”<sup>7</sup> This qualification does not require a sinless man, but the elder must exhibit mature and godly character. Mounce explains that Paul could not have required an elder to be free of internal or external sin, but the apostle emphasizes “the type of external personal reputation that would be a credit to the church.”<sup>8</sup> Church leaders must develop a reputation of consistent godliness both within the church and outside in the community so that the church might avoid unnecessary opposition. George Knight suggests that the personal spiritual discipline of an elder naturally leads to interpersonal maturity with other believers and those outside the community of faith.<sup>9</sup> The following characteristics specifically describe how a maturing elder might live and minister in way that is above reproach.

### **Husband of One Wife**

This quality demands faithfulness in the elder’s personal relationship with his wife.<sup>10</sup> The phrase *μῑς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα* is limited to four usages in the New Testament and connects to the qualifications for elders, deacons, or widows.<sup>11</sup> Due to the placement of the words within the phrase “husband of one wife,” scholars and church leaders disagree over the ecclesiological implications. Strauch describes four possible interpretations:

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<sup>6</sup> “If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination” (Titus 1:6).

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995), 189.

<sup>8</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 170.

<sup>9</sup> George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 156.

<sup>10</sup> “If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination” (Titus 1:6).

<sup>11</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 189.

“elders must be married, elders must not be polygamists, elders may marry only once, and elders must be maritally and sexually above reproach.”<sup>12</sup>

The first possible interpretation seems to apply the text at face value, but it does not consider the examples and teachings of both Jesus and Paul, both who were single men. If elders must be married, then Jesus, Paul, and Timothy would have been excluded as elders. This would also oppose Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 that his singleness is not inferior to married life.<sup>13</sup> Based on the wider context of New Testament evidence, the requirement for every elder to be married cannot be accurate.

The second possibility for the phrase “husband of one wife” prohibits polygamy among church leaders. Strauch admits this interpretation initially appears plausible, but upon further investigation into the usage of the phrase and the context of early church culture, the conclusion that Paul had polygamy in mind remains highly unlikely. Paul applies the phrase to widows in 1 Timothy 5:9 as a qualification for receiving aid from the church. Since polyandry was not an issue within the early church, adding this qualification for widows seems unlikely.<sup>14</sup>

The third option allows an elder to marry only one woman in his entire lifetime, regardless of circumstances, such as death or the wife’s adultery. Early church leaders and letters, including the Shepherd of Hermas, discouraged or forbade remarriage of any kind.<sup>15</sup> At face value, the phrase “husband of one wife” does indicate that an aspiring elder may marry once in his life. However, the restriction does not coincide with the rest of the New Testament teaching on marriage.<sup>16</sup>

The fourth option demands an elder remain faithful to his wife while he is

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<sup>12</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 190.

<sup>13</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 171.

<sup>14</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 191.

<sup>15</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 172.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 12:18-27; 1 Cor 7:9, 39.

married to her. The insistence on the man's faithfulness seems to fit with Paul's priority of character qualifications for elders and deacons. Strauch summarizes the perspective: "The phrase the 'husband of one wife' is meant to be a positive statement that expresses faithful, monogamous marriage. In English, we would say, faithful and true to one woman' or a 'one-woman man.'"<sup>17</sup> Considering all four options, the last interpretation seems most correct in that elders must be free from sexual or marital scandal.

The phrase additionally raises the question of women being permitted to the eldership, or if the office is reserved for men only. Lengthy treatises have been written defending both perspectives; therefore, I will briefly examine through the lens of the phrase in 1 Timothy 3:2, "the husband of one wife." Vern Poythress suggests that Paul assumes male leadership in the church just as he does in the home: "Paul understands the position of overseer as involving the exercise of fatherly care over God's household."<sup>18</sup> Opponents to male-only eldership have cited the cultural context of Paul's letter when women did not have the educational opportunities of men. However, Paul's rationale for not allowing women to teach, as described in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, is not lack of education, but the apostle references the creation account as evidence of man's leadership.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the textual and cultural evidence within the passage and letter strongly defends eldership reserved for men.

## **Self-Controlled**

The word *σώφρονα* can be translated as "being in control of oneself, prudent,

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<sup>17</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 192.

<sup>18</sup> Vern Poythress, "Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 239.

<sup>19</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 940.

thoughtful, self-controlled.”<sup>20</sup> Self-control connects to a wide range of areas, but Mounce points out that the word alludes to “sexual decency.”<sup>21</sup> Knight advocates for a general prudence in all areas of life, without focusing on one area, including sexual decency.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of the emphasis, Paul requires elders to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit expected of all maturing Christians.<sup>23</sup>

The aspiring elder must maintain a clarity of mind and be free from external addictions, such as alcohol or anger.<sup>24</sup> Strauch describes how these characteristics, such as temperance, manifest themselves: “‘Temperate’ denotes self-control, balanced judgement, and freedom from debilitating excesses or rash behavior. Negatively, [temperance] indicates the absence of any personal disorder that would distort a person’s judgement or conduct. Positively, it describes a person who is stable, circumspect, self-restrained, and clear-headed.”<sup>25</sup>

The character expected of an elder requires evaluation over time and in different situations. Since elders lead the local church, both mature and new believers, they must conduct themselves with grace and patience, especially when temptation arises. For example, although Paul does not prohibit an elder to use alcohol, the church leader must exercise wise decisions, which can be inhibited by alcohol misuse.

## **Hospitable**

Paul expects all Christians to show love and generosity toward others; Paul

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<sup>20</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 987.

<sup>21</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 173.

<sup>22</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159.

<sup>23</sup> Rinne, *Church Elders*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> “But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined” (Titus 1:8)

<sup>25</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 193.



expects church leaders to set the pace and model the Christian life.<sup>26</sup> The word φιλόξενος occurs two other times in the New Testament: in Titus 1:8, in a similar list of qualifications for elders, and in 1 Peter 4:9, in which believers show hospitality without complaining.<sup>27</sup> Though hospitality reveals character traits of a person, including love, patience, and kindness, it also involves soft skills, such as communication and listening skills, necessary for an elder to effectively care for those in his care.

The command does not specify to whom the elders should perform hospitality, but Mounce categorizes the following types of people: other church leaders and needy Christians. Mounce notes that deacons do not have the same explicit expectation to show hospitality; therefore, welcoming visiting church delegates may have been an official responsibility of elders.<sup>28</sup>

Donald Guthrie notes that showing hospitality to others was necessary for the Christian faith's expansion in its early years.<sup>29</sup> Hospitable elders had the opportunity to teach the basics of the Christian faith as they showed the love of Christ to those visiting their households. The combination of godly words and works within the confines of one's own home shows the reliability of the Christian faith to transform a person's life. Elders must be examples for other believers to imitate and those outside the faith to consider the trustworthiness of Christians. Knight connects hospitality to the ability of an elder to teach: "He who must teach others and take care of and exercise oversight over them must be open and loving to them."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159.

<sup>27</sup> BDAG, 1058.

<sup>28</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 174.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 96.

<sup>30</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159.

## Able to Teach

Paul greatly emphasizes the character qualifications of an elder; however, he does require that an elder can teach. The English Standard Version translates διδακτός as “able to teach,” while other works translate it as “skillful in teaching.”<sup>31</sup> The word is only used one other time in the New Testament, when Paul uses διδακτός to describe the Lord’s servant (2 Tim 2:24).

Mounce suggests the word may not require an elder to actively teach in the local congregation, but he must have the competencies to communicate doctrine. However, Mounce does recognize the context of Paul’s letter in Ephesus necessitating active teachers to competently oppose false teachings within and outside the church.<sup>32</sup> Strauch observes three competencies that a skilled teaching elder must possess: “A knowledge of the Scripture, a readiness to teach, and the ability to communicate.”<sup>33</sup> The elder’s knowledge of the Scripture enables him to evaluate potentially false teaching within the church and correct the error with the truth. An elder must have the willingness and availability to clearly impart doctrine to the congregation’s members. Knight points out the ambiguity in 1 Timothy 3:2 is clarified in Titus 1:2: the elder has the responsibility to instruct in sound teaching and the tenets of the Christian faith, and the elder must oppose false teaching.<sup>34</sup>

Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin explain the connection between an elder’s character and his competency in teaching: “One who can teach others also needs a willingness to accept teaching.”<sup>35</sup> A qualified elder possesses the humility to submit himself to the authority of the Scriptures, other elders, and the congregation. Though elders

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<sup>31</sup> BDAG, 240.

<sup>32</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 174.

<sup>33</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 195.

<sup>34</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 111.

lead the church, they are not exempt from church discipline or correction (Matt18:15-17).<sup>36</sup>

### **Manage His Household Well**

First Timothy 3:4-5 reads, “He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?” In verses 4-5, the requirement for an elder to manage his household well connects the church leader’s home life to his responsibilities with the church.<sup>37</sup> The qualification demonstrates an elder’s character and competency to lead his household.<sup>38</sup> The word οἴκου can be translated as household or family and is used eight other times in the Pastoral Epistles, to which Paul expects the husband to lead the family.<sup>39</sup>

Mounce points out the importance of this trait to the Ephesian context because deacons are also required to manage their households well: “A person’s ability to manage the church, which is God’s household, will be evident in the managing of his own household.”<sup>40</sup> The elder’s home life indicates how well he may lead the congregation. Knight describes two aspects of a man’s ability to lead his family well that are found in verse 4: the submission of his children and the manner of their submission. The children must have respect and reverence for their father.<sup>41</sup>

Paul explains the rationale for the man’s ability to lead his own family in verse 5: “For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care

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<sup>36</sup> First Tim 5:19-20 gives instructions for handling an elder accused of a serious offense. The requirement for multiple witnesses attests to the level of character expected from elders.

<sup>37</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 198.

<sup>38</sup> “If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination” (Titus 1:6).

<sup>39</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 161.

<sup>40</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 177.

<sup>41</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 161.

for God’s church?” (1 Tim 3:5). The parenthetical question presents an obvious answer: a man cannot effectively lead the church if he cannot effectively lead his family.<sup>42</sup> Yarbrough captures the significance of managing the household well. “An aspiring overseer whose domestic life demonstrates his grasp of a selfless and compassionate dynamic has a basis for putting his nurturing executive abilities at the disposal of “God’s church.” If he does not—and it is Timothy’s task to make this determination—then he is not suited for the overseer position.<sup>43</sup>

### **Not a New Convert**

First Timothy 3:6 says, “He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Paul requires elders to have spiritual maturity in their character and ability to lead others; both qualities take time to develop and assess.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, elders cannot be recently converted believers. Paul uses the word νεόφυτος to describe the “newly planted” person, which Paul uses figuratively to mean “newly planted in the Christian community.”<sup>45</sup> Paul does not place an age requirement on the elder candidate but on his spiritual maturity.<sup>46</sup>

The qualification serves as a safeguard for the elders and the congregation to avoid an immature leader causing damage to the church. Paul explains pride as the temptation for new converts that may be installed as leaders. Newly converted individuals do not have the experience or maturity to handle the issues an elder is expected to address.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 200.

<sup>43</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 201.

<sup>44</sup> This requirement is absent from Titus 1:5-9 possibly because the Ephesian church was established while the church in Crete was newly formed. See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 181.

<sup>45</sup> BDAG, 669.

<sup>46</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 180.

<sup>47</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 201.

Thomas and Griffin describe how a leader's pride can affect his effectiveness: "The pride in a prominent position produces a blindness that blunts spiritual alertness."<sup>48</sup> An elder must be aware of the sinful tendencies within himself if he is to recognize the sinful tendencies within the church. Jesus warned his followers to address their own sin, so that they may better correct other believers (Matt 7:5).

### **Reputable among Unbelievers**

Paul concludes the list of qualifications for an elder by moving outside the church community; the first six verses primarily focus on his life within the Christian community while the seventh verse concerns his attitude and actions among unbelievers. First Timothy 3:7 reads, "Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."

The elder's behavior must be imitable among the believers; his behavior must not bring reproach among the unbelievers. Strauch describes the impact a Christian's reputation, especially that of an elder, on the community: "The church's evangelistic credibility and witness is tied to the moral reputation of its leaders."<sup>49</sup> Unpaid elders may have vocations where they consistently interact with unbelievers.

Mounce connects the spiritual maturity required in verse 6 to the elder's reputation described in verse 7: "Rather than being an untested νεόφροτος [recent convert], the overseer should be one whose reputation is tried and known."<sup>50</sup> Lea and Griffin explain the elder's reputation may have a direct connection to the validity of Christianity in the minds of believers: "The mention of the leader's name should not cause derision among the opponents of the gospel. The behavior of the leader should provide an example of

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<sup>48</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 113.

<sup>49</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 201.

<sup>50</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 182.

integrity and commitment to the gospel he professes.”<sup>51</sup>

An elder with a poor reputation with outsiders may bring disgrace upon both himself and the witness of the church. Mounce views the disgrace caused as a trap set by Satan rather than those outside the church.<sup>52</sup> Knight agrees by summarizing how important the reputation of an elder is to resist the devil and leading the church well: “A man without a good testimony from outsiders could ‘lose his head’ or ‘senses’ when he fell into reproach and thereby be ensnared to obey the evil one and disobey God.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 Paul lists the traits of an elder while emphasizing character qualities. An elder must possess the maturity to effectively model godly behavior and the skills to communicate doctrine to other believers. The responsibilities expected of elders demand these individuals possess the godly character and competencies to lead and protect the church.

### **The Encouragement to Elders (Acts 20:28-35)**

Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesian elders contains a description and prescription for modern day church leaders to consider and implement into their personal and collective leadership responsibilities. Strauch highlights the importance of the passage to application to elders within the local church: “[Paul’s] speech to the Ephesian elders is a virtual manual for pastor elders.”<sup>54</sup> The apostle recognizes the importance of his words because he does not expect to see these elders again. Therefore, he describes the significant weight attached to the office and the responsibilities required of the elders.

Although the division of Paul’s farewell speech to the Ephesians can be broken

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<sup>51</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 114.

<sup>52</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 183.

<sup>53</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 166.

<sup>54</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 140.

into two broad sections, scholars disagree on how to analyze the passage.<sup>55</sup> I. Howard Marshall traces the first section as an account of Paul’s past interactions and ministry experience.<sup>56</sup> The second section concerns Paul’s exhortation to the elders to lead the churches when he leaves: “They are to follow his example of faithful service, and to be ready to give themselves to the service of the church as freely as he had done.”<sup>57</sup> John Polhill subdivides Marshall’s second section into two categories of instructions for the elders: (1) Paul warns the elders of false teachers arising from within the churches; and (2) Paul encourages them to follow his example in their own leadership.<sup>58</sup>

Paul opens his charge to the elders with a recollection of past events and interactions with the churches. Paul reminds them of the example he set for church leaders to be involved in the lives of the Christians they lead (Acts 20:18-19). Paul did not minister from an isolated position of authority, but he developed strong relationships with those he led and those he led alongside.<sup>59</sup> In verses 28-35, Paul instructs the elders on how to lead the churches under their care.

### **Protect the People (Acts 20:28-31)**

After reminding the elders of his own example of teaching the “whole counsel of God” in verse 27, Paul emphatically instructs the church leaders to care for their own spiritual health and the church. Paul warns not only of threats outside the church but also from within. Strauch offers practical wisdom for elders to protect the church by knowing the spiritual condition of its members: “The command to guard the flock means that the

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<sup>55</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 347.

<sup>56</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 348.

<sup>57</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 348.

<sup>58</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 423.

<sup>59</sup> David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 563-64.

elders must keep their minds on the church. They must be watchful and observant. They must be attentive at all times to the spiritual well-being of the people.”<sup>60</sup> Church leaders bear the responsibility to lead and protect the church from false teaching and dangerous beliefs; this responsibility begins with the elder’s own spiritual life.

**Acts 20:28.** Paul employs the verb προσέχω when referring to the elders’ responsibility in their own lives and the care for the church. Arndt, Bauer, Danker, and Gingrich define προσέχω as “to be in a state of alert, be concerned about, care for, take care.”<sup>61</sup> Church leaders should know the sinful tendencies within themselves and the threats that may destroy the church, whether due to the members or those outside the church. Polhill describes the command for elders to “be vigilant” as they lead the other believers under the authority of God.<sup>62</sup>

The spiritual condition of the elders cannot be neglected even as they care for the church. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul exhorts his protégé to “keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16). Puritan pastor Richard Baxter strongly warned other preachers of the dangers of ignoring their own spiritual health: “Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others.”<sup>63</sup> David Peterson echoes the seriousness an elder must take with his own spiritual development: “Christian leaders cannot care adequately for others if they neglect the care and nurture of themselves.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 146.

<sup>61</sup> BDAG, 879.

<sup>62</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 426.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (1656; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2007), 53.

<sup>64</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 568.



The charge to shepherd the whole flock requires elders to know people under their care. The elders must observe their congregation members to assess spiritual health and progress.<sup>65</sup> Peterson suggests that Paul include the phrase “all the flock” to ensure no groups were ignored, such as certain Gentile or Jewish sects: “Neglect of one group or another will result in the whole congregation being hurt or hindered in its growth and witness.”<sup>66</sup>

Darrell Bock explains that the elders’ work is to be a consistent practice in the life of the church: “The present-tense infinitive [ποιμαίνειν] means to shepherd continually and in this context also indicates the purpose of being an overseer. The elder is to protect, rule, and foster care.”<sup>67</sup> Since the challenges facing a church continually change, elders must know their people to properly protect them.

Church leaders do not have the option of favoring one group over another within the congregation because the church belongs to God. The second half of verse 29 identifies God as the final authority over the church, including its leaders. Strauch explains that the elders must protect the believers because God owns the church: “The flock the elders pastor is a flock of unspeakable worth. It does not belong to the elders, the apostles, or any other man.”<sup>68</sup> Paul reminds the elders that the Holy Spirit guided the process of their selection and installation. Elders do not operate in their strength but under the Holy Spirit; they also cannot claim final authority over the church because Christ has purchased it “with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The qualifications of an elder require the humility and character to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ as he cares for the church.

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<sup>65</sup> Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Philipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 177.

<sup>66</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 569.

<sup>67</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 630.

<sup>68</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 149.

**Acts 20:29-30.** Paul provides another reason for elders to know and guard themselves and the church: the threat of false and dangerous teachers arising from within. Paul hopes to avoid a power vacuum after he leaves Ephesus that might be filled with false teaching that would destroy the church, distort the gospel, and defame the name of Christ. Therefore, the elders must intentionally lead and protect the people. Polhill connects Paul's imagery of wolves to Jesus's warning against false teachers in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>69</sup> Paul is not clear from where these false teachers will arise, whether from within the ranks of the elders or from the congregation at large. However, Bock suggests the latter group is more likely due to the "scope of the potential threat."<sup>70</sup>

Paul explains that through their destructive teaching, the false teachers will draw others within the congregation to create division among the church. Pride and need for acceptance can manifest themselves as divisive acts within the church; these sinful thoughts and actions remain constant threats among leaders and the church to the present day.<sup>71</sup> Marshall clarifies that while attempts to identify a specific heresy have been made, no clear or conclusive theories can be made. Therefore, Paul's general warning reminds Christian leaders to remain vigilant against destructive teachings or behaviors that threaten believers and the congregation.<sup>72</sup>

**Acts 20:31.** Paul exhorts the elders to "be alert" of the potential threats and follow the example set by him. The present imperative  $\gamma\rho\eta\gamma\omicron\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon$  shows a constant readiness in the subject.<sup>73</sup> Bock identifies the same word in Mark 13:35, when Jesus

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<sup>69</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 428.

<sup>70</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 631.

<sup>71</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 571.

<sup>72</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 353.

<sup>73</sup> BDAG, 208.

commands his disciples to be alert for his return.<sup>74</sup> Similar to the timing of Jesus's return, Christian leaders do not know where threats may arise; therefore, they must consistently know the needs of their people and the dangers from within the church and outside in the community.

Paul encourages the elders to follow his example as a means to protect the church; they are to remember how he admonished the Christians at Ephesus. The use of a present participle, *μνημονεύοντες*, describes a "continual remembering" of Paul's methods of leading the believers. An elder must also encourage other elders to remain vigilant as he watches of the congregation.<sup>75</sup>

Paul's reference to the three years spent in Ephesus demonstrates the need for consistent care for the Christians under the elders' authority. Faithful teaching not only includes orthodox teaching but an enduring example over time. Church leaders should commit to teaching doctrine and protecting the church for a sustained period so that the believers can observe and imitate their example of faith (Heb 13:7). Marshall recognizes Paul's hyperbolic statement, "I did not cease night or day," to mean his consistent and thorough admonishment of the Ephesian church.<sup>76</sup> Christians are called to admonish one another (Col 3:16) despite their position within the church. However, leaders must set the example for others to follow and offer the encouragement to persist.<sup>77</sup> Paul's ministry provided a picture for the Ephesian elders to imitate, and church leaders today can glean principles of faithful and intentional leadership within their congregations from the apostle.

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<sup>74</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 631.

<sup>75</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 571.

<sup>76</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 354.

<sup>77</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 571.

### **Provide an Example (Acts 20:32-35)**

The final section of Paul's address to the Ephesian elders includes a blessing and an appeal to consider the example of his life and ministry. Paul references the openness of his life toward others, including financial matters, to show dependence upon God's grace.

**Acts 20:32.** The blessing and commendation of the elders to God pass the authority to the elders as Paul prepares to leave the people. Marshall cautions against viewing blessing as an installment or ordination since these leaders already possess the title and responsibilities of elders.<sup>78</sup> Paul uses the word παρατίθημι, meaning to “entrust for safekeeping, give over, entrust, or commend.”<sup>79</sup> Paul blesses the Ephesians elders by praying to God on their behalf; He declares his trust in the power of God to guide the church through the elders. Paul reminds the elders of the grace given to them for leading; their faithfulness comes from God's faithfulness. Once Paul departs, the Ephesians are still not left to themselves, but God's presence remains.<sup>80</sup>

Paul reminds the elders of the significance of the word of grace: it is “able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). The message of the gospel saves both the elders and the congregation; both are responsibilities that the elders must carry. Elders must not only be able to effectively communicate (1 Tim 3:2), but they must teach the truth of God and His gospel.

Paul identifies two results of the word of God's grace toward God's people: the maturing of the believers and their sharing of an inheritance. These two common phrases within Pauline literature contain promises that God will build up believers and provide them with an inheritance of eternal life.<sup>81</sup> These sanctified believers are set apart by God

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<sup>78</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 354.

<sup>79</sup> BDAG, 772.

<sup>80</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 631.

<sup>81</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 572.

for God’s pleasure and purposes, and Paul stresses the unity these collective individuals share because they have responded to God’s grace.<sup>82</sup>

**Acts 20:33-34.** After a powerful blessing and commendation of the elders to God, Paul briefly describes the ministry example he set before the Ephesians: freedom from pursuing selfish gain and actively supporting himself. Paul labored to serve the Ephesians instead of reaping material possessions. Paul mentions that he refused to covet silver, gold, or apparel; all were common forms of wealth and given to leaders within communities.<sup>83</sup> Christians are called to follow the example of their leaders’ faith. Therefore, the leaders must habitually practice godly living in the presence of the people they serve (1 Cor 11:1). Leaders may be tempted to leverage their position within a church or a community for their own selfish gain, whether financially, materially, or socially.

Throughout his letters, Paul explains his own freedom from material covetousness and encourages other leaders to follow his example. To the church at Thessalonica, Paul avoided any “pretext for greed” (1 Thess 2:5); while in Corinth, he “labored, working with [his] own hands, so as to give no appearance of selfish gain (1 Cor 4:12). Though elders are not forbidden payment, Paul encourages congregations to support their leaders (1 Cor 9:12; 1 Tim 5:17-18). In his letter to Timothy, Paul explains how greed and the love of money lead to other sinful activities, including leaving the Christian faith community (1 Tim 6:10).

Peterson considers Paul’s example and exhortation a word of caution to the elders in addition to previous warning of false teachers. Elders, just like other organizational leaders, wield influence and authority over the members and resources in

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<sup>82</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 632.

<sup>83</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 354.

the group. Greed and pride may inspire elders to misuse their power for personal benefit.<sup>84</sup> A faithful elder must possess a combination of godly character and effective competencies to lead the congregation and fight the temptation of selfish gain.

**Acts 20:35.** Paul ends his speech to the elders with a reminder to serve their people, not for dishonest gain but for their good and out of obedience to Christ. Though not recorded anywhere else in the New Testament, including the Gospels, Paul quotes one of the more famous teachings of Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” The saying does not condemn receiving gifts or those who lack the ability to give more than they receive, but Marshall suggests the teaching reminds church leaders that service to others, especially those within the church, requires self-sacrifice.<sup>85</sup>

Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders combines reminders of the apostle’s ministry example and instructive warnings to the elders of their great responsibilities to the church. Since church members are under the authority of the elders, these church leaders should pursue godly living and wise leading. The character of an elder shapes the competencies to reflect the holiness of God. His humility protects against teaching that aims to manipulate others; he demonstrates love by protecting the flock against false teachers and dangerous practices.

### **The Equipping by Elders (2 Tim 2:1-2)**

Elders bear the responsibility in teaching, protecting, and guiding the church under the authority and in the strength of Jesus Christ. They are not replacements of Jesus but reflections of His character and reminders of His presence. Effective and wise elders also recognize their limitations, both physically and spiritually, to guide the people for sustained periods of time; therefore, they develop qualified men to lead the church alongside them and after them.

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<sup>84</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 572.

<sup>85</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 355.

In his final canonical letter, Paul writes Timothy, his protégé and spiritual son, a reflective and instructive guide on how to conduct himself as a leader of the church and minister of the gospel. The second chapter opens with a call to be strengthened followed by a command to develop other leaders. Church leaders care for their congregation by serving under the authority of Jesus Christ as they exercise oversight over their people.

### **Second Timothy 2:1**

Paul opens the exhortation with two solemn indicators—the use of “you, then” and “my son”—to ensure Timothy understands the weight of his teachings. Paul begins a sentence with second person address only six times in the Pastoral Epistles, which Yarbrough believes Paul uses to emphasize the significance of his point.<sup>86</sup> The deeply personal phrase, τέκνον μου, reveals that Paul related to Timothy more than just as an impersonal teacher but as a spiritual father. Paul reminds Timothy of his care and concern for the young man before he delivers a strong command requiring enormous effort.<sup>87</sup> Mounce suggests that Paul uses the warm and personal tone to encourage the young and weary church leader who has experienced remarkable opposition.<sup>88</sup> Church leaders should note the deep personal investment of Paul into Timothy as a model for identifying and equipping future leaders; leadership development takes intentionality, time investment, and love.

Paul recognizes the difficulties that ministry can have upon church leaders. Therefore, he urges Timothy to find his strength in God supplied by the grace of Jesus Christ. The word ἐνδυναμοῦ, or “to be strengthened,” written as a passive present imperative, implies that Timothy must continually rely upon the grace of God to strengthen him. The present tense contrasts with aorists found elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles (1

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<sup>86</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 371.

<sup>87</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 389.

<sup>88</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 503.

Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 4:17) because while the latter focuses on past events, Paul here inspires Timothy to a habitual practice of being strengthened.<sup>89</sup> Paul immediately defines the source of strength: “The grace that is in Christ Jesus.” This unique phrase within the New Testament shows that the resources given to God’s people are available through faith in His promises to sustain them through trials and opposition.<sup>90</sup>

Knight argues that the phrase ἐν τῇ χάριτι connects Jesus Christ to the servant of Christ; the grace is the means or instrument by which the servant is strengthened.<sup>91</sup> Church leaders should recognize that their strength comes not from self-discipline or will, but they must rely upon the gift given by God. The consistent practice of being strengthened by God prepares Timothy for the difficult yet necessary assignment of developing other church leaders to teach them the truth of the gospel message. God freely gives grace to His people to accomplish His purposes.

### **Second Timothy 2:2**

Paul shares the grace of God to Timothy and expects his spiritual child to communicate the same message to other believers so that the gospel spreads throughout generations and across geographic locations. Elders should apply the command to develop current and future leaders with faithful character and commitment to the gospel within their own congregational contexts.

Mounce cautions readers against reading the verse as a proof text for apostolic succession, so the verse cannot be lifted from its context of Paul’s final letter of encouragement to a young church leader: “Timothy is not told to hand over the reins to those in power as would be expected in an institutional structure. He is told to find men of

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<sup>89</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 503.

<sup>90</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 371.

<sup>91</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 390.



good character.”<sup>92</sup> The first phrase of the verse, “what you have heard from me,” reveals the careful attention Paul took to help Timothy comprehend the gospel, which remains unchanged. Paul’s ministry to and with Timothy occurred over time and in different settings.

Scholars do not universally agree on the meaning of the second phrase, διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων. Mounce outlines three possible interpretations of how Paul uses “in the presence of many witnesses.” One perspective suggests an isolated occurrence when the elders observed the baptism or commissioning of Timothy. However, according to Mounce, this option is unlikely because Paul would probably not have shared an entire gospel presentation in one setting and expected Timothy to pass that packaged message onto others.<sup>93</sup> Knight agrees that Paul probably did not refer to a one-time past event because Paul undoubtedly taught Timothy many other doctrines that were necessary for the latter to pass along to other men.<sup>94</sup> A second option of the phrase translates διὰ to mean “through.” Therefore, the text would read “through many witnesses.” Though Paul ministered within a network of Christian workers, he probably would not appeal to the authority of other leaders to validate his teaching of the gospel to Timothy.<sup>95</sup>

The third and most likely option emphasizes the public manner in which Paul communicated the gospel compared with the false teachers in Ephesus. Paul did not teach the Christian faith in secret, but multiple credible individuals shared in the labor of preaching with Paul.<sup>96</sup> Elders should work together to teach the congregation members the truths of the gospel.

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<sup>92</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 504.

<sup>93</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505.

<sup>94</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 390.

<sup>95</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505.

<sup>96</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 390.

Paul commands Timothy to entrust the words and doctrines the apostle had taught to his protégé. In verse 1, Paul uses a present tense imperative to encourage Timothy to be consistently strengthened by God’s grace, but in verse 2 Paul uses an aorist tense verb with the word παράθου, “signifying the need to find faithful men.”<sup>97</sup> Timothy is charged with discovering faithful men of character to preach and teach the truths of the gospel. Paul’s use of faithful implies the men are believers in Christ and trustworthy in their word and relationships. Yarbrough explains that the type of men Timothy is to select are not self-seeking, but their work will benefit others.<sup>98</sup>

Paul clearly does not intend for the gospel message to stop after Timothy’s death; therefore, the apostle instructs Timothy to invest in men who perpetuate the teachings of Christ. All Christians are called to make disciples (Matt 28:19); however, elders have the specific responsibility to oversee the teachings of the church. Knight points out the future tense verb “to be” when referring to the entrusted men’s task: “Their teaching activity is future (future ἔσονται) in that it takes place after they have been entrusted with Paul’s teachings.”<sup>99</sup> Paul modeled how Timothy can apply the command to develop others—he communicated the truths of the faith in multiple settings alongside many people over a long period of time. Thus, Christian leaders should prioritize leadership development within their own congregations by identifying and investing in future leaders to lead and teach the church.

Strauch applies the passage to the elders’ role in developing future leaders: “A good eldership will be praying for and looking for capable men to join them and will be conscientiously training and preparing men for future eldership.”<sup>100</sup> The task is not an isolated event but an ongoing process by a group of leaders charged with evaluating the

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<sup>97</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 506.

<sup>98</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 372.

<sup>99</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 392.

<sup>100</sup> Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 278.

character and competencies of faithful individuals and equipped with skills to fulfill their responsibilities.

### **Conclusion**

Healthy churches require qualified leaders to encourage and equip their congregations by setting an example to follow and exhorting them to obey God. Paul's letters to Timothy prescribe character qualifications necessary for elders that reflect Christ and serve others. Recognizing that every elder has limited time, energy, and gifts, leaders should evaluate their ability to fulfill the responsibilities of teaching, leading, and protecting the congregation.<sup>101</sup>

Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders describes the significant task of a shepherd to guide and protect the flock from false teachers that may arise within the church and outside in the community. He set an example of patient endurance and selfless service over multiple years to equip the Ephesian elders to build up the body of Christ. Christian leaders should consider the example of their own faith and lives before the believers they serve. The reliability of their witness is compromised if their words do not match their attitudes and actions (Jas 1:22).

Elders have the dual responsibility of ministering to the needs of the present congregation while developing leaders to care for believers in the future. Paul's charge for Timothy to entrust faithful men to teach the gospel and its truths to others is the solemn responsibility of effective and sustainable elder teams. Elders' teaching and communication skills vitally extend the reach of the gospel and deepen the faith of the believers; therefore, church leaders cannot neglect leadership development and teaching methodology. However, the qualifications of an elder as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 emphasize character traits that cannot be taught in a classroom. An elder develops an "above reproach" reputation through humility before God and selfless service to others.

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<sup>101</sup> Paul David Tripp, *LEAD: 12 Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 84.



CHAPTER 3  
THE CALLING, CHARACTER, AND COMPETENCIES  
EXPECTED OF ELDERS IN THE REFORMATION  
AND POST-REFORMATION PERIODS

Though the New Testament repeatedly affirms the offices of elder and deacon, it does not exhaustively describe their responsibilities within the local church; elders primarily lead the church through teaching, shepherding, and praying for the church, while the deacons assist with tasks as directed by the elders.<sup>1</sup> Over time, new challenges to Christians required church leaders to adapt their methods and practices, including leadership development and organization. An increasingly diverse and spread-out Christian movement caused leaders to adapt the New Testament's descriptions of an elder, which has caused no shortage of controversy throughout church history.

Though early and medieval church history contributed greatly to the development of the elder, this study will limit itself to the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. More specifically, I will examine the practices and expectations of an elder through selected writings beginning with Martin Luther and ending with Jonathan Edwards, including the elder's calling, character, and competencies within the local church.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), the Augustinian Catholic monk who sparked the Protestant Reformation, not only reconsidered the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church but wrote and trained young ministers to lead the new Protestant congregations. Luther colorfully described necessary qualifications for these pastors, especially their humility before God and man, both of whom they are called to serve.

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<sup>1</sup> Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 589.

John Calvin (1509-1564), the towering Reformer and theologian, reacted strongly against the Roman Catholic Church with his influential work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but this work also outlines important considerations for church leaders, including elders within the local church. Caricatures paint Calvin as a stoic, isolated figure; however, the pastor-theologian led his community and fellow church leaders to value family life and the opportunity for showing God's grace within the house.

Puritan Richard Baxter (1615-1691) practiced pastoral ministry with the same enthusiasm as his writings to pastors, especially *The Reformed Pastor*. A seventeenth English minister, Baxter urged current and potential pastors to develop significant yet subtle pastoral competencies, such as listening and asking questions so they may apply scriptural truths to individual congregation members.

John Owen (1616-1683), a seventeenth century Puritan and contemporary of Baxter, was a brilliant theologian and pastor, posthumously nicknamed the prince of divines.<sup>2</sup> A congregationalist minister, Owen believed the local church played an important role in the calling of qualified and competent elders to lead the people.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), although generations removed from the English Puritans, rivals their intellectual and theological rigor in the American colonies. An intensely focused man, Edwards urged ministers to devote their physical and intellectual capacities to pursuing God, which results in godly character and priorities to care for the local church. In an ordination service sermon, Edwards charged the young minister to consider the example of Christ as a template for his own character, most notably his humility.

Though fallible writers and leaders, the Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, and the post-Reformation believers, especially the English-speaking Puritans, provide valuable insight and wisdom for the local church in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>2</sup> J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 191.

## The Calling of an Elder

Paul introduces the qualifications of an elder with the charge that the church leader must desire to serve (1 Tim 3:1), while Peter echoes the elder's willingness as an integral trait for healthy leadership (1 Pet 5:2). Though the individual must aspire to the office, an affirmation or external call from a congregation or group of qualified individuals completes the process. This section will trace the understanding and implementation of an elder's calling and reception into his role.

### Reformation Period

The Reformation reconfigured foundational theological emphases, including justification and the authority of the Scriptures over the church; however, church leadership also experienced notable shifts, including the calling of elders within the local church. Gregg Allison describes the contrast that the Reformers sought to establish in their congregations from the Roman Catholic Church: "In establishing his churches, Martin Luther's main concern was to distance Lutheran congregations from the Roman Catholic structure and its elevation of the pope as the supreme ruler over all Christian churches."<sup>3</sup> Luther and Calvin sought to reform the church's teachings and practices, which included the calling of local church leaders.

**Martin Luther.** The Reformation greatly emphasized a return to the sufficiency and supremacy of the Scriptures in the lives of individual believers and local congregations. The medieval Roman Catholic Church viewed the sacrament of the Eucharist as the central element within the gathering of the church. However, under Martin Luther, Protestant churches gave central focus to the sermon.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, bishops and pastors bear the responsibility to properly preach the Word of God, and congregations

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<sup>3</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, 601.

<sup>4</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (repr., Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 272.

must wisely discern the calling of potential leaders. Allison succinctly describes a church leader's calling in relation to a specific local church. "[Luther] emphasized that these bishops or pastors were to be called by God and chosen by the church."<sup>5</sup>

In Luther's practical guide, *On the Councils and the Church*, the congregation bears the responsibility to call ministers. In a strong reaction against the Roman Catholic Church, he firmly describes the church's authority as higher than that of the pope: "As Baptism, the Sacrament, and God's Word do not belong to the pope but to the Church, so with the keys, they are church's keys, not the pope's keys."<sup>6</sup> One may infer from Luther's words that he believes the congregation possesses the responsibility to discern the calling of a minister within its own context instead of relying upon the decisions of the Roman Church.<sup>7</sup>

**John Calvin.** Calvin believed in and sought to model the church and its leadership after the doctrine of the "priesthood of the believers." Though He reacted strongly against the Roman Catholic Church by opposing the authority of the pope, the reformer did not abolish church leadership, but reorganized the structure to include four offices: pastors, elders, deacons, and teachers.<sup>8</sup> The calling of an elder, along with a pastor and teacher, according to Calvin, is based on the authority of God because no person can faithfully execute his responsibilities apart from the calling and power of God.<sup>9</sup> Calvin and his protégé and successor, Theodore Beza, argued that congregations

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<sup>5</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, 602.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, accessed January 22, 2023, [https://wolffmueller.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Work-on-Councils\\_100618.pdf](https://wolffmueller.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Work-on-Councils_100618.pdf), 228.

<sup>7</sup> Luther appears to have changed his mind about the practicality of the local congregation's ability to make these types of decisions. See Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 243.

<sup>8</sup> William Stacy Johnson, *John Calvin: Reformer for the 21st Century* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 90.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 4.3.13.



should initiate and extend callings to qualified candidates, rather than pastoral candidates reaching out to congregation. Calvin believed this approach revealed the potential pastor's humility and patience instead of his selfish ambition or worldly desires.<sup>10</sup> Along with a humble attitude, Calvin and his colleagues outlined three areas of qualification for pastors in Geneva. Scott Manetsch describes the criteria: "What was most important, indeed essential, was that pastoral candidates possess 'a good and sound knowledge of the Scripture,' have the ability to 'communicate God's Word to the people for their edification,' and be persons of 'good morals' whose lives were above reproach."<sup>11</sup> The character and competencies expected by Calvin will be discussed, but one notes that the congregation has an active role in the selection of its church leaders.

Calvin strongly connects God's calling of an elder with the agreement of the congregation. In the *Institutes*, the reformer asks, "Whether a minister should be chosen by the whole church, or only by colleagues and elders, who have the charge of discipline; or whether they may be appointed by the authority of one individual?"<sup>12</sup> Though he provides Scripture support to suggest one individual may appoint an elder, the theologian concludes that the congregation must vote an affirmation of a proposed elder under the moderation and facilitation of another elder.<sup>13</sup> The requirement for a presiding elder during the affirmation vote ensures the process is faithfully executed.

## **Post-Reformation Period**

The Puritans followed the tradition of Luther and Calvin to elevate the preaching of God's Word as the pinnacle of the church gathering. Therefore, these heirs to the

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<sup>10</sup> Scott Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536-1609* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 82.

<sup>11</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 83.

<sup>12</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.15.

<sup>13</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.15.

Reformers diligently sought men called by God to pastor the congregation primarily through the exposition of the Scriptures. The great reformed Anglican theologian J. I. Packer credits the Puritans with cementing his own calling to preaching and pastoring: “My sense of being called to preach the gospel, teach the Bible, and shepherd souls . . . crystallized out through my study of Baxter’s own ministry and his *Reformed Pastor*.”<sup>14</sup> Packer’s debt to Richard Baxter and John Owen, among others, speaks to the Puritans’ strong commitment to calling and confirming qualified pastors and elders.

**Richard Baxter.** In *The Reformed Pastor*, Richard Baxter vehemently urges aspiring and practicing ministers to assess their motivations and callings to the pastorate. After a lengthy description of the nature of being overseers of the local church, he contrasts healthy motivations for serving with dangerous reasons for desiring the office: “To be a bishop, or pastor, is not to be set up as an idol for the people to bow to . . . but it is to be the guide of sinners to heaven.”<sup>15</sup> Leaders both within and outside the church face similar temptations to serve for selfish gain, such as reputation or worldly success. However, Baxter strongly condemns these dangerous motives that not only affect the individual leader but the congregation he serves can also experience spiritual harm. Therefore, according to Baxter, potential and practicing ministers must consider the example and attitude of Christ as a servant, who set aside his own comfort to obey God the Father and meet the needs of the people.<sup>16</sup> Following the wisdom of the apostle Peter, Baxter reminds elders that their service must not be under coercion but voluntarily for the good of the people (1 Pet 5:2).

Baxter shows how the glory of God and the beauty of Christ’s church prove a

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<sup>14</sup> Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (1656; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2007), 125.

<sup>16</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 125.

healthy motive for desiring the call to ministry. Drawing upon the new identity of God's people, he describes the privilege of overseeing the church: "What a high honor is it to be but one of them, yea, but a doorkeeper in the house of God!"<sup>17</sup> Elders with a discouraged spirit to serve can follow the Puritan's wisdom to consider the infinite cost of Christ who purchased the salvation of the people the elders have been entrusted and called to serve. Elders show the worth of Christ and his gospel through their care for the flock and calling to oversee the church.

Baxter explains how the Holy Spirit calls the minister to the office through three ways. First, the Holy Spirit qualifies the man with the necessary character and competencies to faithfully fulfill his role. Second, the Holy Spirit prompts the people to receive the called man to the appropriate position at the right time. Third, the Holy Spirit guides both parties—the aspiring minister and the people—to agree to a "particular charge."<sup>18</sup> The calling of an elder is not reluctant obligation or apathy, but the man must desire to submit his own convenience to care for the church.

**John Owen.** John Owen stands as a premier theologian and church leader among the Puritans. A congregationalist pastor, he highlighted the local church's responsibility to ordain and call ministers to serve the congregation. Crawford Gribben describes an event where Owen supports his ecclesiological position on the calling of elders: "Owen preached on Ephesians 4:8, referring to the Geneva Bible's translation of Acts 14:23 to defend his claim that elders were appointed by a congregational vote."<sup>19</sup> Owen belonged to a group of Independent Congregationalists who developed a statement on its position in the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order. The document, written and

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<sup>17</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 131.

<sup>18</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Crawford Gribben, *An Introduction to John Owen: A Christian Vision for Every Stage of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 111.

adopted in 1658, set guidelines and declared the “independence of each local church, the right of each congregation to select its own officers, and the two church offices of pastor/teacher elder and deacon.”<sup>20</sup>

The Protestant movement, beginning with Martin Luther and John Calvin, reorganized church governments and the calling of its leaders to distance itself from the Roman Catholic Church. The Puritans adopted similar theological convictions to the first- and second-generation Reformers, including the people’s responsibility to call ministers who desire the office. However, one must not assume that all Protestant denominations adopted a congregational form of government. Presbyterianism arose during the post-Reformation period to include different levels of church government, including the national level (synod), regional level (classis), and local level (presbytery).<sup>21</sup> Though each group of churches structured authority differently, the apostle Paul’s directive remained: “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim 3:1). In other words, churches are better served by leaders who want to serve them.

**Jonathan Edwards.** The brilliant theologian and pastor Jonathan Edwards lived just outside of the Puritan time period of the seventeenth century; however, he echoes and even expands on the above-mentioned Christian thinkers. In an ordination service sermon in 1749, Edwards describes Jesus Christ as the standard of calling, character, and competence for church leaders. Devotion to Christ must precede the aspiring elder’s desire to serve the church; an elder is called first to Christ and then His church. Edwards describes a delicate balance for church leaders because on the one hand they are sheep under the guidance of Christ as the chief Shepherd, and on the other hand they are shepherds overseeing the flock of the local church. Edwards explains, “They are not only members

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<sup>20</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, 606-7.

<sup>21</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, 604.

of his church, but the officers of his kingdom, and the dignified servants of his family.”<sup>22</sup>  
The calling of a minister begins with his calling to Christ.

Next to a devotion to Christ is a desire to serve the people of the church. Edwards taught that elders must yearn for the salvation of people and their continued devotion to Christ: “Ministers should be animated in this by a great love to the souls of men and should be ready to spend and be spent for them; for Christ loved them and gave himself for them.”<sup>23</sup> Edwards holds the prayer life of Christ and His commitment to the ministers’ care as tools for inspiring a deeper conviction in the ministers’ calling. The two desires, both to Christ and His church, are distinct yet not separate requirements for a faithful elder in the local church.

Edwards emphasized the solemn charge of the individual elder’s calling, but the eighteenth-century theologian and pastor did not neglect the serious responsibility of the congregation to faithfully discern and receive an elder candidate. According to Edwards, the minister oversees the care of eternal souls, so the congregation must carefully consider the calling and qualifications of the proposed leader. Edwards notes,

And you, my brethren, as all of you have immortal souls to save, if you have considered the things that have been spoken, cannot but be sensible, that it not only concerns your elect pastor to take heed how he behaves himself in his great work, wherein he is to act as a coworker with Christ for your salvation; but that it infinitely concerns you how you receive him, and behave toward him.<sup>24</sup>

The congregation’s discernment and partnership with the elder does not end after his election and appointment to the office, but they must consistently pray for and encourage him as he carries out his responsibilities.

According to the theologians and church leaders previously examined in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods, the calling of an elder requires the internal

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<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “Christ, the Example of Ministers,” in *Sermons of Jonathan Edwards* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 456.

<sup>23</sup> Edwards, “Christ, the Example,” 459.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, “Christ, the Example,” 463.

desire or prompting within the man, and the receiving body, whether a local congregation or governing church delegation, must affirm the candidate's calling. The apostle Paul begins the qualifications of an elder with the man's desire to serve, but Paul then lists character and competency requirements for the receiving body to assess his fitness for the office.

### **The Character of an Elder**

A unique role within the church, an elder must follow the lead of God while leading the people of God through his words and example. Seeking to follow the example laid out by the apostles, the Reformers and the Puritans in the post-Reformation period believed church leaders must display character worthy of imitation by God's people (1 Cor 11:1).

### **Reformation Period**

The time prior to the Reformation saw decline in the moral and spiritual vitality of the church leaders. On his trip to Rome around 1510, the Augustinian monk, Martin Luther witnessed not devotion to Christ and His church. Alton Gansky describes the scene to be of but "wealth, immoral priests, and a general lack of piety."<sup>25</sup> Wanting to not only reform the theological convictions laid out in Scripture, the Reformers, namely Luther and Calvin, called local church leaders to live lives worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27).

**Martin Luther.** Martin Luther greatly emphasized the humility required of pastors and elders in their personal lives and their service within the church. In his Large Catechism, Luther colorfully warns pastors against thinking too highly of themselves and their learning, resulting in the pastors' downfall:

Therefore I again implore all Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to be doctors too soon, and imagine that they know everything (for imagination and cloth

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<sup>25</sup> Alton Gansky, *60 People Who Shaped the Church: Learning from Sinners, Saints, Rogues, and Heroes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 135.

unshrunk [and false weights] fall far short of the measure), but that they daily exercise themselves well in these studies and constantly treat them; moreover, that they guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security and vain imagination, but steadily keep on reading, teaching, learning, pondering, and meditating, and do not cease until they have made a test and are sure that they have taught the devil to death, and have become more learned than God Himself and all His saints.<sup>26</sup>

Though the competencies of elders will be discussed later in this chapter, one cannot ignore the intimate relationship between humility and learning. Leaders can fall into the temptation of believing they must be experts; otherwise, they will be exposed as incompetent or frauds. Luther encourages ministers to patiently endure learning and gaining experience to serve their congregations truthfully and honestly. His opening comment echoes James 3:1, where the writer speaks of the seriousness and humility of those desiring to teach: “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” Luther contending that ministers must steadily and patiently learn over time also alludes to Paul forbidding new converts being selected as elders (1 Tim 3:6). A new convert lacks the spiritual maturity to handle the issues related to leading a congregation and feeding the people spiritual nourishment needed for their growth.

**John Calvin.** In the *Institutes*, Calvin outlines the character requirements of church officers from a biblical and historical perspective, but this section will limit its focus to elders or pastors. Describing “sound doctrine and holy lives” as prerequisites for serving in the local church, Calvin desires to protect the reputation of the church within the community.<sup>27</sup> The unbelieving world must not have the opportunity or rationale to accuse the elders of godless character; therefore, though an elder remains a sinner, he must demonstrate consistent repentance for disobedience. Calvin describes prayer as result of humble repentance because the elder seeks the will and wisdom of God to fulfill

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<sup>26</sup> Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” accessed February 7, 2023, <https://www.wolfmueller.co/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/LargeCatechismOct17RevisionwithCover.pdf>, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.12.

his responsibilities: “But above all, they were earnest in prayer, imploring from God the spirit of wisdom and discernment.”<sup>28</sup> A person reveals humility not through words alone, but through his attitude and actions; genuine prayer uniquely combines all three to submit to the authority of God.

Calvin recognized that false believers attended church services with false assurance; therefore, the Reformer urged church leaders to practice church discipline for sinful behavior. These self-deceived individuals must be corrected with a firm yet gentle demeanor, similar to pastoral counseling in the twenty-first century.<sup>29</sup> Paul lists gentleness as a qualification for an elder because though the church leader must address erroneous belief and sinful behavior, his attitude must reflect the gentleness of God, who patiently leads people to repentance (1 Tim 3:2; Rom 2:4). Calvin taught that church leaders represent Christ as ambassadors in the world; therefore, their humble patience must reflect His character.<sup>30</sup>

Paul requires elders to faithfulness in their relationships, including marriage. Calvin prioritized an elder’s marriage as a beautiful picture of Christ’s marriage to the church. The elders must demonstrate an ability to serve both the church and his family. Scott Manetsch explains the significance and expectations placed upon these church leaders:

The construction of clerical marriage brought with it a new identity and new responsibilities for the Protestant minister: his spiritual calling as a “shepherd of souls” now extended beyond the parish church to his family and household, where he served as husband, father, son-in-law, and paterfamilias. It was expected that the pastor’s household, including his wife and children, should serve as an example to the surrounding community, a model of Christian piety and domestic tranquility for neighbors to emulate.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.12.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, *John Calvin*, 92.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.1.

<sup>31</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 100.



Manetsch's description reveals the consistency of character required of an elder according to Calvin. The church leader cannot afford to live a double life: devotion to Christ with the church and devotion to the devil at home, because the family, and by extension the church, will eventually see the hypocrisy in the elder's life. Present-day ministers may employ a stark distinction between their home life and career in the church, but in Calvin's Geneva, the "Christian's life with God was to be lived in and through the regular activities of household and community."<sup>32</sup>

An elder's humility before God and his family continues in his disposition toward the church. Calvin and his colleagues in Geneva resisted associating with an arrogant or greedy aspiring minister.<sup>33</sup> Church leaders must lay aside their own personal ambitions to seek the glory of God through the good of their congregation. Present-day elders may apply these principles by focusing on the people they are called to serve instead of using their current position to seek a more glamorous position.

### **Post-Reformation Period**

Recognizing the existence of a diversity of theological perspectives in the post-Reformation period, space limits this study to three influential church leaders and theologians from the reformed movement, namely the Puritans. Though John Owen and Richard Baxter lived thousands of miles from and were decades apart from Jonathan Edwards, these spiritual giants demonstrated and explained the importance of character in believers. Packer summarizes why the lives and writings of the Puritans apply to the character qualifications of present-day church leaders:

The answer, in one word, is maturity. Maturity is a compound of wisdom, goodwill, resilience, and creativity. The Puritans exemplified maturity; we don't. We are spiritual dwarfs. A much-traveled leader, a native American (be it said), has declared that he finds North American Protestantism, man-centered, manipulative, success-oriented, self-indulgent and sentimental, as it blatantly is, to be 3,000 miles wide

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<sup>32</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 107.

<sup>33</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 82.

and half an inch deep. The Puritans, by contrast, as a body were giants. They were great souls serving a great God.<sup>34</sup>

The examples and teachings of Baxter, Owen, and Edwards must not be followed and implemented blindly by elders for two reasons. First, as these men would affirm, only the Bible is the final authority in the lives of believers; therefore, wise elders must test their convictions and perspectives against the scriptures (1 John 4:1). Second, the cultural context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Christendom appears to have an increasing gap with Christianity in present-day America. Even within the United States in the twenty-first century, the religious landscape in the southern United States does not share the same challenges and concerns as northern states. In both instances, church leaders must carefully evaluate the timeless truths of Baxter, Owen, and Edwards against the authority of God's Word while considering their own church's context.

**Richard Baxter.** In his influential work, Baxter lays humility as a foundational element of effective and faithful pastoral ministry. Elders must be aware of the issues facing their congregations and its members along with their own personal temptations. Warning pastors of the pervasive nature of pride, Baxter writes, "This is a sin that hath too much interest in the best of us, but which is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in other men."<sup>35</sup> The sin prevalent in church leaders may affect their congregations in at least three ways. First, an undiscerning believer may blindly imitate the example of the leader's foolish behavior instead of evaluating the leader against the standards outlined in Scripture. Second, a prideful church leader may impede a believer's efforts to exercise his spiritual gifts due to the elder's controlling or jealous nature. Third, an elder who seeks glory for himself but disguises the acts as worship to God not only lies to his congregation but defames the holy name of God. Therefore, current and aspiring elders must honestly and accurately assess themselves in light of God's grace on and through

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<sup>34</sup> Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 137.

them (Rom 12:3). Baxter urges church leaders to recognize their sinful tendencies toward pride so they may root it out with humility in Christ.<sup>36</sup>

Baxter echoes Paul's requirement of patience among elders in the local church because each believer possesses different degrees of spiritual maturity. Comparing the minister to a medical doctor, Baxter describes the obstacles of obstinate congregation members. Though the distracted believer certainly has faults to which he must answer, the minister must take responsibility for his care over the people. Baxter writes, "He is unworthy to be a physician, who will be driven away from a phrenetic patient by foul words."<sup>37</sup> Faithful elders must consistently demonstrate patience toward their people to reflect the patience of Christ with sinful humanity and to seek the good of sometimes ignorant believers.

Using the analogy of a father with his children, Baxter implores elders to seek the good of their people out of love for them. The people must know their elders do not desire dishonest gain, but they willingly serve the congregation out of humble service (1 Pet 5:2).

**John Owen.** John Owen stressed the preaching of the Bible in the local church, but argued that pastors must develop a deep love for both God and their people in their ordinary lives. In other words, the character and competencies of a church leader are distinct yet not separable. The elders' humility will lead to a deepened prayer life and dependence upon God to give them the strength and endurance to bear the burdens of their people (Gal 6:1-2).

Owen summarized Paul's qualifications of elders to include five overall themes, but to limit the scope of the reasons to character, I shall only describe three. First, church leaders must have a love for their people that manifests in the faithful preaching of the

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<sup>36</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 146.

<sup>37</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 119.

gospel, the edification of their souls, and the protection from false teachers and “wolves.”<sup>38</sup> Pastors cannot view their office as means for gaining power, money, or prestige, but they must aim to glorify God by caring for God’s people in the local church. Second, alluding to Paul’s exhortation for elders to be sober and self-controlled (1 Tim 3:2), Owen urges these church leaders to diligently watch over the flock. Self-controlled and sober-minded leaders understand and implement priorities of their position to the exclusion of trivial or unnecessary distractions. Paul reminded Timothy of his charge to lead the church with the focus of a soldier who did not get entangled in civilian affairs (2 Tim 2:4). Third, Owen stressed the reputation of church leaders, both inside and outside the church: “As [Jesus] was absolutely in himself ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ so a conformity unto him in these things, and that in some degree of eminency above others, is required in them who are called unto this office.”<sup>39</sup> Owen’s description compares with the introductory trait of an elder being “above reproach” in his character (1 Tim 3:2) and maintaining a respectable reputation with those outside the church (1 Tim 3:7).

Owen masterfully welds the character and competencies of church leaders to show that a person’s love for the church will motivate him to develop necessary skills to deepen their love for God and obedience to His Word.

**Jonathan Edwards.** Edwards resolved to demonstrate the glory and character of God in every area of his life with every fiber of his being. As a young man, he developed standards, which he called resolutions, to guide his personal life and later his pastoral ministry. In his fourth resolution, Edwards resolved to “never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God; nor be, nor suffer

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<sup>38</sup> John Owen, *The Church and the Bible*, vol. 16, *True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government* in *The Works of John Owen* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1968), 9.

<sup>39</sup> Owen, *Church and the Bible*, 11.

it, if I can avoid it.”<sup>40</sup> His resolution echoes the spirit of Peter’s instructions for elders to live as examples for the church (1 Pet 5:2). In his own life, Edwards aimed to pursue holiness and devotion to God through his words, both on the page and in conversation, and actions; in his teaching, Edwards exhorted other ministers to follow his example: “Ministers should follow their Lord and Master in all those excellent virtues, and in that universal and eminent holiness of life, which he set an example of in this human nature.”<sup>41</sup> Christ is not only the destination to which elders must point their people, but they hold Christ as their example for how they must point.

Edwards described humility as a foundational qualification for ministers because humility reflected the example set by Christ (Phil 2:5-11). Prayer remains an important manifestation of humility in believers, especially elders, because earnest prayer requires the person to acknowledge his own position in comparison before God—a servant to his Master. The elders’ prayerful humility before God extends into their relationships and leadership of their congregations. Alluding to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), Edwards connects the attitudes of ministers to their actions with their people: “Ministers should be persons of the same quiet, lamb-like spirit that Christ was of, the same spirit of submission to God’s will, and patience under afflictions, and meekness towards men . . . of fervent love and extensive benevolence.”<sup>42</sup> Following Christ’s example, elders must seek the good of their people, namely Jesus Christ, and they accomplish their task by following His example of patient love toward their people.

Humility is not confined to the elders’ treatment of the people, but humility extends to their willingness to sacrifice for their people. This sacrifice includes time, energy, and financial resources to teach, discipline, pray, and counsel believers. Edwards

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<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards,” *Desiring God*, accessed February 4, 2023, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-resolutions-of-jonathan-edwards>.

<sup>41</sup> Edwards, “Christ, the Example,” 452.

<sup>42</sup> Edwards, “Christ, the Example,” 452.

argues that these leaders “should follow the example of Christ, in his readiness not only to labor, but suffer, for the salvation of souls, to spend and be spent for them.”<sup>43</sup> He urges these men to remember their efforts are not good in themselves, but they serve the greater good of seeking the good of their people, namely their salvation through Christ. Present-day elders should reflect upon the humility espoused by Edwards that shows through their sacrificial service to their people, which demonstrates the loving character of Christ and results in the salvation of souls.

### **The Competencies of an Elder**

The character of an elder gives the congregation an example to follow; therefore, elders must demonstrate humility and be above reproach (1 Tim 3:2). Though a visible demonstration remains important, elders must communicate God’s Word to the people through preaching, teaching, counseling, and praying. The pastor-theologians during the Reformation and post-Reformation period ministered to vastly different contexts compared with twenty-first century American churches, but discerning pastors may glean principles that apply to their congregations.

### **Reformation Period**

The Reformation elevated the priority of the preaching of the Scriptures in the church, so church leaders developed competencies to clearly communicate their message to the congregation. However, the priority of the sermon did not allow for pastors or elders to neglect their other responsibilities. These church leaders oversaw church discipline and the administration of the sacraments, including communion and baptism.<sup>44</sup>

**Martin Luther.** Luther argued that pastors must have strong abilities to teach for the protection of the people against dangerous beliefs and the edification of the people.

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<sup>43</sup> Edwards, “Christ, the Example,” 455.

<sup>44</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, 602.

In *On the Councils and the Church*, he warns pastors to be on guard against different enemies against God's people, including the pope, Satan, and other heretical factions. The primary way pastors protect believers from spiritual attacks is to faithfully teach the Scriptures. Therefore, according to Luther, pastors must have communication skills comparable to a schoolteacher because a teacher can distill complex truths into a simple explanation.<sup>45</sup>

Luther taught that pastors bless their congregations when they communicate the gospel message in their preaching and teaching. In his commentary on Galatians, Luther connects the blessing of Abraham of the nations to the minister's job to bless his people by faithfully carrying out his responsibilities: "And this is the priestly office and continual sacrifice of the Church in the New Testament, which distributeth this blessing by preaching, by ministering of the Sacraments, by absolving the penitent, by comforting the broken-hearted, by distributing the word of grace which Abraham had."<sup>46</sup> Each of these responsibilities requires different competencies and skills. First, a minister should explain the Scriptures clearly so the congregation can understand the significance of passages and apply it to their situation. Second, according to Luther, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper dispensed God's grace to His people. Again, the minister must have the ability to communicate why and how the Christian practices are observed. Third, ministers should listen to the needs and sinful temptations of their people, which can occur in pastoral counseling. After listening and asking questions to assess the idols within the person, the minister can offer words of comfort from the Scriptures that include the forgiveness of sins promised by God. Bob Kelleman appropriately summarizes Luther's emphasis on communicating the scriptures as a foundational competency among pastors:

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<sup>45</sup> Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 228.

<sup>46</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos, 1997), 238.

“Luther never made a dichotomy between preaching and counseling; both were gospel-centered, Word-based ministries.”<sup>47</sup>

**John Calvin.** Calvin and his pastoral colleagues centered the development of their competencies around learning mostly notably through books. Manetsch describes the significance of literature for the Reformers in Geneva in not only their pastoral ministry but their personal lives: “The daily lives of Geneva’s ministers were filled with books. Whether serving in a parish in the city or countryside, the ministers were members of a literate humanist culture that was shaped by and engaged with the ideas and opinions found on the printed page.”<sup>48</sup> Books informed and strengthened the theological convictions of the ministers and captured their imaginations to showcase the glory of God to their congregation and colleagues. However, reading was not the end for these Protestant pastors but a means to protect their congregations from dangerous doctrines and provide orthodox teachings to the believers. Contrary to popular misconceptions about Calvin and his successors, the theologian and pastor cautioned his fellow pastors to emphasize practical theological matters over complex and complicated issues.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, church leaders must develop skills in both theology and communication to clearly explain the Scriptures to the people.

An elder’s understanding of the scriptures and theology was not limited to preaching sermons, but Calvin believed the Bible guides the lives of believers, both with the gathered church and in the lives of individual believers. The Reformers elevated the preaching of the Word over the sacraments more than their Roman Catholic opponents; however, Calvin believed theology applied to the life of the church, including the

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<sup>47</sup> Bob Kellemen, “Martin Luther: Reformer of Pastoral Counseling,” *9Marks Journal* (Fall 2017), <https://www.9marks.org/article/martin-luther-reformer-of-pastoral-counseling/>.

<sup>48</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 221.

<sup>49</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 235.



sacraments. Defying the Catholic categorization of seven sacraments, he argued that since only two sacraments are described in the Bible, baptism and communion were the officially means of God's dispensed grace.<sup>50</sup> The pastors' responsibilities during baptism shows the significance of theological knowledge and communication for Calvin. Manetsch outlines the typical baptism service, which includes a prayer, an explanation of baptism within God's plan of redemption, and a charge to the parents and family members.<sup>51</sup>

Calvin did not limit pastoral responsibilities to the church service, but believed visitation to individuals and families supported the preaching of God's Word. He argued that pastoral visits held several functions and provided benefits both to the minister and members. First, the pastor could assess the spiritual condition of the person or family and offer contextualized counsel, whether in corrective action or encouragement. The pastor may have used the time to help members prepare for the Lord's Supper by offering the opportunity for confession and repentance. Second, pastors examined the family members' knowledge and communication of the catechism to ensure they understood the tenets of reformed Christianity. A person's ability to explain the catechism was a key factor in the pastor's approval for his entrance into taking communion. Third, pastors visited individuals to mediate personal disputes among community members.<sup>52</sup>

According to Calvin, elders must excel in both theological understanding and articulation to edify their congregation, encourage the discouraged, correct the wayward, and oppose the heretical. Present-day Christians may take high literacy rates for granted, but the in sixteenth century, pastors were among the most educated individuals in the towns. Therefore, they taught both children and adults the fundamentals of learning so that they may comprehend the things of God and obey His commands and statutes.

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<sup>50</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 256.

<sup>51</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 259.

<sup>52</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 281-83.

## Post-Reformation Period

The Reformers stressed the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, meaning the Bible is the final and supreme authority in the lives of believers. Puritans Baxter and Owen, followed by Edwards, continued emphasizing the Bible's prominence by training and exhorting church leaders to consistently study and clearly communicate God's Word to their people. Though preaching remained the primary means of instructing the people, these pastors, especially Baxter, catechized families in their homes while encouraging individuals with pastoral counseling.

**Richard Baxter.** Baxter exemplified pastoral competencies with his unique combination of modeling and instructing ministers to evangelize and edify individuals and congregations of believers. Packer elevates Baxter as a model for a pastor-evangelist. Though Baxter possessed glaring faults, "as a pastoral evangelist, however, Baxter was incomparable. His achievement at Kidderminster was amazing. England had not before seen a ministry like it, and by the late 1650s Baxter was a widely acclaimed role-model for pastors throughout Puritan England."<sup>53</sup> Baxter believed that pastors must regard teaching as their first and most important duty. The conviction to teach manifested in both public gatherings and private conversations. Therefore, Baxter led prayer meetings and Bible studies to instruct the people in the Christian faith. The *Reformed Pastor* author deeply believed in the reality of sin within the hearts of men, so Baxter implored ministers to preach the sound truth about the gospel message.

The consistent preaching of God's truth led to the practices of church discipline and catechizing congregation members in small groups and individually. Baxter believed that individual instruction was among the most effective means of discipleship.

“Moreover, we shall have the best opportunity to impress the truth upon their hearts, when

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<sup>53</sup> Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 304.

we speak to each individual's particular necessity."<sup>54</sup> There are three implications from Baxter's approach to individual discipleship. First, pastors must not only know the truth of God's Word for themselves but must clearly and comprehensively communicate the truth to their congregation. The combination of knowledge and communication constitutes a required trait in Paul's list: "Able to teach" (1 Tim 3:2). Second, faith is not confined to intellectual assent, but must affect the person's will, desire, and attitudes. The pastor aims to teach the whole person, not just his mental capacities. Third, the pastor must have a general understanding of the sinful tendencies of his congregation, and a specific knowledge of the struggles facing the individual. The former requires elders to learn cultural issues facing their context, patterns of sin within the congregation, and prayerfully consider methods of correction and discipline.<sup>55</sup> The latter requires the pastor to listen and ask questions to discern the issues beneath the surface. Present-day pastors can glean insight from Baxter's individualized instruction that may translate to pastoral counseling. Pastors must not divorce theological truths from the concerns and problems of life among their congregation members because God has designed human beings and the Scriptures describe the tendencies of humanity.<sup>56</sup>

In his instructions to pastors regarding catechizing individuals and families, Baxter offers timeless wisdom, including listening skills, privacy, and asking follow-up questions. Pastors must demonstrate humility by listening, so that they might understand and address their people's needs. The wise pastor combines listening and asking questions to evaluate the person's biblical and theological knowledge so that he can appropriately discern further instruction. Similarly, if a pastor converses with a person

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<sup>54</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 175.

<sup>55</sup> Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 119.

<sup>56</sup> Heath Lambert, *Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 17.

with limited knowledge of the Scriptures and little affinity for theological matters, then he must reframe his process with simple questions and answers. “When you perceive that they do not understand the meaning of your question, you must draw out their answer by an equivalent, or expository question.”<sup>57</sup> Baxter explains that a person may have ignorance of Christian doctrines or may have erroneous beliefs altogether. Regardless of the person’s background, elders must intentionally develop listening skills and the competency to ask effective questions to congregation members. Humility leads one to speak less and listen more so he can show his care for the person’s situation and the desire to truly recommend wise counsel and instruction.

**John Owen.** Owen believed that pastors have the primary responsibility to feed the flock or teach the congregation from God’s Word.<sup>58</sup> Reflecting upon Christ’s example, Owen describes in *The Church and the Bible* three main tasks within the pastor’s responsibility to teach the people. First, the pastors must consistently pray for the overall spiritual health of the people in his private study. Pastors cannot forget that though people are entrusted to their care, believers belong to God (1 Pet 5:4). Therefore, church leaders should consistently bring the needs of the congregation to the Chief Shepherd. Second, pastors must develop skills to communicate the truths of the Scripture faithfully and effectively to the congregation. Owen urges the pastors to recognize that different seasons of ministry and life call for different edification of the saints. Third, because knowledge of needs requires knowledge of the person, pastors should engage individually with people for “personal admonition, exhortation, consolation, instruction, as their particular cases do require.”<sup>59</sup> Pastors can direct the scriptural truths to the specific situations of their people, which may be accomplished through pastoral counseling or catechesis.

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<sup>57</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 175.

<sup>58</sup> Owen, *Church and the Bible*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Owen, *Church and the Bible*, 11.

Owen stressed the pastors' need for continual learning so that he may preach the Word, counsel the people, and protect the flock. The protection of the flock requires church leaders to understand the dangerous teachings and practices prevalent within the community. The skill of learning combined with an active concern for the congregation leads to what Owen calls "a diligent watch." Recognizing that believers cannot be taken out the world, pastors must take care "over their own flocks against the craft of seducers from without, or the springing up of any bitter root of error among themselves."<sup>60</sup> Like other Puritans, Owen emphasized the teaching responsibilities of church leaders so that the people would be guided by the Spirit as they obey the Scriptures.

**Jonathan Edwards.** Edwards focused his efforts on the singular pursuit of God in every manner of life. George Marsden captures the intensity of the theological giant: "Edwards was also driven by ambition to serve the coming of God's kingdom in some great way not just in Northampton but throughout the world."<sup>61</sup> Edwards intended to fervently serve God in ways that some present-day church leaders may object. John Piper, who has expressed high acclaim and appreciation for Edwards, believed Edwards did not consistently engage in pastorally wise practices with his congregation members: "He did not visit regularly from house to house . . . this meant that he could spend thirteen or fourteen hours a day in his study."<sup>62</sup> Marsden expounds on Piper's concern with a more detailed context. "[Edwards] was not good at small talk, often not of a sociable frame of mind, and such routine calls sapped his meager energies and were too time-consuming. If parishioners had special needs, he welcomed counseling them on spiritual things in his study."<sup>63</sup> Resisting making a value judgment of Edwards' priorities in his pastoral duties,

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<sup>60</sup> Owen, *Church and the Bible*, 36.

<sup>61</sup> George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2003), 134.

<sup>62</sup> John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 54.

<sup>63</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 135.

the pastor-theologian did not exemplify a well-rounded elder who aims to know, lead, feed, and protect the congregation and its members.<sup>64</sup>

Edwards argued that pastors serve their congregation most effectively through the preaching and teaching of the Bible. While he was remarkably well read, he devoted considerable time to studying directly from the Scriptures. Piper describes Edwards's example set for future elders: "He gave himself assiduously to study the very words of God, and would not allow them to lie by him neglected. This was the wellspring of his profoundly Biblical re-thinking of great theological questions."<sup>65</sup> Church leaders can become enamored with the latest Christian books or leadership strategies, which may lead to minimizing their knowledge and application of the Scriptures.

### **Conclusion**

Present-day elders have significant differences with the theologians and leaders in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. First, typical American church leaders have considerably less influence within society compared with their theological predecessors because the United States and Europe have gradually become less religious.<sup>66</sup> The Reformers and English Puritans lived in a world where Christian belief and behavior was both assumed and expected. Calvin's Geneva was one such example:

Sunday was a day of worship and spiritual rest in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century Geneva. Once a year, the Small Council dispatched a town crier throughout the city to remind the inhabitants that they were required by law to attend the Wednesday morning prayer service as well as the Sunday morning and afternoon services each week . . . attendance at sermons, celebrating the sacraments, treating Sunday as a sacred day—these were civic duties that confirmed the confessional unity and political cohesiveness of the community.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 102.

<sup>65</sup> Piper, *God's Passion*, 56.

<sup>66</sup> Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitational to the Skeptical* (New York: Viking, 2016), 9.

<sup>67</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 130.

Without detailing the challenges and opportunities of present-day elders compared with Calvin, Luther, or Owen, one may confidently conclude the vast cultural differences. Therefore, pastors and elders must adapt their methods of proclamation and correction to congregations and communities within increasingly skeptical and even hostile environments.

The cultural differences do not, however, nullify the exploration of historical lives and writings to glean timeless truths that may be applied to the present. To the contrary, an increasingly diverse society requires church leaders to engage in cross-cultural leadership by learning the values and customs of people groups and specific individuals.<sup>68</sup>

Church leaders should note the following considerations from this historical investigation. First, character matters. Each of the five pastor-theologians stressed humility as a foundational trait for church leaders because a right view of God, oneself, and others encourages deeper dependence on God's grace and motivation to faithfully lead God's people. Elders must listen to the needs of their people so they can accurately discern appropriate solutions. Baxter connects the humble attitude required by elders with knowing the situation of their congregation members. "We must not ordinarily go beyond the capacities of our people, nor teach them the perfection, that have not learned the first principles of religion."<sup>69</sup> Elders learn the specific issues of their congregation in two general ways. First, by diligently studying the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand the sinful tendencies of man in his rebellion against God along with the residual issues affecting individuals and societies. Second, elders should understand specific issues related to their congregation by listening, asking questions, and being involved in the lives of individuals and families. With an intimate knowledge of the

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<sup>68</sup> James E. Plueddemann, *Leading across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2009), 213.

<sup>69</sup> Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 113.

Scriptures and consistent presence with their people, church elders can point their people to the gospel and Christ's redeeming power.

Second, faithful elders serve as a conduit of God's truth and grace through his teaching, both in words and example. The five pastor-theologians possessed different gifts and capacities, but each man used his abilities to mine the truths of the Scriptures for the benefit of the church. Paul insisted that elders must be able to teach, must understand God's Word, and must communicate the truths to their people (1 Tim 3:2). Not all elders must preach Sunday morning sermons, but they must be able to teach groups or individuals the doctrines of the Christian faith, whether in small groups or classes. During an ordination service, Edwards urged ministers to remember the reason for the preaching and teaching of God's Word: "Ministers are also frequently called shepherds and are directed to feed the flock of Christ, which he purchased with his own blood."<sup>70</sup> The humility of elders motivates them to develop the necessary competencies to lead and feed their congregation, but the same humility reminds them that the church ultimately belongs to Christ.

God gave leaders and pastors to the church so that the people of God might grow in their obedience to God and love for one another (Eph 4:11-12). The contexts of the Reformation and post-Reformation eras differ greatly from the challenges of the present day; however, elders must consider the methods these spiritual giants derived from the Scriptures to serve their own congregation so that churches in the twenty-first century can apply the truth to the needs of their people. Piper exhorts students of church history, especially pastors, to exercise caution when applying the methods of earlier church traditions. "It takes wisdom to discern how the strengths of an old saint should appear in another time."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Edwards, "Christ, the Example," 458.

<sup>71</sup> Piper, *God's Passion*, 50.



## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The Shepherd Leadership Team carries the responsibility to oversee the teaching and vision of Judson Church by supporting ministry staff, training leaders of ministry programs, and participating in the discipleship process. Each of the important responsibilities requires the shepherd leaders to maintain faithful character and develop skills and competencies. Each of the current leaders possesses remarkable skills and experience in leading in the local church and in his respective profession. However, each man also has the humility to recognize weaknesses related to leadership. First, since every leadership situation involves different circumstances and people, shepherd leaders must intentionally invest time and effort into learning new skills to meet the diversity of challenges and opportunities. Second, future leaders must develop the necessary competencies to fulfill the leadership demands when the current leaders can no longer lead, whether due to moving away, retiring, or voluntarily stepping down.

The growing need for an intentionally structured leadership training program at Judson Church led me to create an eight-session curriculum and implement the program with the current Shepherd Leadership Team. The intention of the curriculum was to inspire strong desire for leadership development, introduce necessary and urgent competencies related to the Shepherd Leadership Team, and to show the effectiveness of training volunteer leaders in the local church.

This chapter will describe the process of preparing and implementing the eight-session training program for the shepherd leaders. First, I will outline the preparation stage, including gathering data from a carefully selected expert panel, consisting of both internal and external leaders to Judson Church, to evaluate which competencies to include in the

training program. This section will also outline how the curriculum was created and the rationale for ordering the selected competencies. Second, I will describe the implementation of the eight-session curriculum with the shepherd leaders of Judson Church. I will explain the learning objectives of each session along with major activities and the response of the participants. Finally, I will offer brief remarks on the results of my stated goals for the project, especially the implementation of the curriculum.

### **Preparation for the Training Program**

The eight-session training program intended to increase the competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church. To accomplish this overall objective, I needed to complete a series of steps and utilize a variety of tools to create and implement the curriculum, including gathering data, selecting an expert panel, analyzing the data, and writing the curriculum. The steps are organized into the first three goals of my project: identifying and selecting leadership competencies related to the Shepherd Leadership Team, assessing the competencies using a survey, and writing a curriculum to increase the selected competencies.

#### **Goal 1**

The first goal of this project was to identify appropriate leadership competencies for the Shepherd Leadership Team. My first task was to assemble an expert panel of leaders to select competencies necessary for a shepherd leader to effectively lead. The panel consisted of volunteer and staff ministry leaders within Judson Church with a strong knowledge of the shepherd leaders and their responsibilities. I selected two external leaders, pastors from local churches in the Joliet area, to select important competencies from the list.<sup>1</sup> After analyzing the results of the survey, I settled on three skills: verbal communication, leadership development, and conflict resolution. Along with the three

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 3.

competencies, I planned to begin the program with an overview of leadership in the local church by examining selected biblical passages. I also planned to end the program by teaching humility and teachableness as necessary character traits, to remind leaders that their growth is never complete. My intention to combine character and skill-based competencies into one program demonstrated the need for leaders to grow in both areas once the structured program ended.

## **Goal 2**

The second goal of this project was to assess the identified leadership competencies of the members of the Shepherd Leadership Team. This assessment was completed using a twenty-four-question survey that offered a range of questions related to leadership development, verbal communication, and conflict resolution. I sent the survey to the five shepherd leaders with instructions to return the completed document within three days; each participant responded with his results within two days. The self-assessment tool instructed participants to rate their own abilities or confidence by choosing to strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, or strongly agree. These six choices offered participants a range, so they could improve their competencies through the program.

The participants rated their abilities lowest in the area of verbal communication, especially theological topics. Therefore, I decided the curriculum would emphasize studying and discussing biblical passages within each of the sessions so that regardless of the competency addressed, participants would gain experience with theological issues. For example, in the opening session I planned to include two important passages related to leadership: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. The participants would analyze the character and competency qualifications of the church leaders, and then present the rationale for each of the traits listed in the passages.

I assigned a number value to each of the available responses, with 1 representing “strong disagree” and 6 representing “strongly agree.” The average score of the twenty-

four-question survey from all five respondents was 4.8. With the gathered data from the participants and the selected competencies, I began writing the curriculum for the eight-session training program.

### **Goal 3**

The third goal of this project was to create a curriculum using the assessment data to strengthen the identified competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team. The surveys and the expert panel advice provided necessary direction for the competencies, but the next step required significant planning and organization. To complete the third goal, I needed to create an eight-session curriculum to address the three competencies recommended by the expert panel. The following section covers the creation of the curriculum, including outlining the topics, describing learning objectives for each session, compiling necessary information, and creating relevant exercises and questions to enhance the sessions.

**Outlining the curriculum.** Once I received feedback from the expert panel, I needed to select the order of the competencies to teach. Recognizing the importance of an introduction to the leadership principles and rationale for leadership development, the first session would serve as an introduction. The second and third sessions would explore verbal communication, an important and multi-faceted skill for shepherd leaders at Judson Church. Following verbal communication, I selected leadership development as the next competency in the fourth and fifth sessions. Over the past year, the shepherd leaders have recognized recruitment and equipping of future and current leaders to be a neglected priority at Judson Church, but they collectively aim to address this concern. The final competency explored conflict resolution in the sixth and seventh session. Shepherd leaders must model humility and unity even during disagreements, and they should have skills to help congregation members navigate conflict in a godly manner. The last session

summarizes the entire training program and reinforces humility and teachability as foundational values for continued learning.

**Focusing the curriculum.** The selected topics cover a wide range of directions and emphases, so the next step required me to narrow down the scope of the curriculum. To limit the content and supporting exercises into manageable teaching sessions, I needed to create learning objectives for each session. Using Bloom’s Taxonomy to identify measurable and relevant outcomes, I created between two and four goals to guide and focus the sessions. Bloom’s Taxonomy categorizes different aspects of knowledge using actions to describe and measure the process.<sup>2</sup> I used the tool to vary the learning objectives so that the learning might be more comprehensive. Selecting the learning objectives for all eight sessions prior to writing an individual session helped keep the curriculum cohesive and unified. The sessions were intentionally built upon knowledge gained from previous lessons, which required me to keep the overall purpose of increasing competencies in mind as I developed individual learning objectives and the corresponding activities.

**Shaping the curriculum.** The shepherd leaders indicated in the survey results and through individual conversations that they desired to grow in their knowledge and communication of the Scriptures to better serve the congregation. After defining learning objectives for each session topic, I selected appropriate passages to address directly or indirectly address the competencies. In the first session I outlined two critical passages related to church eldership: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Although both authors address the nature of leadership, Paul and Peter emphasize different attitudes and characteristics. Each shepherd leader has extensive knowledge of the New Testament; however, the team has little experience analyzing the Scriptures together. Therefore, I

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<sup>2</sup> Iowa State University Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, “Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy,” accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.celt.iastate.edu/instructional-strategies/effective-teaching-practices/revised-blooms-taxonomy/>.

determined to root the exercises and activities within the lesson in the truths and principles found in the Bible. For the sessions, I utilized the grading rubric to guide my own decisions regarding the format and content. During the writing of the content, I consulted two individuals on the expert panel for informal feedback to ensure the direction was clear and the content was aligned with my learning objectives.

**Varying the curriculum.** After formulating and compiling the content that would lead to the completion of the learning objectives, I developed different exercises and activities to reinforce the content. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck note that teaching someone requires three aspects: knowledge, experience, and coaching. Most teaching environments emphasize transferring knowledge but offer little experience and almost no coaching or feedback to the participants. I wanted to diversify the learning environment for two reasons. First, since education may have the perception of being boring or monotonous, I wanted to create an experience for the shepherd leaders to enjoy learning new competencies so they would be more inclined to participate in future training sessions. Second, different exercises enable participants to practice and experience the skills while the entire group can offer feedback. For example, in the third session participants will role play a conversation about the gospel with one another. To begin the exercise, I will explain the criteria for the conversation, including time limits and content to consider. Then, the individuals will implement the exercise before the group. Though I will offer coaching, each participant is invited to share feedback.

**Assessing the curriculum.** To evaluate the sessions for clarity and biblical faithfulness, I submitted the documents to the expert panel for review along with the rubric for the panel's guidance.<sup>3</sup> The expert panel consisted of two senior pastors in the Joliet area, a ministry director at Judson Church, the children's ministry director at Judson

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1.

Church, and the finance team leader at Judson Church. The internal panel members have a strong knowledge of the responsibilities of the Shepherd Leadership Team and the current members of the team. The external panel members possess knowledge and experience to train and evaluate church elders. The panel's wisdom helped shape the consistency of the training program, which will be helpful to develop training programs for other ministry teams. Once the curriculum was evaluated, I was ready to begin the implementation of the training program with the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church.

### **Implementation of the Training Program**

The next step in the project was to implement the training program with the Shepherd Leadership Team. I explained to the five non-staff shepherd leaders that the sessions would coincide with their schedules, but the sessions would be held at least once per week. Each leader understood the commitment of the program, which allowed the program to be completed within an eight-week period.

#### **Session 1**

The shepherd leaders completed the first session of the training program at the beginning of Judson Church's annual leadership retreat. The first session introduced the topic of leadership and the importance of developing competencies to serve the congregation. The curriculum was divided into three sections: leadership defined and described in a local church context, an analysis of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and an analysis of 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Though many definitions of leadership exist, Justin Irving and Mark Strauss clearly describe leadership as "a process by which leaders and followers partner together for the purpose of achieving common goals and a shared vision."<sup>4</sup> Working from this definition, the shepherd leaders applied its components to their roles within Judson Church.

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<sup>4</sup> Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 1.

For example, one leader identified how leading people requires time, energy, patience, and focus to complete the goals. In other words, leading people is a process. As the instructor, I alternated between guiding the discussion and presenting new information. Expecting the first section to be completed quickly, participants received and discussed the information with great interest and enthusiasm. Each man not only offered his own perspective, but some added additional insight and applied the definition of leadership to specific situations or ministries with Judson Church.

## **Session 2**

The second session introduced verbal communication as the first competency within the training program. Each of the shepherd leaders has experience and education related to communication, including one lawyer, a chemist, an engineer, and a businessman. Though the leaders possess credentials, they recognized the need for further development in communications to the congregation.

The session covered three important facets for verbal communication: clarity, conciseness, and correctness. I opened the section on correct information by referencing the “God, who never lies” (Titus 1:2). Accurate information may seem an obvious trait in effective communication, but the shepherd leaders discussed potentially harmful phrases in large and small group settings. For example, exaggerating numbers or statements is not only a form of lying, but the audience may lose trust in the communicator. One leader also pointed out the danger in using the phrases “always” and “never” when counseling couples, such as, “He never helps around the house.” The clarity section included an exercise of identifying unclear or unhelpful information in a Sunday morning announcement for a fellowship event, which the shepherd leaders then rewrote with clearer explanations. The conciseness section included a discussion of the dangers associated with neglecting this communication trait, including an inattentive audience. I concluded the session by inquiring which of the three traits was the greatest struggle for each leader.



I asked the shepherd leaders to make suggestions for the program's improvement as the training progresses. One man recommended longer time allotted for the sessions because though the content was focused, more discussion might provide additional insights. In preparation for the training program, I allotted thirty to forty-five minutes for each session because each leader had time constraints due to family, work, and other ministry-related obligations.

### **Session 3**

In the third session I applied the principles of verbal communication to the small group and one-on-one settings. Participants analyzed potential dangers associated with being unclear and not concise in speaking with individuals, including a loss of trust with the person. Building upon the second session I introduced the concept and skill of listening by having participants review James 1:19-20 to discern how the skill applies to leading individuals and small groups. To demonstrate how listening involves more than just not speaking, I asked participants to create a list of questions and biblical responses to a hypothetical situation that would result in a gospel conversation. I divided the group into partners so each person could practice listening and formulating responses. As the men worked together, I made notes of their interactions, including taking a picture of the partners conversing. When I reconvened the group, I shared that the hidden purpose of the exercise was to reveal the importance of non-verbal communication while listening. For example, one participant leaned forward while the other person was speaking, which indicated interest. Another participant sat with his hands in his lap compared with a usual crossed-arms posture. The group reflected upon how these subtle yet significant details communicate to those they lead.

### **Session 4**

The fourth session introduced leadership development as the second competency within the training program by examining 2 Timothy 2:2 as a foundational passage.

Though the participants were familiar with the passage, we spent time analyzing its meaning and applying the principles to the context at Judson Church, including the importance of identifying and investing in current and potential leaders. I asked participants why they believe few leaders intentionally develop other leaders. One participant believes that ego or pride hinders a person's desire because the leader is afraid of losing his position within the organization or being overshadowed by the emerging leader. Another reason is a lack of knowledge or ability to train others. The latter reason helped transition the session into the main information and exercise section.

I explained that teaching is often regarded as lecture or discussion centered, but there are other necessary components, including providing experiences and offering coaching or feedback. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck describe the three-step process of training as knowledge, experience, and coaching, to provide individuals with a well-rounded learning environment.<sup>5</sup> After describing how each component builds upon the other, I asked participants to describe negatives if one of the components were removed. If the knowledge section is removed, then the individual may not have the necessary information to understand or complete the task. If the experience is removed, then the skill may remain an abstract concept. If the feedback or coaching component is removed, then the individual may not know how he might improve.

I ended the session by assigning participants to implement the knowledge, experience, and coaching process with one congregation member. Each participant was asked to select a skill needed to fulfill his responsibilities as a shepherd leader at Judson Church, such as prayer, teaching, or counseling. Participants would then teach the skill to the individual giving knowledge, whether through lecture, a video clip, a discussion, or reading a section of Scripture. The individual must be given an opportunity to practice the skill under the guidance of the shepherd leader, who can then provide feedback.

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 189.

## Session 5

I began the fifth session by reviewing the homework assignment from the fourth session. Each participant taught a skill to another individual, such as a family or congregation member, by giving knowledge, providing an experience to practice the skill, and offering feedback. Participants each shared their experience, including teaching the tech team volunteers how to communicate, evaluating a sermon using Judson Church's statement of faith, and praying with food pantry volunteers. The homework assignment was designed to reinforce the information presented at the fourth session and to show the shepherd leaders the importance and practicality of developing others.

After the homework discussion I led participants through a theological study of Ephesians 4:11-16 to explore the ends and means of leadership development within the local church. Each participant immediately recognized the importance of equipping church members to do the work of ministry instead of allowing believers to devolve into spectators and consumers of spiritual content. I explained how the teaching process they had just completed is a template for equipping individual members of our congregation—regardless of their leadership status or potential—to utilize their own gifts to serve the congregation and the community.

I alternated between lecture style explanations of key information and using Socratic teaching methods to pull insight from participants. I found the latter teaching method to be more effective in this learning environment because the shepherd leaders have extensive knowledge in theological and ministry matters. When I opened the time up for discussion by asking a question, each man offered a thoughtful response. The session's concluding question combined a leader's character and competence by asking, why should a leader combine truth and love to those he leads and equips for ministry? The men cited Ephesians 4:15 and then proceeded to address the character of Christ as an aim of every Christian, which includes both truth and love. The fifth session proved to be the most interactive and spirited in the training program so far because the shepherd leaders

had shared their desire for leadership development within the team and to other congregation members.

## **Session 6**

The sixth session introduced the last competency in the training program: conflict resolution. I explained how conflict resolution has many facets and countless scenarios, but the sixth session would focus on identifying some root causes of conflict with others. I introduced the material by examining James 4:1-2 with participants to distill scriptural insights on the causes of conflict. I followed up the discussion by asking how sin affects a person's judgement of a situation involving conflict. The shepherd leaders recently read Paul David Tripp's book, *LEAD* with great enthusiasm, and the book was cited to show that people, including leaders, will have clouded judgement.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, wise and effective leaders demonstrate humility and grace when helping others resolve conflict.

The next section of the session explored Proverbs 18:13 to connect listening to resolving conflict. I have utilized this verse repeatedly in pastoral counseling sessions with individuals and couples because, as the counselor, I do not want to presume I have all correct information. Therefore, I must listen and occasionally ask questions to learn about the situation before offering any insights. The shepherd leaders applied the listening concept to their own responsibilities within the church, including mediating conflicts with quarreling congregation members.

By the sixth session I had made three observations. First, participants prefer group teaching sessions compared with individual conversations. Each man freely shares his perspective and readily asks clarifying questions. Second, the shepherd leaders repeatedly express appreciation for the leadership training program because they have a

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<sup>6</sup> Paul David Tripp, *LEAD: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 83.

clear understanding of their responsibilities found in Scripture, and they are given practical tools for fulfilling their roles. Third, each participant made noticeable improvement in his disposition toward leadership at Judson Church. For example, one participant intentionally altered his body posture to appear less intimidating to others by uncrossing his arms when speaking and putting his hands in his lap. These small shifts contributed to a more relaxed learning environment than I anticipated.

### **Session 7**

I began the seventh session with a discussion of the homework assignment to read “Assume You are Wrong” by Tim Shorey, and each participant responded to interesting points in the article and applications to the Shepherd Leadership Team.<sup>7</sup> In the first session, each man hesitated to share his perspective, but during this session each man passionately explained his opinion while the others attentively listened. I noted that the non-verbal communication had changed over the past couple of sessions. The men were making stronger eye contact, leaning forward to listen, and uncrossing arms to show a more open posture. While I quietly observed this change in the participants, one man openly shared the observation with enthusiasm and appreciation.

The next activity tied the article to Scripture as we investigated Hebrews 3:12-13 to discern the root causes of conflict within ministry teams. Combining wisdom from the Bible passage and the article, I asked, “How does reminding ourselves and one another of our sinful tendencies and need for God’s grace lead to humility?” One participant shared that since others are aware of his potential pitfalls, the group has the permission and responsibility to hold him accountable. Another participant shared that being aware of his own areas of weakness could inspire greater humility toward others who have similar dispositions.

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<sup>7</sup> Tim Shorey, “Assume You are Wrong,” Gospel Coalition, January 21, 2021, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/assume-you-are-wrong/>.

I ended the session with a reminder that though conflict is inevitable in a fallen world, we can love one another by speaking the truth out of an attitude of love. We must look to Jesus as not only a perfect example, but our substitutionary solution to our greatest conflict: our sin against God. Once we recognize the gospel's power to change us, then we can freely love others with humility and conviction.

## **Session 8**

In the last session I changed the venue from a smaller office to a large classroom with a table. In past sessions, space within the church building was an issue, but during the last session a larger classroom was available. I began the session by summarizing the three competencies: verbal communication, leadership development, and conflict resolution. I explained that the final session would tie the skill-based competencies together with two-character traits: humility and teachableness.

In the first section I asked one participant to read 1 Timothy 4:13-16 so we could identify the responsibilities of a church leader. After identifying the responsibilities in the passage, each man explained how the text applies to being a shepherd leader at Judson Church. For example, the shepherd leaders must ensure that the doctrine being taught aligns with Scripture (1 Tim 4:16), which can be fulfilled by actively teaching the congregation and instructing individual believers.

I concluded the session by asking each participant about his own leadership development and the skills he would like to address in the next six months. Four of the five participants indicated further verbal communication skills as their highest priority, while the fifth shepherd leader expressed interest in leadership development skills. I asked this question so that each man could apply the material to his own life, and the other participants could help him increase his competencies in these selected areas.

After the session ended, two participants provided instant feedback related to the length of the sessions. The final two sessions lasted longer than the preceding sessions, which allowed participants to contemplate the material and one another's responses. I will

consider the impact that time will have on the participants' schedules and the effectiveness of the discussions and exercises.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the project is to increase the leadership competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church. By outlining the goals of the project, I could evaluate the project's effectiveness so that modifications could be made for future training programs.

The first three goals of the project contributed toward the creation of the eight-session curriculum for increasing three skill-based competencies for a shepherd leader, including verbal communication, leadership development, and conflict resolution. Though the sessions concentrated on the skills, I intentionally combined different character traits, such as humility and teachableness, to show how both character and skills are necessary for an effective church leader. By surveying and receiving evaluations from an expert panel of leaders, both within and outside Judson Church, I was able to modify the curriculum for clarity and direction.

The implementation of the training program required me to schedule training sessions for the five shepherd leaders based on their work, family, and other responsibilities. After the first three sessions, scheduling became easier because the participants expressed positive feedback that the program was a high priority; therefore, they made themselves more available than I had anticipated. In the next chapter I will assess the data from the survey results and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the project so that I may create and implement more effective training programs for church leaders.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

If leaders do not implement their theories, then the theories remain abstract; if leaders do not evaluate their implemented theories, then they cannot make necessary changes. This project developed leaders, specifically the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church, in a structured training program. This chapter will evaluate the creation and implementation of the project, including its purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Since the project was formatted for future implementation in new contexts, I will analyze the project so that I may modify structures and processes to achieve desired outcomes. I will then conclude the chapter with theological and personal reflections of the project.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to increase leadership competencies in the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church in Joliet, Illinois, by establishing an intentional, structured development program. The Shepherd Leadership Team consists of the lead pastor and five unpaid shepherd leaders, and the team is responsible to oversee the vision and teachings of the church along with the strategic implementation of ministries. The team was created in 2018 after Judson Church revised its bylaws and church government. The need for focused and consistent training led me to create and implement the development program for the shepherd leaders. The training program needed to ground the principles and competencies in the Scriptures while addressing the contextual needs at Judson Church.

The shepherd leaders individually and collectively expressed gratitude for the training program and enthusiasm for continued training. The desire for future development



was evidenced through conversations and by their willingness to participate in a training session for the deacons, which covered the theology of communion and the practice at Judson Church. Though the shepherd leaders did not assist in the training for the deacons, they wanted to encourage the deacons to value leadership development for their respective positions. I anticipate future training programs, not only for the shepherd leaders but also other ministry teams and congregation members. The project helped foster an environment where the shepherd leaders recognize their need for continued development and candid conversations about how they can each collectively grow as Christians and leaders.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

This section will evaluate the four goals of the project to increase the leadership competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church through a structured development program.

#### **Goal 1**

The first goal was to identify appropriate leadership competencies for the Shepherd Leadership Team. I selected an expert panel of three internal leaders and two external leaders to select necessary competencies for the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church. The internal leaders possess extensive knowledge of the responsibilities assigned to the shepherd leaders, and each internal leader understands the strengths and weaknesses of each shepherd leader. The conversation with each internal leader allowed me to explain the necessity of continued leadership development, which generated interest for their own respective ministry positions. I consulted with the external leaders on the expert panel because the two individuals possess strong leadership experience both in the church setting and in the community. One of the external panelists is a pastor in the Joliet area, and he expressed interest in creating and implementing a similar program for the elders at his church. The goal was successfully met because the expert panel selected

three competencies from the rubric that I would address in the eight-session development program.

### **Goal 2**

The second goal was to assess the identified leadership competencies of the members of the Shepherd Leadership Team. I sent a survey to all five shepherd leaders via email, and I received their completed surveys within two days. After receiving the results of the surveys, I recorded the data into a spreadsheet for future use. One shepherd leader expressed his appreciation for a “pre-program” survey because he could evaluate his own progress as I evaluated the effectiveness of the program. The second goal was successfully completed because I received the completed survey from all five shepherd leaders who would participate in the training program.

### **Goal 3**

The third goal was to create a curriculum using the assessment data to strengthen the identified competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team. The goal of creating the curriculum comprised the most effort and time because I needed to compile the data from the expert panel and synthesize the material into a contextualized program. After outlining the topics for all eight sessions to address the three competencies—verbal communication, leadership development, and conflict resolution—for the shepherd leaders, the individual sessions were completed. To ensure I was on the right track with the creation of the sessions, I emailed the first two lessons to the expert panel for feedback based on the rubric. This informal feedback showed me how I might improve upon the clarity of directions for the exercises.

In the creation of the curriculum, I made three important observations. First, I selected appropriate Scripture passages related to the topic as the first step in each session. I wanted to reinforce the supremacy and value of Scripture in guiding individual lives, but the collective leadership team as well. Expounding on and applying one or two Scripture

passages in each session reminded participants of Scripture's authority within the church. Second, teachers can easily succumb to information overload by presenting too many concepts in one setting.

Third, entire training programs was written on each of the individual competencies I planned to address in two sessions. The training program could not exhaustively cover every context or situation but could introduce the concepts and inspire continued study and development. For example, I wanted to address conflict resolution in two areas in the training program: within the Shepherd Leadership Team and among congregation members. However, there are more types of conflict involving church leaders, including disciplining a wayward congregation member and the shepherd leader seeking forgiveness from a congregation member against whom he had sinned.

The third goal was successfully completed because the expert panel unanimously agreed that the curriculum met or exceeded all the criteria listed in the rubric.<sup>1</sup> One expert panel member commented that the exercises and content fulfilled the learning objectives; however, entire classes could be devoted to the individual competencies. Participants in the training program would agree with the expert panel member's observation.

#### **Goal 4**

The fourth goal was to increase three to five leadership competencies by implementing the curriculum with the Shepherd Leadership. The eight sessions alternated between Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons, based on the participants' availability. The goal was measured by administering a post-survey to assess the identified leadership competencies and utilizing the pre-survey from the second goal. This goal, measured using a *t*-test, was considered successfully met because each shepherd leader

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

demonstrated a positive difference in the pre- and post-survey scores of the identified competencies.

In the implementation of the curriculum in the training program, I made two observations. First, the participation level seemed to increase as the sessions progressed. In the first session, participants gave appropriate responses to the questions but did not engage with one another or the material beyond explicit expectations. However, by the end of the eighth session, participants arrived early for the sessions, had homework assignments complete, and each man consistently showed greater attentiveness to the experiences. For example, in session 7 and 8, one participant asked follow-up questions to the group to stimulate even greater engagement. Second, I changed the location of the meeting in the last two sessions. Due to space constraints on our meeting days and times, we met in a smaller room. The larger room allowed participants space to move their chairs apart and write their responses on a larger table compared with a small coffee table. Since the participants were not as physically close to one another, each man seemed to feel more comfortable maintaining eye contact.

The *t*-test allowed me to analyze the effectiveness of the training program by comparing the results of the pre- and post-program self-assessment surveys. The results of the *t*-test between the surveys show a statistical difference, indicating an increase in the participants' competencies. The null hypothesis is set at .05, which shows that randomness is unlikely in the difference, showing that the training is the main cause in the difference between the test results. The test results for the pre- and post-training survey were  $t_{(28)} = -3.330, p < .003$ .<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 6 for complete *t*-test results.

Table 1. Average score of the pre- and post-program surveys

Pre-training average score	4.88
Post-training average score	5.19

I analyzed the results of the *t*-test with the treasurer of Judson Church, who also leads the Resource Team, tasked with overseeing the finances and building. The treasurer expressed interest in using the surveys to analyze other training programs for leaders and members of Judson Church. For example, the deacons will receive training to increase their competencies related to their responsibilities. I plan to utilize the pre- and post- program surveys to measure the effectiveness of the training.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The creation and implementation of the project revealed four strengths. The first strength was the identification of areas for the Shepherd Leadership Team to develop after the project's conclusion. The project revealed to the participants that their learning and growing as leaders never ends. Judson Church has struggled to identify and train leaders for their position; therefore, leaders did not recognize the need nor possess the tools for continued education. After each session, at least one shepherd leader shared his excitement for leadership development, so that he can fulfill his responsibilities, including communicating the vision and strategies of the church. Since the project did not exhaustively cover every type of conflict resolution, leadership development, or verbal communication, I will be able to address additional skills within these competencies in the future. The project inspired other leaders within Judson Church, who were aware of the training program. The chairperson of the deacon team has requested that I create a program to help the deacons develop skills related to their responsibilities.

The second strength of the project is the resources for continued development in the form of homework assignments and additional reading. Since the program's conclusion, a couple of the participants have requested resources, books, articles, and

videos to help them understand theological concepts and pastoral skills. The homework assignments contained sections of a book or an article, which the participants now have the opportunity to finish or explore related topics by similar authors and practitioners. One resource featured a section from *Discipling* by Mark Dever.<sup>3</sup> This book is part of a series by the 9Marks ministries. The shepherd leaders have read sections of *Discipling*, and they also have a list of books related to church leadership.

The third strength of the project was the curriculum's emphasis on discussion of theological concepts and their application to the ministry at Judson Church. The shepherd leaders meet collectively once per month for business meetings, but they do not often meet for training or contemplation of theological matters. The training program assigned each participant homework readings and writings so that they were prepared to discuss their implications to leadership and applications to Judson Church. One shepherd leader is new to his position, so he had the opportunity to interact with the other shepherd leaders, and I could observe their interactions.

The fourth strength of the project was that the length of each session was limited to one hour. I kept each session to a one-hour limit for two reasons. First, since each shepherd leader volunteers his time in multiple ministries at Judson Church, I wanted to honor their commitments by keeping a set schedule. The sessions alternated between evenings and immediately after Sunday morning worship services due to scheduling conflicts. Except for one participant, all the shepherd leaders explained that the one-hour sessions offered optimal time for discussion without becoming monotonous or redundant. The remaining shepherd leader believed the sessions could have been held for two-hour blocks of time. Second, since leadership training is relatively new to Judson Church, I wanted to "leave them wanting more." In other words, the training program was intended to increase three competencies in the shepherd leaders; I anticipate future programs to

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 93-104.

address additional skills. If each session or the number of sessions exceeded the mental capacity or time commitment, then the participants may be less likely to attend future development programs.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The nature and scope of the project possessed three known weaknesses. The first known weakness was the small sample size of participants. The Shepherd Leadership Team consists of the lead pastor and five non-staff leaders, so I was left with a maximum group of five participants. At the beginning stages of the project, I considered multiple options. The first option would allow five deacons to join the training program along with the shepherd leaders, which would increase the participant size to ten. This would give a larger sample size to measure the results of the program. However, since the deacons are not tasked with teaching and leading responsibilities similar to the shepherd leaders, I decided to forgo this option. The second option I considered was to include leaders within the church with the potential and desire to lead as shepherd leaders. Judson Church recently added a new shepherd leader from a candidate pool of four other men. I considered asking these individuals; however, these individuals could not commit to the eight sessions of the training program. The last alternative option was to invite elders from another church in the Joliet area. Judson Church has partnered with the other congregation on pastoral ordination councils and youth ministry events. However, I decided against inviting another group of elders because I wanted the results of this training program to reflect the competencies of the leadership at Judson Church.

The second known weakness of the project was the selection of the competencies by the expert panel. The external panelists understand the responsibilities and skills required of elders from their own education and experience, but since they were not familiar with the abilities and needs of the shepherd leaders at Judson Church, they could not select the most urgently needed competencies from the list. The internal panelists had a much stronger knowledge of the context of the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson

Church than the external panelists. Two panelists occasionally attend sections of the shepherd leaders’ meetings for reports and discussions related to their respective ministries. However, the internal panelists do not have experience as shepherd leaders, so their knowledge is limited as well.

The third known weakness of the project was using self-assessments for the pre- and post-program results. Though the participants answered the questions to the best of their ability, self-assessment is limited because a person may not be aware of his weaknesses to accurately evaluate his competencies. Some leaders may have rated themselves too high or low based on their preconceived notions of leadership competencies as described in the survey. For example, as shown in table 2, the statement prompts the participant to rate himself on both identifying potential leaders and developing leaders. Based on my observations and experience with the participants, some men are better at recruiting volunteer leaders while others are stronger to equip them with the knowledge and experiences. In future training sessions I will specify areas of leadership development, including recruiting and teaching, so that the results may be more accurately and clearly measured.

Table 2. Comparing results from a self-assessment question

As a leader, I am responsible to identify and develop other leaders.	SL:1	SL:2	SL:3	SL:4	SL:5
Pre-program Response	6	6	6	6	5
Post-program Response	6	6	6	5	5

In future training sessions I will combine self-assessment surveys with surveys from the other participants in the program. Since the shepherd leaders know one another and their abilities, they have the opportunity to identify areas of strength and improvement.



## **What I Would Do Differently**

In evaluating the project's creation and implementation, I would make four alterations to the process. The first change I would make would be the type of exercises and activities within the sessions. Though each session contained different discussions and exercises, I would include a wider variety of exercises throughout the training program. In the leadership development competency I introduced the three-step process of giving knowledge, offering experiences, and providing feedback to teach a new concept or skill. If I were to repeat the training program, I would introduce the process earlier so the participants could practice the knowledge, experience, and feedback steps in different exercises and concepts. For example, I assigned the participants to teach a skill to another individual outside the program using the three-step process. If I had introduced the process in the first or second session, then I could have incorporated it into the verbal communication and conflict resolution competencies. In future training programs that aim to develop verbal communication skills, I would use technology as an evaluation tool. For example, if the participants learned to preach a sermon, teach a Bible study, or give an announcement, each man would record his presentation so that the other men can offer feedback. A video recording allows the participant to assess his own progress by watching and rewatching his presentation. The variety of exercises, experiences, and activities would help participants practice the competencies from different perspectives and create a more engaging learning environment.

The second change I would make if I were to repeat the project also requires additional technological equipment to create a "flipped classroom." This method of teaching involves giving participants the knowledge before the classroom meetings so time and energy in the gatherings focus on coaching and exercises. I would dispense the content information by creating video lectures so participants could watch at their convenience and pace. The content can also be given before the sessions through books and articles. The flipped classroom provides two additional benefits. First, time spent on the material is not concentrated into one- or two-hour sessions, but the content can be

taught in fifteen-minute sections multiple times per week. Participants would have the opportunity to ponder and practice the material before the sessions, and then the group could help one another under the instructor's guidance. Second, the flipped classroom would allow me more time with each individual participant to address progress through coaching and additional resources.

The third change I would make would be to utilize additional forms of assessment, including asking participants to evaluate one another. Though a person may honestly answer a survey to the best of his ability, he may not see his own weaknesses or strengths like an outside observer. The shepherd leaders have worked together in different ministry contexts for years, including the newest member of the team, so the men have had ample opportunity to observe the present skill level and ability of one another. The other participants could also provide a balance to one person's self-assessment, whether he rates himself too high or too low on a specific question. For example, in my opinion, one shepherd leader rated himself too high on developing other leaders. However, he has little experience in recruiting and equipping other leaders in his ministry context. Other participants may provide a fuller picture of his abilities and a more accurate number if the self and peer-assessments were both considered.

The fourth change I would make would be to select the competencies instead of relying upon an expert panel. Though the external panelists have a strong understanding of the responsibilities and skills required for an elder, and the internal panelists know the participants and their abilities, I would have been able to select the most necessary competencies for the given context. For example, though conflict resolution was an important competency to address with the shepherd leaders, the more urgent skill was planning. I would have created two sessions on planning, both individual and team, to help participants learn to develop plans and strategies for the church. Over the past year, the Shepherd Leadership Team has shifted the vision and mission of Judson Church to a new statement: "Lives and communities being transformed through the gospel." This

statement requires strategic initiatives and direction from the Shepherd Leadership Team. If I had to repeat the project, I would have selected the competencies from the list and utilized the expert panel to evaluate the curriculum.<sup>4</sup>

### **Theological Reflections**

This project has given me the opportunity to reflect upon the theological implications and specific applications to the continued leadership development at Judson Church. First, the Scriptures call church leaders, especially elders, to maintain consistent character over long periods of time in different facets of life, including within the family and out in the community. Since the shepherd leaders are responsible to lead the congregation in its pursuit of holiness, they must set an example for other believers to follow (1 Tim 3:1-7). Churches are primarily led and served by volunteers who do not have extensive training or time to devote to continued leadership development. However, the Scriptures demand church leaders be men of integrity, regardless of their employment status within the church organization (1 Pet 5:2). The project not only reinforced the significance of character based on Scripture, but the creation and implementation of the training program revealed its importance as well.

Second, progress in character and skill-based competencies take time and intentional effort. Each of the shepherd leaders has extensive volunteer ministry experience, but each has indicated through self-reflection, survey results, and observations, that he still has much room for improvement. Paul explains that an elder must not be a recent convert because he may be tempted with pride (1 Tim 3:6). An effective church leader recognizes his strengths, but he is also aware of his sinful tendencies and weaknesses. The training program was not designed to address every skill or competency required of a shepherd leader, but I was able to observe the attitudes of each man as he considered his own progress in front of the other participants. When I informally

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 2.

surveyed the leaders after the final session, four of the five participants wanted to learn more about verbal communication. The fifth participant wanted to explore leadership development. An effective leader does not see his learning as complete when a class or book is finished, but he humbly submits himself to God and other leaders for continued development.

Third, though the Scriptures contain supremely valuable leadership principles, the saints and church leaders of the past offer insights, both through faithful service and disappointing failures, for church leaders to examine for their own ministry contexts. In Hebrews 12:1, the author exhorts his readers to consider the “great cloud of witnesses” in their faithful obedience to God. Prior to his encouragement, the author to the Hebrews recounts stories from the Old Testament of men and women who follow God regardless of persecution or praise. When creating the curriculum for the training program, I consulted books and other resources from present-day church leaders along with theologians and pastors from the past. Though every principle should be measured against the scriptural standards, the Reformation era and Puritans offered valuable insights into church leadership.

### **Personal Reflections**

The creation, implementation, and evaluation of this project have helped me reflect upon four personal considerations. First, effective leadership development requires informal and formal training environments. Before the project, I relied upon informal interactions and processes with the leaders at Judson Church to equip them with knowledge, skills, and character. These informal interactions included occasional conversations over coffee or studying a passage of Scripture together. One of the purposes of the informal training was to set an example for the leader through my words and actions. However, the project revealed the benefits of combining formal training programs with informal, yet intentional development. For example, the shepherd leaders gathered weekly for the sessions to learn, discuss, and practice the competencies in a controlled

environment. Outside the training sessions I followed up with the individual leaders on their progress. One shepherd leader helps coordinate the tech and music teams for Sunday morning worship services. He shared with me after service how he utilized the coaching skills he learned in one of the sessions on leadership development. The combined format permits leaders to structure important topics and skills while allowing for creative applications to situations. The other benefit of the combined format is the participants in the formal training program can observe the instructor and one another in multiple environments.

The second area of reflection is an increased appreciation for church history's application to leadership. Though I have been a student of history throughout my educational career, church history has been compartmentalized and reduced to theological studies. In my program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in general, and in my project in particular, I have gathered significant principles in leadership from the past, especially the Reformation period and the Puritans. For example, Richard Baxter exemplified intentional care for his congregation and community through preaching and individualized teaching to the households of his congregation.<sup>5</sup> Though the methods must be transferred to my ministry context, I can apply the principles of actively pursuing believers in their discipleship through teaching, preaching, and counseling. In future leadership training programs I plan to incorporate more examples from church history to show the relevance and wisdom of these spiritual giants, so the participants can gather and learn from these additional resources.

The third area that I reflected upon from the project was the importance of listening and non-verbal communication. Listening to a person shows him or her that you care not only about the information shared, but listening also demonstrates concern for the person. In the training program I observed the posture of the participants as they

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (1656; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2007), 175.

listened to me and one another. I noticed that as a person was sharing an insight, he would begin his discourse by making eye contact with every person in the room. Though, as he continued to talk, his focus would shift to one or two individuals who displayed exceptional listening and other non-verbal skills. For example, one participant would frequently lean forward toward the person, tilt his head, and occasionally nod. The speaking participant appeared to respond positively to the engaged person by increasing his focus on the engaged listener. Leaders must communicate clearly, correctly, and concisely with their words, but the effective leader does not speak incessantly. When appropriate, he asks questions and genuinely engages the person through his posture and ability to listen.

The fourth reflection from the project was the realization that leadership development is a gradual process. Effective leaders take time to develop character and skills. The training program was not the finish line for the current shepherd leaders, but it was one step of many as each man learns new skills and sharpens existing ones. Each participant has served in leadership roles in different capacities for decades, but by the end of the training program, each person explicitly affirmed his commitment to continued leadership development. These men demonstrated godly humility in their recognition that they have not arrived at their final destination; therefore, they must consistently learn new competencies and apply existing strengths to new situations. This project taught me that there is always room for improvement, even within the project itself. The expert panel revealed through conversations and the rubric that the curriculum I created needed refinement in clarity and direction of the sessions. Leadership is not a solo endeavor; an effective leader surrounds himself with other competent individuals. Likewise, leadership development is also not an individual pursuit; effective leaders learn with the more experienced, teach the less experienced, and learn from everyone. Even though the five shepherd leaders completed the eight sessions together, not every leader will grow at the same pace and to the same level. Therefore, I must show patience for each person's growth and recognize that God gives different gifts to different leaders (Rom 12:6).

## **Conclusion**

The project aimed to increase three leadership competencies in the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church through a structured training program. The project can be considered successful because the four goals outlined were effectively met. The combination of the four goals contributed to the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the eight-session training program for the five volunteer shepherd leaders. The success of each goal depended upon the effectiveness of the preceding goal. Though each goal was successfully met, there were weaknesses within the project and areas for improvement to consider for the future. The results of the pre- and post-program survey show a positive difference, which concludes the training program was effective in increasing the leadership competencies of the shepherd leaders.

The completion of the project revealed remarkable insights and benefits. The theological and personal insights gained from the project will allow me to utilize the project format in new learning environments to teach new leadership competencies. The project revealed areas of improvement, not only at Judson Church but with me as the lead pastor. I have learned how to lead through the creation and implementation of the training program more effectively. My hope and prayer is that God will use my experience to faithfully serve the congregation at Judson Church and the surrounding communities for His glory and the good of others.

## APPENDIX 1

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

In the following evaluation, the expert panel, consisting of both internal and external leaders of Judson Church, assessed the effectiveness of the curriculum taught to the Shepherd Leadership Team.



Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the Bible.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.					

Other Comments:

## APPENDIX 2

### IDENTIFYING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

This survey assessed the necessary competencies relevant to the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church.<sup>1</sup> Respondents ranked the items to determine three to five competencies to increase during this project.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Kevin Peck and the Austin Stone Community Church, referenced in Kevin Peck, “Building and Deploying Leaders,” Leadership Pipeline Presentation (seminar presentation, Strategic Leadership Community Online, February 25, 2021).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rank the following leadership competencies in order of importance.

(1 = most important; 20 = least important)

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Self-Awareness	
Problem Solving	
Planning	
Situational Awareness	
Adaptability	
Stress Tolerance	
Self-management	
Written Communication	
Verbal Communication	
Leadership - Motivation	
Leadership - Organizing	
Leadership - Appraising	
Leadership - Developing	
Leadership - Empowering	
Conflict Resolution	
Innovation	
Decisiveness	
Empathy/Understanding	
Concern for Excellence	
Humble/Teachable	

## APPENDIX 3

### ASSESSING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

This survey assessed the identified leadership competencies for each Shepherd Leader. Respondents completed the survey before and after the teaching sessions. The project was evaluated based on the survey analysis.

In the following survey, provide responses related to your own spiritual leadership. The gathered information will help assess necessary competencies of a Shepherd Leader at Judson Church in Joliet, Illinois. Circle your level of agreement with the statements using the following scale.

SD = Strongly Disagree  
D = Disagree  
DS = Disagree Slightly  
AS = Agree Slightly  
A = Agree  
SA = Strongly Agree

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I effectively lead my family at home (If applicable).  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
2. I consistently teach the Bible to my family at home (if applicable).  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
3. I can clearly articulate the gospel in under one minute.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
4. I can recognize the gifts and talents of others around me.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
5. I can apply biblical discipline as prescribed in Matthew 18:15-17.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
6. I practice hospitality at home by loving and serving others.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
7. I fulfill the qualification of a biblical leader as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
8. As a leader, I am responsible to identify and develop other leaders.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
9. I can identify appropriate scriptural passages related to church leadership.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
10. I can explain the biblical narrative of redemption in the Old and New Testaments.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
11. I can biblically and effectively pray for a sick person.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
12. I can provide helpful and biblical counsel to a couple with marriage issues.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
13. I can explain a biblical rationale for tithing and/or financial giving.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
14. I can clearly articulate the vision of Judson Church.  
SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

15. I can correctly divide the Scriptures.  
SD D DS AS A SA
16. I can identify my spiritual gifts.  
SD D DS AS A SA
17. I can articulate my personal discipleship plan.  
SD D DS AS A SA
18. I can guide an unbeliever to salvation using the Scriptures.  
SD D DS AS A SA
19. I can articulate Judson's Church's position on baptism.  
SD D DS AS A SA
20. I can articulate Judson Church's position on communion.  
SD D DS AS A SA
21. I can lead the congregation in a pastoral prayer.  
SD D DS AS A SA
22. I can articulate the biblical qualifications of a deacon.  
SD D DS AS A SA
23. I can help resolve a conflict between two believers.  
SD D DS AS A SA
24. I can articulate the necessity of spiritual disciplines to a new believer.  
SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 4  
PROJECT CURRICULUM

**Session 1: Leadership Competencies Overview**

While leadership is essential to a church’s growth and health, the term can be difficult to describe because not everyone agrees. However, for our purposes in this program, we are going to use the following definition of leadership: “a process by which leaders and followers partner together for the purpose of achieving common goals and a shared vision.”<sup>1</sup> Over the next several weeks, we are going to examine and experiment with different leadership competencies related to the being a Shepherd Leader at Judson Church. In this first session, we will explore the foundations of leadership in the local church by looking at three important passages related to New Testament elders. Below are three objectives that we will aim to complete.

**Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe leadership in the local church context.
- Identify two key New Testament passages for elder qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- Organize the qualifications of an elder in the passages into character and competency groups.

**Introduction**

Thank you for investing the time, energy, and effort into serving our congregation by sharpening your leadership skills. Over the next eight weeks, my prayer and aim to provide you with tools and experiences to develop necessary leadership competencies for a faithful and effective Shepherd Leader at Judson Church. But exactly is faithfulness? Jamie Dunlop describes faithfulness as “our responsibility to obey what God has asked us to do in the way He has asked us to do it.”<sup>2</sup> So as aim to lead our congregation well, please keep faithfulness in mind. To begin our time together, let’s brainstorm ideas to answer the following question:

**Discussion Question**

*Why do you think that leadership is important in the local church?*

Thank you for working through some of these possibilities. As we work our way through

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<sup>1</sup> Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jamie Dunlop, *Budgeting for a Healthy Church: Aligning Finances with Biblical Priorities for Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 28.

the next eight weeks, let's keep something in mind: "why" we do "what" we do matters because the why keeps us focused on what's important and how to best accomplish what's important.

### **Definition of Leadership**

Admittedly, there are a lot of definitions of leadership out there. But for this program, let's use the following definition of leadership.

*Leadership is a "process by which leaders and followers partner together for the purpose of achieving common goals and a shared vision."*

Let's take some time to work through this definition.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1.) What are the vital components listed in this definition?
- 2.) Why might these components be vital?
- 3.) How do each of these components apply to the Shepherd Leadership Team at Judson Church?
- 4.) What components do you think are missing from this definition?

### **Summary**

This definition helps us emphasize our goals and vision as a church while meeting the needs of our people, including reminding them of our church's goals and vision. We cannot, nor should we do all the ministry at Judson Church. But we partner with our people accomplish our goals. An important word at the beginning of the definition cannot be missed: process. Change and growth takes time and patience. Every person in our church is at a different place in spiritual maturity; therefore, we must trust the Holy Spirit to work in the person, and at times, through us lead them in the right direction.

### **Qualifications for Elders in the New Testament**

While we are called to lead our congregation, we are to be led by Jesus Christ. God outlines qualifications in the scriptures for the church leaders, especially elders. Before we teach our people the supremacy of the scriptures, we must develop a love for God and His Word. You all have read and studying these passages in great detail over the years. But let's view and evaluate our definition and approach to leadership through the lens of these three passages. The first passage comes from the apostle Paul's first letter to Timothy. Let's read the passage together.

#### **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*



## Discussion Question

Why do you think that an elder must “aspire” to the office (v. 1)?

## Exercise: Character in the Church

Let's divide into two groups for this next exercise. The first group will cover verses 1-3 while the second group will examine verses 4-7. After reading the passage, write out the different qualifications. After you have written out the qualifications answer the following questions.

- 1.) How does this trait reflect the character of God?
- 2.) How might having this character trait benefit the people of Judson Church?
- 3.) Coupled with the character traits listed, what skills might be necessary to effectively lead as a Shepherd Leader?

## Transition to Passage #2

Over the next eight weeks and beyond, please keep these character traits in mind because knowing them are not only necessary to complete this training program, but as faithful church leaders, we must consistently demonstrate the character outlined in this passage. For this next exercise, we are going to work through the passage together.

## 1 Peter 5:1-4

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

## Discussion Questions

Referring back to our definition of leadership, leaders and followers must partner together to achieve their goals and mission. How might the scripture passage relate to the partnership of leaders and followers?

Faithfully and effectively shepherding the flock requires certain competencies and skills. What skills described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 relate to shepherding and how?

## Exercise: Character and Competencies

Both Paul and Peter outline several qualifications for an elder. Let's divide them into two groups: character and competencies. Next, let's focus on the teaching requirement (1 Tim 3:2). Take one of the character qualifications listed and describe how a character deficiency in an elder might affect his teaching. Let's try this with another character trait.

## Check for Understanding

Why must the local church emphasize the character of its leaders?

### **Conclusion**

We have covered a lot of ground this evening, but I would like to show two important connections. First, faithful church leadership must be rooted in the character qualifications outlined in both 1 Timothy 3 and 1 Peter 5. The Christian leader is called to reflect Christ, who is the head of the church (Eph 5:23). Second, as the Shepherd Leaders at Judson Church, we have the responsibility to remind our people of our mission to glorify God by making disciples and our vision of seeing “lives and communities being transformed through the gospel.” Our character not only reflects Christ, but it gives credibility to what we say. If our words don’t match our actions, then not only will people have a poor example of what to follow, but they may see the church and its leaders as hypocritical and deceptive. This evening, we have examined how character relates to leadership. Over the next seven weeks, we will explore different competencies that will help us meet the needs of our people and honor God. In preparation for our next meeting, would you please write down the following assignment?

### **Homework Assignment**

- 1.) Read Titus 1:6-9. What are some similarities and differences between this list and the list in 1 Timothy 3:1-7?
- 2.) Which traits listed in Titus 1:6-9 need the most improvement in your own life and leadership? What is one step you might take to improve?

## **Session 2: Verbal Communication**

The Shepherd Leaders are responsible for overseeing the teachings and vision of Judson Church; therefore, we must be able to clearly communicate the truths of scripture to our congregation. The next two sessions (sessions 2 and 3) will explore why verbal communication is so important for leaders and their followers in the local church setting. This session will emphasize communication in a large group context. Below are three objectives that we will aim to complete.

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify common mistakes related to communication.
- Describe three vital components of verbal communication: correctness, clarity, and conciseness.
- Evaluate a Sunday morning announcement clarity.

### **Introduction**

In our first session, we looked at some foundational principles of leadership by looking at a few New Testament passages. Each of the passages emphasizes the character of leader, but it doesn't ignore his competencies. As Shepherd Leaders, we must possess and develop skill-based competencies to meet the needs of our people, including equipping them for the works of ministry (Eph 4:12). In the next two sessions, we will explore verbal communication in three formats: large group settings, in small groups, and individual conversations. Each of these are important for Shepherd Leaders because we are called to teach our people the important truths of God (1 Tim 3:2). In this session, we will focus on large group settings. Before we begin, let's recap your homework.

### **Homework Review**

Let's review your answers to the following questions:

- 3.) Read Titus 1:6-9. What are some similarities and differences between this list and the list in 1 Timothy 3:1-7?
- 4.) Which traits listed in Titus 1:6-9 need the most improvement in your own life and leadership? What is one step you might take to improve?

Thank you for taking the time and effort to study God's Word on leadership. This next question will help transition us into our topic on verbal communication. Look again at the passage.

*Which of the traits require effective verbal communication and why?*

### **Why verbal communication?**

The apostle Paul tells the Ephesians to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). How can the loving truth be known if its not communicated. We don't just hand the people of Judson Church a Bible and point. But the gospel truths must be explained, illustrated, argued, and applied to everyday life, so that our congregation can know God and how to best love and obey Him. This starts with the three C's of effective verbal communication: correct, clear, and concise.

### 3 C's of Effective Communication

#### Correct Communication

This may seem like an obvious one, but what we say must be true. When preaching or teaching God's Word, we don't have the freedom to alter the message, but we must present His truth. In his letter to Titus, the apostle Paul describes God as one who "never lies" (Titus 1:2). Recognizing that we still sin, which includes lying, by God's grace, we must aim to speak the truth in love our people, whether we are preaching a sermon, making an announcement, or counseling a member. This next question is practical because we will also mess up correct communication.

#### Discussion Question

What are some necessary character traits to repent and ask forgiveness of someone when we miscommunicate, whether intentionally or unintentionally?

There are many ways that we can help ensure we are communicating correct information. First, check your source. If you are making a Sunday morning announcement, check the website or the Connect Board to ensure you are providing the group with the correct dates and times. This may seem trivial, but if the information is incorrect, it doesn't matter how clear it is. Second, don't exaggerate. When preaching a sermon, some preachers will use phrases like "everyone says this..." or "everyone knows that..." While this may seem petty, a person may not know what you are saying, which could unnecessarily alienate him.

#### Discussion Question

What are some other phrases that leaders should consider so they can avoid exaggerating?

#### Clear Communication

So, we can see why communication must be correct, but it has to be clear. What do I mean by clear? The words we speak and the way we speak must be direct. When I say direct, I don't mean rude or abrasive, what I mean by direct is, you are to the point. You say what you mean, and you mean what you say. Let's try an exercise to see an example of unclear communication. I am going to read the announcement, and I want you to identify aspects that are unclear.

#### Exercise

*Good morning, Judson Church,  
I want to bring your attention to an event that is happening next week. We are going to be hosting a fellowship event for seniors. There will be food and drinks provided by the church, but we need you to sign up before the event. Dinner will be served at 6pm, but the doors will open at 5:30pm.*

What unclear information did you spot?

With a partner, rewrite the announcement to be clearer. You will need to make up some information.

### **Concise Communication**

Clear and correct information is vital, but it can't ramble and go on forever. Our verbal communication must be concise, so that what you want to say is heard and understood. Admittedly, being clear and concise is quite subjective. What is clear for you isn't clear to me and vice versa. But there are a couple of points that we can keep in mind. Ask yourself, what are the most important pieces of information that you need to know? In the Sunday announcement, you need to know who the event is for, what day, what time, how much, where, along with some other items. But is it necessary to say in your announcement? Maybe. It depends on what you want the audience to know to spark interest and where they could go to get more information. For example, for a fellowship at Judson Church, there are two ways a person can learn about an upcoming event: the church website and the Connect Board in the lobby.

### **Discussion Question**

What are some dangers in neglecting concise verbal communication?

### **Check for Understanding**

While all three are important, which area do you have the most difficult in your own communication?

### **Conclusion**

We have seen verbal communication not only honors God because He is truth, but those we lead must understand what we want them to know or do. Could you imagine giving directions to a person, but you have no idea where they need to go? That's why our information must be correct. Could you imagine using outdated street signs or landmarks that don't exist anymore; the person you are trying to help would have no idea where to go. The same applies to leading and speaking with our congregation. When we give announcements, preach a sermon, lead communion, our verbal communication must be correct, clear, and concise. This leads right into our homework assignment. Before our meeting next week, please write a manuscript of a three minute Sunday morning presentation of communion.

### **Homework Assignment**

The communion manuscript must contain the following elements:

- 1.) 2.5-3 minutes in length
- 2.) 1 scripture passage relevant to communion
- 3.) Who can take communion at Judson Church?
- 4.) What is the process for taking communion at Judson?
- 5.) When is communion taken?
- 6.) Why is communion important?

### **Session 3: Verbal Communication**

The Shepherd Leaders are responsible for overseeing the teachings and vision of Judson Church; therefore, we must be able to clearly communicate the truths of scripture to our congregation. In the previous session, we introduced reasons for developing communication skills for large group setting. This session will emphasize communication in a small group and individual context. Below are three objectives that we will aim to complete.

#### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Differentiate necessary communication skills in a small group compared with an individual conversation.
- Deliver a one-minute gospel presentation.
- Evaluate two gospel presentations for content, clarity, and conciseness.

#### **Introduction**

I cannot thank you enough the time and effort you have invested in leading the people of Judson Church and in your own leadership development. We have laid a foundation for leadership in the New Testament by looking at the character and competencies required of elders. Last time, we examined the first skill-based competency in our training program: verbal communication. I introduced through essential components: correctness, clarity, and conciseness.

#### **Discussion Question**

*Why are each of these components important when addressing a large group audience?*

#### **Foundation of Listening**

Today, we are going to apply those same three principles to small group and individual conversations while emphasizing an often-neglected skill in communication: listening. In his New Testament letter, James explains why Christians must become good listeners and how that might be accomplished. “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20).

#### **Exercise**

Let’s examine the passage in James 1:19-20 to apply its wisdom to our tasks as Shepherd Leaders.

- 1.) How might listening help prevent anger toward those we lead?

With a partner, write five ways you can demonstrate a bad listener. Act it out for the group.

With a partner, write five ways you can demonstrate a good listener. Act it out for the group.

#### **Discussion Question**

Which of these ways is transferrable from an individual conversation to a small group setting? Why or why aren’t they transferrable?

## **Verbal Communication of Gospel Truth**

As a Shepherd Leadership Team, we have spent a great amount of time wrestling to communicate the gospel to our congregation. While the gospel is an unchanging message, there are many implications and applications to groups and individuals. As leaders, we must listen to the needs of people, both in our congregation and out in the community to discern how to effectively share the gospel message.

### **Exercise: Listening for Gospel-Centered Conversation**

With a partner, review the following situations. Select one scenario to have a gospel conversation. One person will play the part of the skeptic while the other person will play a Christian leader. The pairs will present their conversation to the class. The class will then make notes on how well the church leader listened and articulated the gospel with clarity, correctness, and conciseness.

Take note of the following passages to ground your message in the scriptures.

- Romans 6:23
- Romans 3:23
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4
- John 3:16
- Ephesians 2:8-10

- 1.) A father of two young children just lost his wife to cancer. The man grew up going to church, but with the little faith he has in a god, he is angry.
- 2.) A college student claims to be spiritual but not religious. He believes that people should be treated with respect, but people shouldn't be told how to live their lives.
- 3.) An old man is terminally ill. He thinks that he has done enough good things to go to heaven, but he isn't quite sure.

### **Check for Understanding**

Why is listening vital to sharing the gospel with individuals or small groups?

### **Conclusion**

Verbal communication is not just clear, concise, and correct speaking, but we must actively listen to others, so we can effectively communicate and lead them. The gospel can be communicated to every type of person because the gospel applies to every type of person. As Shepherd Leaders, we must listen to their needs, so they see how the truth addresses their situation. The past two sessions are not meant to be exhaustive training on verbal communication, but we want to lay a foundation for continued learning by seeing why it's so important for effectively leading our people at Judson. In our next session, we will introduce a new competency: leadership development. How we discover, develop, and deploy our leaders and members at Judson will help us lead well into the future, so the gospel can spread throughout our city.

### **Homework**

Read chapter 10 (Raising up leaders) in Mark Dever's book, *Discipling*.

Which two (of the nine described) traits do you struggle to do? Why?

## Session 4: Leadership Development

Leaders not only lead their followers, but they reproduce new leaders for continued growth into the future. The apostle Paul tells his protégé, Timothy, to identify and invest in future leaders, so they can guide the church well into the future. The next two sessions (sessions 4 and 5) will examine leadership development at Judson Church, especially the position of Shepherd Leader. This session will explore critical skills in leadership development by utilizing the foundational principles and verbal communication skills learned in previous sessions. Below are three objectives that we will aim to complete.

### Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain why leadership development is necessary to the current and future health of the local church.
- Explain the three-step process of training a person a new skill.
- Implement the three-step process for training a person to pray aloud.

### Introduction

The apostle Paul explains that God gifted the church with leaders to not do the works of ministry, but to equip the church for the works of ministry. In other words, leaders equip the people to serve others, teach others, and so on. Leadership development is one way that we can equip our church because as Paul says in Romans 12:8, leadership is one of the spiritual gifts given to the church. Over the next two sessions, we will introduce some foundational principles and practices of leadership development, so we can not only train future Shepherd Leaders, but the other leaders within the church. To begin, let's look at 2 Timothy 2:2.

### Leadership Development Requires People

*(2 Timothy 2:2) and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.*

If you aren't familiar, the apostle Paul wrote this letter at the end of his life to his protégé and spiritual son, Timothy. Paul invested time and energy into teaching and leading Timothy. Now, Paul instructs Timothy to follow his example to develop other individuals that will develop others. In other words, Paul wants leaders who will reproduce leaders. The same applies to us as Shepherd Leaders.

### Discussion Question

What are some reasons why leaders don't develop other leaders?

### Homework Review

In preparation for this session, I asked you to read chapter 10 of *Discipling* by Mark Dever. We have gone through this book in one of our classes, but this chapter is a good reminder of why and how we can develop other disciples to lead. So, after reading the chapter, what are two traits that you personally struggle to do?



Dever quotes D.A. Carson with a great description of elders: "...an elder does what an ordinary Christian should do extraordinarily well. He is a model for the whole flock. He is a picture of maturity for all of them."<sup>3</sup>

### **Discussion Question**

What are some practical ways that we can model for our congregation and individual members?

### **Evaluate Exercise**

In their book, *Designed to Lead*, Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck describe the importance of leadership development, even though it's difficult. "Leadership does not provide instant gratification. It does not produce immediate results. Unlike executing a plan, running a program, completing a task, or knocking out a short-term goal, developing leaders is long and hard work. It takes discipline to develop leaders for the future."<sup>4</sup> Leadership takes time and effort. It also takes different forms and methods of instruction. Geiger and Peck outline three facets of leadership development: knowledge, experience, and feedback. In this exercise, we are going to look at training a leader to pray for another person using the three steps.

### **Knowledge**

"Knowledge is what leaders must learn and know."<sup>5</sup> This might seem like an easy or simple process, but let's work through the knowledge together. What are some important truths or practices to remember when praying with someone? What are some scripture passages you might share with the person to help him or her develop prayer?

### **Experience**

Knowledge is important, but it must be put into practice for it to be effective and useful. You can provide a person with experience to pray in a variety of ways, but here are a couple. First, you can simply ask the person to pray aloud while you quietly pray and observe. Second, you can pray the Lord's Prayer together to give him a framework. Third, you could pray first to give him an example and then he prays. The point is there are a lot of ways to give someone an experience praying. So let's break into partners and try one of the options.

### **Conclusion**

So, what method did you try and why? What did you learn about how your partner prays?

### **Coaching/Feedback**

You have already begun our final section of teaching someone to pray by offering

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 95.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 179.

<sup>5</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 163.

feedback and coaching. It's important to have the knowledge and put it into practice, but if they aren't given any guidance from an experienced individual, how will people grow?

### **Discussion Question**

Why do you think coaching is often neglected when teaching someone?

### **Homework**

For our next session, I would like you to apply the three step training method to one member of our congregation. Ideally, select someone who is relatively new to the Christian faith who does not have much experience pray aloud. At our next session, we will share our experiences with one another.

## **Session 5: Leadership Development**

Effective church leaders consider not only the immediate needs of the congregation, but also the future challenges and opportunities. Identifying and equipping believers to lead is a primary role of the church leaders, including the Shepherd Leaders at Judson Church. The apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians provides a helpful framework for leadership development in the local church. This session will examine Ephesians 4:11-16 to identify the purposes and basic process of developing leaders within Judson Church.

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain the goals and purposes of leadership development according to Ephesians 4:11-16.
- Explain the role of the pastor-teacher in leading the congregation toward unity and maturity according to Ephesians 4:11-16.

### **Introduction**

In our last session, we learned and practiced a three-step process for teaching new skills. Before we share about our homework assignment, I would like to briefly outline this session. This week, we are going to focus on the “why” and the “what” of leadership development by examining a passage of scripture. We are going to explore the goals of raising up leaders along with some steps to help us get there. Before we do, let's pray together and ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance in our time together.

### **Homework Recap**

Last session, you were given a challenge to teach one congregation member to pray aloud. Praying is not only a spiritual habit, but a skill that takes a lifetime to develop. As our love for God deepens, so does our prayer life. But I would like to hear how your teaching time went.

### **Biblical Goals of Leadership Development**

Thank you for investing time and effort into caring for our congregation and your own leadership competencies. For this next session, we are going to look at Ephesians 4:11-16. I have printed the text on paper, so you can underline, circle, or take notes on the page.

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

### **Ephesians 4:11**

Let's read that verse together. So, this may seem an easy question, but it's important. What are the gifts listed in the verse? Now while there is some disagreement among theologians about whether there are four or five gifts listed here.<sup>6</sup> However, for our purposes today, we will assume Paul refers to five gifts. These gifts are important, but we must also remember that Christ gives these gifts to the church; the church belongs to Jesus and Jesus gives gifts to the church. But why? What is the purpose of these gifts?

### **Ephesians 4:12**

Paul gives a clear directive to the leaders of the church: they equip the believers to do ministry. The leaders are not called to do everything in the church while everyone else sits and watches.

#### **Discussion Question**

Why might leaders just do the ministry themselves rather than equip the believers? What are some examples of "works of ministry" that a leader should equip a believer to do?

### **Ephesians 4:13-14**

Paul sees equipping the saints as an important goal, but it's not the final or ultimate goal. Equipping the saints leads to an even greater purpose.

#### **Discussion Question**

What are the purposes listed in verses 13-14 and why are they vital to the health of a church?

How might equipping believers to do ministry help unify a church?

### **Ephesians 4:15-16**

In this verse, Paul switches from the negative effects of immaturity to present a positive prescription for attaining unity and growth within the church. Speaking the truth in love is a common phrase shared in Christian circles.

#### **Discussion Question**

Why must a leader combine truth and love to the congregation members as he equips them for ministry?

#### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this exercise is to show how as leaders, we must examine the scriptures to see how God leads us and how we are to lead the rest of God's people. God has charged the Shepherd Leaders to guide Judson Church through teaching God's Word; therefore, we must study God's Word together at times. We learned a practical exercise in our last session: teaching others requires offering knowledge, experience, and feedback. Today, we saw the biblical rationale for developing leaders at Judson Church. Some may become

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 250.

Shepherd Leaders one day while others will serve in other ministry roles. Regardless of their position, we have the responsibility to equip the saints at Judson for the works of ministry. In our next session, we will learn about another important competency for Shepherd Leaders: conflict resolution.

## **Session 6: Conflict Resolution**

Leaders will experience conflict, within leadership teams, the congregation, and even within themselves. While people cannot escape conflict, they must resolve conflict in a godly manner. This session will introduce conflict resolution for Shepherd Leaders by examining some root causes of conflict.

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain a cause of conflict as described in James 4:1-2.
- Apply and implement the principles of conflict resolution to a hypothetical example.

### **Introduction**

We have worked through some important competencies as Shepherd Leaders here at Judson. From the foundations of leadership found in 1 Timothy 3 to verbal communication to leadership development. Today, we begin a new competency: conflict resolution. As church leaders, we often have a front row seat to sinful tendencies and actions of our congregation members. At the same time, we must also examine our own motivations and sinful tendencies that can cloud our judgement of situations, which may even contribute to escalating conflict. In this session, I would like to explore some foundational causes of conflict found in scripture along with a couple of steps we can immediately implement to address the issues. Our first section is to examine what James has to say about conflict.

### **Causes of Conflict**

#### **James 4:1-2**

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

### **Discussion Questions**

What is a cause of conflict according to James?

How might the reality of sin affect our judgement of a situation?

The sinful desires in our own hearts and the hearts of others starts some conflict and can exacerbate the problems. Let's look at one other passage to see what might causes fights among individuals.

#### **Proverbs 18:13**

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

## Discussion Question

What issue does this verse reveal and what might some deeper issues?

How does the gospel address the deeper issue within us and those we lead?

## Exercise

We are going to apply some of the principles to a hypothetical situation that may arise within the local church. We have read Paul Tripp's book *LEAD* as a team. In his chapter on restoration, Tripp reminds leaders of the pitfalls of self-delusion. "No leader is impervious to temptations, because no leader is sin-free and sanctification-finished. Not one. Leaders are susceptible to spiritual blindness."<sup>7</sup>

Our task is to address the situation and apply the principles to work toward a resolved conflict. Your goal is to

- 1.) Ask two or three questions to better understand the situation.
- 2.) Offer one scripture passage to address the situation.

A Christian couple has asked to meet with you. The husband claims to work hard at his job, but when he returns home from work, he is distant due to exhaustion. The wife appreciates his hard work, but he seems to care little for her or their children because he just wants to watch television or sit on his phone. When she has brought the issue to him, he apologizes, but then makes little effort to serve his family around the house. They want to work on their issues, but little progress has been made.

What are two or three questions you might ask the couple?

Do the scriptures address any of these situations?

What counsel or advice would you offer this couple, if any?

## Conclusion

Conflict is not going away until Jesus comes back to make all things right. However, as leaders, we can model godly attitudes and aim for conflict resolution within our own relationships, and we can teach our congregation members how to address their own interpersonal issues. In our next session, we cover another important section of conflict resolution.

## Homework

For our next session, please read the following article, "Assume You Are Wrong" by Tim Shorey. Ask yourself three questions about the article:

- 1.) What do you find interesting?

<sup>7</sup> Paul Tripp, *LEAD: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 189.

- 2.) What points do you disagree and why?
- 3.) What points do you find applicable to being a Shepherd Leader?

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/assume-you-are-wrong/>



## Session 7: Conflict Resolution

Conflict is unavoidable in relationships; however, believers can practice humility, forgiveness, and repentance to bring glory to God and reflect Christ-like character. Leaders are called to model this character for the congregation and mentor other believers into practicing these attitudes and actions.

### Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain how our own sin can produce blind spots in resolving conflict.
- Identify necessary traits for resolving conflict.
- Explain the connection between a believer's identity in Christ and his actions toward other believers regarding conflict.

### Introduction

Conflict within the Shepherd Leadership Team is unavoidable if we are being honest with one another. We are all finite and frail individuals in need of God's transforming grace. Conflict with other congregation members and leaders is also a reality. But how do we deal with conflict? Today, we are going to explore a couple of passages that offer insight into how we can begin with our blind spots, and then we will look at how conflict resolution might look among believers. Before we move into our first passage, let's review the homework from our last session.

### Homework Review

In our last session, we ended with some homework. Let's take a few minutes to discuss your response to the article, "Assume You Are Wrong" by Tim Shorey. Ask yourself three questions about the article:

- 1.) What do you find interesting?
- 2.) What points do you disagree and why?
- 3.) What points do you find applicable to being a Shepherd Leader?

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/assume-you-are-wrong/>

### Obstacle to Christ-like Character

#### Hebrews 3:12-13

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

The writer to the Hebrews isn't speaking to unbelievers but to fellow Christians. He doesn't assume that just because they trust in Jesus, there will no longer be conflict or sin in the lives of God's people. The same applies to us as leaders; we will still struggle with sin within ourselves and within our leadership team. We must be honest about that reality and aware of our own sinful tendencies.

### **Discussion Questions**

How does reminding ourselves and one another of our sinful tendencies and need for God's grace lead to humility?

How might confession with one another deepen our trust toward one another?

### **Transition to Colossians 3:12-15**

Just like our congregation members, we are works in progress; we need God's grace and one another to root out the sin that distorts our relationship with God and distracts us from obedience to Him. So, we've seen how sin can create conflict, but now let's look at a picture of how God's people should treat one another with the help of the Holy Spirit.

### **Colossians 3:12-15**

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

### **Discussion Questions**

What actions does Paul command believers to do in this passage?

Why must the actions listed first be rooted in our identity as described in verse 12?

### **Conclusion**

While we can't avoid conflict, we can act lovingly and humbly before others because God has reconciled us to Himself by grace through faith in Christ. Jesus is not only our example of perfection, but He has also solved our greatest conflict: sin against our holy God. We can confess our sins before God and one another because our identity is not in our work, but in the finished work of Jesus. In our final session, we will connect all three competencies that we have learned so far — verbal communication, leadership development, and conflict resolution — to two distinct yet not separate leadership traits: humility and teachableness.

## **Session 8: Humility/Teachable**

Church leaders must demonstrate faithful character and appropriate competencies to effectively serve their congregation. However, every leader must consistently discover new and develop existing skills, so that he might meet the challenges and opportunities within his leadership responsibilities. This final session will reinforce the necessity of continued growth and education by examining two New Testament passages and praying for one another's faithfulness in self-leadership and service to the congregation.

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify one or two competencies related to being a Shepherd Leader that he would like to develop in the next six months.
- Design two steps to strengthen or develop the competencies.
- Explain the benefits of inviting encouragement and accountability when learning new competencies.

### **Introduction**

While we have reached our final session together in this program, this is by no means the last time we will gather to learn new skills; this is only the beginning. We have introduced verbal communication, leadership development, and conflict resolution as necessary competencies for church leaders in general, and Shepherd Leaders at Judson in particular. In this session, will show how growth in these areas requires humility and teachableness. If we are not honest about our growth, then we will not be as effective as we could be.

In his first letter to his protégé, the apostle Paul identifies important responsibilities for a church leader. Paul recognizes that Timothy has not arrived as a perfect teacher (who is besides Jesus?). Therefore, Paul encourages the young church leader to further develop his skills as a pastor, so that the believers would benefit from his giftings and efforts.

### **1 Timothy 4:13-16**

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

### **Discussion Questions**

What responsibilities does Paul list and how might those skills relate to a Shepherd Leader at Judson Church?

What is one skill listed that you would like to develop in the next six months?

How might our congregation benefit to know that each of our Shepherd Leaders are actively learning new skills and strengthening existing ones to better serve them?

### Exercise: Planning Your Progress

After you have identified one or two skills, write down two steps you can take in the next two months to develop the skills. Below are a couple of examples:

Competency	Step #1	Step #2
Explain the gospel in under one minute	Read <i>What is the Gospel?</i> by Greg Gilbert and takes notes on key points.	Write a draft of a script of your presentation and practice with another church leader.
Hospital visitation	Observe a fellow church leader making a visit and take notes.	Debrief the visit with the church leader for key reminders.

### Galatians 6:1-3

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

### Discussion Questions

What attitudes does Paul describe in this passage and how might they relate to leadership?

How might an arrogant attitude manifest itself in leadership and how might the attitude destroy a leader, his team, and the congregation?

### Closing Exercise: Prayer for One Another

In our final exercise together, we are going to actively pray for the man to our right. Over the past eight weeks (and even before then), we have learned one another's strengths and weaknesses. In your prayer, ask God to show the man grace and mercy by reminding him of his identity in Christ. Then ask God to give the man a spirit of humility and determination to further develop his competencies, so that God may be glorified, and Judson Church would be well served.

## APPENDIX 5

### COMPARISON BETWEEN PRE- AND POST- TRAINING SURVEY SCORES

The following table reflects the data gathered in the pre-training survey and the post-training survey. The table contains the average score and the change in score for each question.

Question	Pre-Training Average Score	Post-Training Average Score	Change in Score
1. I effectively lead my family at home.	4.8	5.4	.6
2. I consistently teach the Bible to my family at home.	4.4	5	.6
3. I can clearly articulate the gospel in under one minute.	5	5.8	.8
4. I can recognize the gifts and talents of others around me.	5	5.2	.2
5. I can apply biblical discipline as prescribed in Matthew 18:15-17.	4.8	4.6	-.2
6. I practice hospitality at home by loving and serving others.	5	5.4	.4
7. I fulfill the qualification of a biblical leader as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.	5.2	5.4	.2
8. As a leader, I am responsible to identify and develop other leaders.	5.8	5.6	-.2
9. I can identify appropriate scriptural passages related to church leadership.	4.8	5	.2
10. I can explain the biblical narrative of redemption in the Old and New Testaments.	4	5	1
11. I can biblically and effectively pray for a sick person.	4	4.8	.8
12. I can provide helpful and biblical counsel to a couple with marriage issues.	4.4	4.8	.4
13. I can explain a biblical rationale for tithing and/or financial giving.	5.4	5	-.4
14. I can clearly articulate the vision of Judson Church.	5.2	6	.8
15. I can correctly divide the Scriptures.	4	5	1
16. I can identify my spiritual gifts.	4.8	4.8	0
17. I can articulate my personal discipleship plan.	4.8	4.8	0
18. I can guide an unbeliever to salvation using the Scriptures.	4.4	5	.6
19. I can articulate Judson's Church's position on baptism.	5.8	5.6	-.2
20. I can articulate Judson Church's position on communion.	5.6	5.6	0
21. I can lead the congregation in a pastoral prayer.	4.6	5.2	.6
22. I can articulate the biblical qualifications of a deacon.	5	5.6	.6
23. I can help resolve a conflict between two believers.	5.2	4.8	-.4
24. I can articulate the necessity of spiritual disciplines to a new believer.	5.2	5	-.2

APPENDIX 6

T-TEST RESULTS: ALL QUESTIONS

Table A1. T-test: Paired two sample for means

	Pre-training Total	Post-training Total
Mean	4.883333333	5.183333333
Variance	0.264057971	0.13884058
Observations	24	24
Pearson Correlation	0.543459899	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	23	
t Stat	-3.330057915	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00145575	
t Critical one-tail	1.713871528	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0029115	
t Critical two-tail	2.06865761	

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## ABSTRACT

### INCREASING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN THE SHEPHERD LEADERSHIP TEAM THROUGH A STRUCTURED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AT JUDSON CHURCH IN JOLIET, ILLINOIS

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This project aimed to increase the leadership competencies of the Shepherd Leadership Team through a structured development program at Judson Church in Joliet, Illinois. Chapter 1 covers the ministry context Judson Church, describes the rationale and goals for the project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of three passages of Scripture (2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 20:27-28; 1 Tim 3:1-7) to show the necessity of increasing leadership competencies in church leaders. Chapter 3 explores leadership development of key figures in Reformation and post-Reformation periods. Chapter 4 describes the process of the project, including the content and evaluation of the competencies. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on the completion of the specified goals. This project aimed to glory God through the development of church leaders in their leadership competencies.

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### EDUCATION

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### MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

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