LEVERAGING TRANSFERABLE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

TO INCREASE LAY LEADER TRAINING PERCEPTION AT

NEW VISION BAPTIST CHURCH,

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

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by

Gregory James Freeman

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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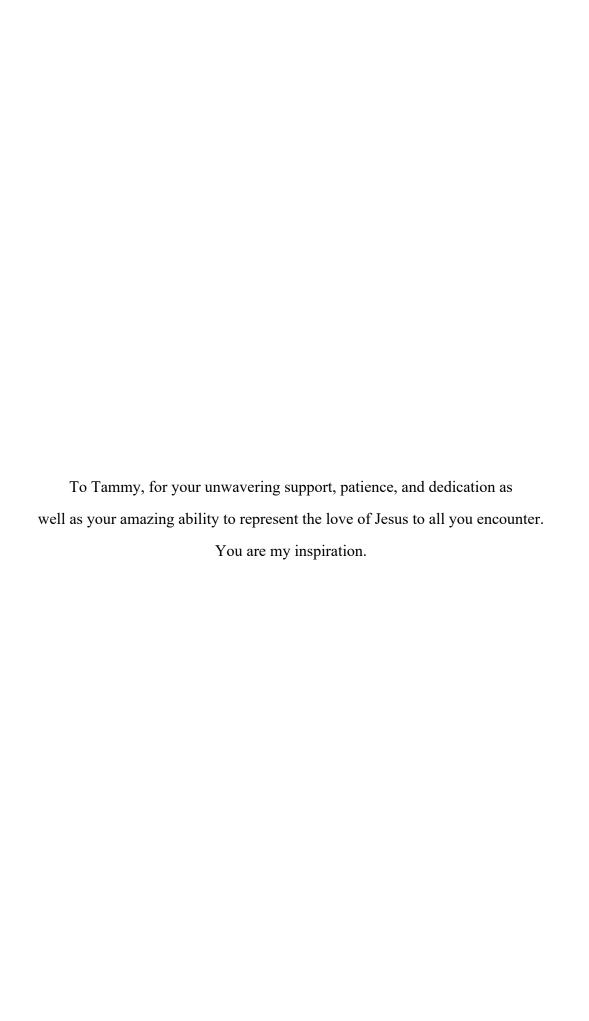NEW VISION BAPTIST CHURCH,

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

Gregory James Freeman

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To Tammy, for your unwavering support, patience, and dedication as

well as your amazing ability to represent the love of Jesus to all you encounter.

You are my inspiration.

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PREFACE

My two decades as a church member at New Vision Baptist Church have defined me in ways I could not have possibly imagined when my family first walked in the doors in the fall of 2003. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and with the support, care, and encouragement of my church family, I have grown as a leader, as a father, as a Christian, and as a man. The numerous staff and lay leaders I have served with and shared life with, in the good times and the challenging times, have had a major impact on me. God used each person and each situation to grow me. A special acknowledgement goes to Pastor Brady Cooper for believing in me and providing me an opportunity to fulfil my ministry calling. This project is my effort to acknowledge the impact of good leaders caring for and investing in the spiritual development of others, as I have personally benefitted from such investment. I pray that more and more believers would step into the roles of service for which the Lord has called and equipped them.

I am indebted to the faculty and staff at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for their faithful adherence to the Word of God and their passionate desire to equip men and women to serve the bride of Christ.

Greg Freeman

Murfreesboro, Tennessee

December 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission statement of New Vision Baptist Church (NVBC) is "Guiding People to Lives of Gospel Transformation." True transformation is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (1 Cor 1:18). The role of the church, therefore, is to equip and encourage people to develop the spiritual disciplines that make them aware of, and open to, the movement of the Spirit. NVBC is a large church with a substantial number of people who are unchurched, lightly-churched, or are new believers within the congregation. While the church has a large and well-trained staff, it is impossible to care for that many individuals using only the vocational staff team. As a result, effectively engaging people on their spiritual journey requires substantial volunteer support. Moreover, Scripture is clear that ministry is accomplished by the saints, and it is the role of the pastor to equip them (Eph 4:11-12). Accordingly, NVBC requires a large cadre of trained and equipped lay leaders to facilitate guiding people to lives of gospel transformation. Traditional leadership training at NVBC has been task-specific and therefore not perceived as sufficiently valuable by many lay leaders; however, for the church to execute ministry plans, lay leader training needs to be transformed so that lay leaders view it more positively and are more willing to participate. This project seeks to use transferable leadership competencies in training to increase lay leaders' perception of the value of NVBC training.

**Context**

NVBC began with seven couples meeting in a bonus room, humbly seeking God's direction as to how best to care for their families and each other. Thirty-five years

later, NVBC is comprised of almost six thousand members spread across two campuses and six worship services. The church is located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Murfreesboro is the largest city in Rutherford County, which was the second fastest growing large county in the state of Tennessee from 2010 to 2020.[1] Over the span of that decade, Rutherford County grew by 30 percent compared to 9 percent growth for Tennessee and just over 7 percent growth for the United States.[2] During that same time period, the city of Murfreesboro grew by almost 41 percent to a total population of roughly 153,000.[3] The congregation is predominantly white (the city of Murfreesboro is about 72 percent white) and young. The church database shows that about 46 percent of members classify as Millennials and 37 percent as Generation X.[4]

NVBC is committed to ministering to the entire family. This contributes to a circular dynamic whereby age-graded ministries (i.e., preschool, children, students, and college) are staffed and resourced to meet the needs of the families that attend. As those ministries are developed, even more young families are drawn to the church. The different ministry areas create events and activities designed to encourage engagement among the church family while also creating attractive opportunities for people in the congregation to invite lost or un-churched family members and friends. NVBC is intentional about

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[1] US Census Bureau, "2020 Census Demographic Data Map Viewer," accessed September 24, 2021, https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2566121a73de463995ed2b2fd7ff6eb7.

[2] US Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Rutherford County, Tennessee," accessed September 24, 2021, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/TN,rutherfordcountytennessee,US/POP010220.

[3] US Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Murfreesboro City, Tennessee," accessed September 24, 2021, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/murfreesborocitytennessee,TN,rutherfordcountytennessee,US/POP010220.

[4] In *Generational IQ*, Haydn Shaw identifies the generational classification based on birth year. In his approach, a person is considered a Millennial if their birth year is between 1981 and 2001. Haydn Shaw, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, and the Future Is Bright* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2015), 81. Shaw continues to note that a person is considered Generation X if their birth year is between 1965 and 1980 (63). A person is considered a Baby Boomer if their birth year is between 1946 and 1964 (43). A person is considered a Traditionalist if their birth year is 1945 or earlier (25).

developing and facilitating programs and environments that create biblical community. This approach is primarily found in the form of small groups. Small groups are a key component of most age-graded ministries, from children's ministry through college and adult ministries. This broad approach to reaching and engaging people requires a large number of lay leaders to execute effectively.

The staff leadership believes that people are well-positioned for gospel transformation when they are actively growing in spiritual maturity. Discipleship resulting from small group participation is one aspect of growth, but it is not the only one. Ministry service is another way to achieve spiritual growth. Serving others through a wide variety of avenues is not only an invaluable way for the church family to grow spiritually, but also a critical element of taking the love of Jesus to the community. A key element of discipleship is serving others by serving the church. Hearkening back to Ephesians 4:11-12, it is the role of the staff at NVBC to ensure lay leaders are regularly and effectively trained to be Godly leaders.

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

Solomon wrote, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps" (Prov 16:9).[5] NVBC has been blessed with numerous strengths as it works to accomplish its mission, and the leadership, staff, and congregation recognize that everything good that has happened and will happen at and through the church is a result of God's sovereignty. They do not take anything for granted but pursue ministry opportunities with humility. Accordingly, the strengths of the church are the Lord's provision. At the same time, the church is comprised of fallen people, saved only by the grace of God. With human frailty comes weaknesses that the church leadership works continually to identify and address. The strengths of NVBC include relevant and applicable teaching by the senior pastor, ongoing church growth, and a strong sense of church unity.

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[5] All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

The weaknesses of NVBC include the negative perception related to the church being too large, a congregation that does not yet reflect the demographics of the community, and a relatively low percentage of mature members who are unable or unwilling to invest time into serving the ministries of NVBC.

Several strengths at NVBC have contributed to the church's growth over the past nineteen years. One of the most impactful is the teaching of the senior pastor. Not only a gifted communicator, but he also has a God-given ability to exegete and teach the Bible in a way that is relatable while offering clear, practical application. His messages, grounded in Scripture, resonate not only with long-time Christians, but with those who have little to no experience in church. Those sermons have connected with a broad spectrum of people, many of whom have come to faith in Christ at NVBC. A by-product of that breadth of reach is that those new believers are enthusiastic about inviting their non-churched friends and family members to NVBC. That has resulted in the growth of the past nineteen years, which has created another strength: momentum. Year-over-year increases in baptisms, attendance, and missional opportunities contribute to a sense of momentum that creates spiritual excitement. NVBC is intentional about recruiting, equipping, and sending people into the community and around the world to engage people and share the gospel. This ministry momentum encourages the church family, which results in increased involvement. Another key strength for NVBC is a strong sense of unity. Things that so commonly split churches, such as program changes, staff changes, building programs, etc., have not been divisive at NVBC. Members have seen God at work over close to two decades and are generally willing to subjugate their own preferences to protect the unity of the church.

One of the weaknesses at NVBC is a challenge inherent to being a larger church: many consider NVBC to be too big. They attend because of the quality programming for children and students, but as individuals they do not feel known or may feel overlooked. As a result, they tend to be disengaged. Their presence requires volunteer support

(preschool volunteers, children's ministry teachers, deacon support, etc.) but they do not serve the church family. Another weakness is that while the church leadership desires to have a multi-generational church family that represents the local community, that is still a work in progress. The predominance of younger families is exciting, but the relative lack of mature believers means a deficit of spiritual mentors and experienced lay leaders. A third weakness at NVBC is the growing reality that people are less able or willing to give their time to the church. Many people are willing to serve, but they feel limited in how much time they can give. While this is a challenge for most churches, given NVBC's extensive ministries, the unwillingness or inability of a substantial percentage of the church body to serve is not just a weakness, but a threat. NVBC over-indexes in terms of families with young children, which requires even more volunteer support, yet those young families often prioritize other activities (generally non-church activities) over investing time into the ministry. As a result, the church needs to be intentional in how and when it asks people to invest their time, particularly in terms of training.

**Rationale**

NVBC's approach to ministry is broad, wide-ranging, and designed to engage and encourage individuals and families regardless of their level of spiritual maturity. It has served the church well, leading to dramatic growth since 2004. More importantly, it has served the kingdom of God well, with over six thousand individuals professing faith and trust in Jesus Christ and following through in believers' baptism. However, the approach is dependent on active and well-trained lay leaders, and the current training methods are not sustainable given the cultural shifts in the amount of time many people are willing to give. As a result, it is incumbent on the church to add value to lay leaders by developing leadership training that has practical application throughout their lives. This project attempted to accomplish that by identifying and training leadership competencies that can be leveraged across a variety of difference contexts, not just within

NVBC, for the ultimate purpose of increasing the perception of the value of training among lay leaders.

There are theological and practical reasons why this project was needed. Pastors are called to equip believers to do ministry (Eph 4:11-12). Believers are called to serve each other and the church (1 Pet 4:10-11). Believers are called be salt and light in order to reflect the love of Christ to the world (Matt 5:13-16). The practical reasons include enhancing the sustainability of the ministries that guide people to lives of gospel transformation as well as preparing leaders to lead with a biblical worldview in various settings. A third practical reason for this project is to increase long-term training participation among lay leaders by increasing the perceived value of NVBC leadership training.

The first theological reason for this project is that equipping people to serve the church is a biblical expectation and is, in fact, a task of the pastor (Eph 4:11-12). Writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul identified different roles within the church (4:11). Each role is dependent on different gifts, but all exist for a specific reason. That is, to equip people within the church to do the ministry God has called and gifted them to do for the purpose of "building up the body of Christ" (4:12). God does not need people to accomplish his plan on earth, but he does choose to use people to do so. Church leaders bear a responsibility for ensuring that those they shepherd are given opportunities to discover, develop, and deploy the gifts God has given them. This is not to suggest that training is not currently happening at NVBC, nor is it to suggest that this leadership training project comprehensively equips people to serve. It does, however, emphasize the importance of equipping as part of the NVBC culture.

The second theological reason for this project is that believers are called to serve the church as part of their spiritual growth. It is easy for Christians to outsource duties to vocational staff, but that is not an accurate reflection of a New Testament church. Peter refers to believers as "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession,

that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). As royal priests, believers are called to be part of the enduring work of God for the glory of God (1 Pet 4:11). Jesus exemplified the value of service, claiming that he came to serve, not to be served (Matt 20:28) and used himself as an example to the disciples (John 13:12-17). Christians were created for good works, which often manifests by serving the bride of Christ (Eph 2:10).

The third theological reason for this project is that believers are called to take their giftedness to the world, for God's glory (Matt 28:19-20). Christians are called to live in the world so that the grace and mercy of Jesus is reflected in them (John 17:14-15). Leadership development within the church should not be limited to the needs of the church. Believers placed in leadership roles in workplaces, schools, friend groups, and so on have the opportunity to lead with a biblical worldview as another way of sharing scriptural truth. As a result, as Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck note, the "church is able to multiply the Christ-empowered leaders the world desperately needs."[6]

The first practical reason for this project is to create long-term sustainability of the ministries at NVBC. To accomplish the mission before it, NVBC depends upon lay leaders trained and equipped to care for the people and ministries of the church. As lay leaders participate in training events that provide practical application to other aspects of their lives, their perceived value of church training increases. Ministry training time shifts from being an imposition to becoming a true benefit across a variety of contexts. The identification and development of those leadership competencies that are transferable will equip church staff to deliver training events and plans that are meaningful to both the church and the lay leader, resulting in increased willingness by the lay leader to invest time in NVBC training events.

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[6] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 29.

The second practical reason for this project is to develop better all-around leaders who will be equipped to take a biblical worldview into all their leadership contexts. A key component of this project is to identify those leadership competencies that add value to leadership development at NVBC and are transferable to other contexts. Leadership in any context has an impact on other people. Regardless of whether the leader is "leading others" or "leading leaders" there is a multiplication effect when biblical leadership is exhibited.[7] Leaders who are leading and living in ways that are consistent with their words reveal true faith convictions to their followers.[8]

The third practical reason for this project is that as people see increased value in the leadership training offered by NVBC they will prioritize future training events. As they are trained on leadership competencies that they can use outside of their church serving, they will participate with more frequency. The net effect will be more participation in NVBC leadership training events.

## Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase the perceived value of leadership training participation among lay leaders by leveraging leadership competencies that are transferable among multiple contexts.

## Goals

The goals for this project were designed to assess collectively the impact of the enhanced approach to training. The first goal established a baseline of the perception of the value of leadership training at NVBC while the fourth goal quantified the attitudinal change among lay leaders toward NVBC leadership training. The second and third goals reflected the work involved in changing and implementing the training itself.

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[7] Mac Lake, *The Multiplication Effect: Building a Leadership Pipeline That Solves Your Leadership Shortage* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2020), 71.

[8] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 19.

1. The first goal of this project was to assess the perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders through a survey.

2. The second goal of this project was to identify transferable leadership competencies that benefit the ministries of NVBC and also equip lay leaders to exhibit Christian leadership abilities within other contexts, such as their homes, workplaces, schools, etc.

3. The third goal of this project was to develop the curriculum to train lay leaders in three transferable leadership competencies and to develop and implement a one-day, multi-session leadership training event that would equip lay leaders with those leadership competencies.

4. The fourth goal of this project was to increase the perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders.

The goals of this project were measurable through a specific research methodology that allowed a determination of the success of the project. The methodology measured the change in the perception of lay leaders of the value of NVBC leadership training.

## Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of the four goals. The first goal was to assess the perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders through a survey. This goal was measured by administering a New Vision Training Perception Survey (NVTPS).[9] NVBC congregants who had participated in an NVBC training within the twenty-four months prior to the survey distribution were invited to participate. The survey used a Likert scale to assess the respondents' perception of the quality of the training, the value of the training, and their willingness to participate in future training events. This goal was considered successfully met when one hundred surveys had been completed and the data had been analyzed to determine a baseline of willingness to participate in future training sessions.

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[9] See appendix 2. All 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.

The second goal was to develop a catalog of ten leadership competencies that benefit the ministries of NVBC and also equip lay leaders to exhibit biblically-based leadership competencies within other contexts, such as their homes, workplaces, schools, etc. The catalog was developed based on input from the NVBC pastoral staff, strategic ministry team members, and deacons via a quantitative, ranked survey.[10] This goal was measured by the responses of the participants as they ranked leadership competencies important in their contexts and experience. This goal was considered successful when thirty respondents identified ten different leadership competencies as most valuable to them, based on their opinions and experience.

The third goal was to develop the curriculum to train lay leaders in three of the transferable leadership competencies described in the second goal and to develop and implement a one-day, multi-session leadership training event that would equip lay leaders with those leadership competencies. The curriculum consisted of content for each of the three competencies that included the scriptural basis for the competency as well as practical application. This goal was to be measured by at least four members of the NVBC staff pastoral team who utilized a rubric to determine biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[11] This goal was considered successful when each competency training achieved an aggregate average score of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale, as measured by the rubric.

The fourth goal of this project was to increase the perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders. This goal was measured by administering the same NVTPS identified in the first goal. NVBC lay leaders who attended the training session identified in the third goal were invited to participate in the survey. The survey used a Likert scale to assess the respondents' perception of the quality of the training, the value of

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[10] See appendix 1.

[11] See appendix 3.

the training, and their willingness to participate in future training events. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the willingness of respondents to participate in future training events over the baseline established in the first goal. At least fifty post-training event surveys were required for the *t*-test.

### Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

*Lay leader(s).* At NVBC, a *lay leader* is a member of the church family who serves in a capacity such that they have direct influence over other people within the ministry. Lay leaders are volunteers and are not considered staff, though they may have substantial authority depending on the nature of their lay leadership role.

*Staff leadership.* At NVBC, *staff leadership* is defined as staff members who lead ministry departments. This is the executive staff level.

*Transferable competencies.* Based upon their research, David Ulrich, Norm Smallwood, and Kate Sweetman argue that 60 percent to 70 percent of leadership is comprised of those leadership competencies that represent "the basics, the fundamentals, or the essentials of leadership."[12] These skills are core to leadership in general and are therefore transferable across various contexts and cultures. In the context of this project, the leadership competencies included will be considered *transferable competencies*.

Only one delimitation applied to this project. The leadership competencies evaluated and chosen for training were limited to those that are transferable across multiple contexts, including secular contexts. Leadership competencies that are specifically spiritual in nature were outside the scope of this project. This ensures that lay

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[12] David Ulrich, Norm Smallwood, and Kate Sweetman, *The Leadership Code: Five Rules to Lead By* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2008), 12.

leaders clearly understood the leadership skill being taught, though through a biblical worldview, could be directly applicable to any other context.

## Conclusion

The ministries of NVBC have resulted in kingdom impact, yet for that work to continue requires lay leaders within the church to commit to serving God by serving his people in the church. The current approach to training is flawed in that many lay leaders are unwilling to invest time and energy into NVBC training because they have a low perceived value of that training. This project was designed to remedy that by increasing the perception of the value of training by focusing on training leadership competencies that lay leaders can use in the other areas of their lives, as well as the church. Chapter 2 addresses the biblical and theological mandate for believers to serve the kingdom and for pastors to equip believers for that purpose. Chapter 3 provides a backdrop for leadership development and transferable leadership competencies in both secular and Christian organizations. Chapter 4 provides information about the process of assessing the perception of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders as well as the development of new training on three leadership competencies. Chapter 5 evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the project.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON EQUIPPING LAY LEADERS TO SERVE

From the beginning, God had a plan to use mankind in the stewarding of his creation. In the creation narrative, God fashioned man in his image (Gen 1:27) and for his glory (Isa 43:7). Man was given the responsibility of dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26, 28). The tasking of mankind to serve God's kingdom was not thwarted by the fall. Indeed, followers of Christ continue to be equipped by God with gifts (Rom 12:3-8) and charged with participating in the fulfilment of his mission of the redemption and restoration of his creation (Matt 28:18-20). The psalmist celebrates that he is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14). Even as mankind is called to service in general, so individual believers are uniquely created for their own specific call to service. In his sovereignty, God allows human beings, especially believers, to serve him by serving his church.

J. I. Packer contends the reason man was made was for the purpose of knowing God.[1] An element of knowing God means having a relationship with him, specifically, the type of relationship that includes personal involvement.[2] Real relationship means possessing shared values; believers who pursue the Lord are intentional about investing in those things that are valuable and important to him. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul describes the relationship between the Creator and his workmanship, highlighting that his workmanship was created to accomplish good works that bring glory to his kingdom (Eph 2:10). As his creation, therefore, God has invited his people to be part of his mission.

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[1] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 33.

[2] Packer, *Knowing God*, 39.

The metanarrative of Scripture is replete with examples of God working through men and women for their good and for his glory. Early in his earthly ministry, Packer writes, Jesus called the disciples, "took them into his confidence, and enrolled them as his agents to declare to the world the kingdom of God."[3] This nucleus of followers was gathered not only for preaching, but for serving people through the authority of Christ and for the glory of God (Matt 10:1-8a). The works of ministry were not limited to the initial twelve disciples. In addition to those twelve, Jesus sent out another seventy-two, telling them that even more "laborers" are needed (Luke 10:1-2). The expectation of Christ-followers to serve God's kingdom continues post-ascension. As the early church grew, it became essential that the work of ministry be shared. Thus began the deaconate and the need for the New Testament church to have individuals committed to serving and supporting its mission (Acts 6:1-8).

Not only does God choose to work through his people to accomplish his purpose, but he also equips them accordingly. Paul is clear about the equipping, or gifting, of believers in his letters to the churches in Rome (Rom 12:6-8), Corinth (1 Cor 12:4-11), and Ephesus (Eph 2:10), as well as in his letter to Timothy (2 Tim 3:16-17). While the Lord equips believers with "talents and circumstances," there is also a need for them to grow the gifts they are given.[4] As a body of believers, they need leadership to understand the best ways to develop and deploy their gifts. According to Paul, that is the duty of the church leader (Eph 4:11-12). Barnabas and Saul modeled that responsibility as they spent a year teaching (διδάξαι, *didaxai*) "a great many people" at the church in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26), which contributed to the growth of that church.[5]

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[3] Packer, *Knowing God*, 37.

[4] E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 56.

[5] Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 422.

In Scripture, God calls believers to develop and utilize their gifts to serve his kingdom. An exegesis of 1 Peter 4:10-11 will explain that believers are expected to serve one another with the gifts they are given. An exegesis of Romans 12:1 will reveal that believers are called to sacrifice the entirety of their lives to God as a response to what he has done for them. Through this sacrifice, they are actively worshipping him. An exegesis of Ephesians 2:10 will show that God created his people to do good works on his behalf, good works that he prepared beforehand, even before he created his people. An exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-12 will describe the role and importance of ministry leaders in equipping believers for works of ministry and God's expectation for believers to undertake those good works to build up the body of Christ. The cumulative effect of this exegetical work is to provide a biblical and theological foundation for this project that is designed to equip lay leaders to serve the Lord by improving and enhancing lay leader training and its perception at NVBC.

**First Peter 4:10-11**

As the first of two New Testament books that bear the name of the apostle Peter, 1 Peter is a succinct and clear summary of "Christian belief and practice."[6] I. Howard Marshall notes, "One thing that stands out clearly from this letter, it is that Christian congregations were already beginning to know what it was like to live in a hostile environment where other people made it tough for them just because they were Christians."[7] Living in this hostile environment meant mutually supporting other members of this nascent Christian community in an intentional way. "Christians," claims Paul Achtemeier, "are not to be mere bystanders of the world around them. They are to

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[6] J. Ramsey Michaels, "1 Peter," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 914.

[7] I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 14.

participate actively, to be partners, active partners with their holy God" in serving God's kingdom.[8]

**First Peter 4:10-11 Background**

Writing to believers scattered across "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Pet 1:1), Peter encourages them in their faith in the face of the oppression inherent in living a Christian life under Roman authority.[9] Peter is not addressing a specific location or situation, but is instead addressing the challenges faced by Christians living dispersed across these areas.[10] These distributed communities formed a sort of geographic loop, and as a result of this loop, the letter would have been delivered to the "major centers of Christian influence in Asia Minor" with copies being shared with churches in adjacent cities along the route as well.[11] Through the letter, Peter is giving these churches and Christians a message of hope found in their salvation through Christ, along with an encouragement to persist in their faith. Thomas Schreiner neatly summarizes the message Peter is communicating to his audience:

> They are encouraged to persevere, knowing that a great reward will be theirs on the day of salvation. Such perseverance is exhibited by living a godly life, living as good citizens, model slaves, gentle wives, and understanding husbands. When believers live in such a way, they indicate that they are placing their hope in God rather than in the joys and comforts of this world.[12]

Though this letter is not directed to a specific church, Peter does provide guidance as to how the members of a church body are to interact in regard to one another.

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[8] Paul J. Achtemeier, "1 Peter 1:13-21," *Interpretation* 60, no. 3 (2006): 308.

[9] Peter's authorship of 1 Peter has been challenged in modern times, however that debate is not germane to the biblical and theological foundation of this project. I am persuaded by the argument Schreiner makes for Petrine authorship in Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 26-36.

[10] Michaels, "1 Peter," 917.

[11] Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 39.

[12] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 45.

**First Peter 4:10 Exegesis**

In 1 Peter 4:10, Peter writes, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." Addressing Christians in the context of the internal workings of the church, Peter is explicating the expectation that each believer use the gift they received.[13] This is a responsibility of every believer. J. Ramsey Michaels notes that the specific use of ἕκαστος (*hekastos*), defined as "each" or "every," shifts the responsibility from the collective church in Asia Minor to "particular individuals in their respective congregations."[14] The gifts in view, then, are those conferred upon individual Christians and the implication is clear that it is the responsibility of individual believers to use the gifts they have been given. Moreover, by using *hekastos*, Donald Senior contends that Peter has affirmed "that each member of the community has received a gift from God."[15] Not only is every believer given gifts, as well as the opportunity and responsibility to use them for God's kingdom, but no believer is to be excluded from using the gifts they have necessarily been given. Leveraging these gifts is part of the Christian journey.

Peter uses χάρισμα (*charisma*) for "gift" in the same manner as Paul when Paul referred to the spiritual gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12. Though *charisma* is usually associated with a gift of a spiritual nature, it can also be defined as "a gift of grace, a gift involving grace (*charis*) on the part of God as the donor."[16] Schreiner notes that *charisma* "implies that the gifts believers have are the result of God's grace, and the word 'received' confirms this judgement."[17] This distinction is important: in this usage of *charisma* these

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[13] Paul Himes, "1 Peter," in *Lexham Research Commentaries*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Elizabeth Vince, and Abigail Salinger (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 1 Pet 4:7-11, Logos Bible Software.

[14] J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 248.

[15] Donald P. Senior, *1 Peter*, Sacra Pagina Series 15 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003), 121.

[16] W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), s.v. "Gift, Giving."

[17] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 213.

are gifts of grace as a demonstration of God's benevolence. No person deserves the gifts they are given; rather, God chooses to provide the gifts as a demonstration of his lovingkindness. These gifts are not naturally occurring abilities, but are instead a God-provided equipping.[18] Karen Jobes argues that the usage of *charisma* in 1 Peter 4:10 speaks to a broader sense of gifts relative to those outlined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:4-10. "Peter," she comments, "implies that each Christian believer, by definition, has received a gift of God's grace. That experience of grace is to be directed toward service to others."[19] It bears mentioning that in lieu of enumerating the gifts God may provide, the gifts to which Peter refers are many-varied, just as God's grace in delivering them is ποικίλης (*poikilēs*) "varied." In 1 Peter 1:6, the church at Rome is encouraged in their faith despite their *poikilēs* trials as Christians in an oppressive milieu. Jobes observes that the various gifts of God representing the "manifold forms" of God's grace are a response to the various trials the readers have encountered.[20] Schreiner expands on that notion, arguing that the multiple forms of God's grace are demonstrated so "the diversity of gifts reveals the multifaceted character of God's grace."[21]

Because of the generosity through which God provides the gifts, it is incumbent on the recipient to leverage the gifts received for the benefit of the community.[22] Peter uses διακονοῦντες (*diakonountes*) to convey that gifts are given for the express purpose of ministering to others; that ministry of service can take many different forms. This includes, but is not limited to, eminently practical ways such as visiting the sick and hurting, providing physical sustenance, or giving financial support. What is in view here, according

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[18] Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, Sacrina Pagina Series 15 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 160.

[19] Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 281.

[20] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 281.

[21] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 214.

[22] Senior, *1 Peter*, 121.

to Schreiner, is that "spiritual gifts are given to serve and to help others, to strengthen others in the faith."[23] Though the gifts conferred by God are for the benefit of the ministry, not solely the individual, it is the case that as individuals are well-served, the ministry of God is well-served. Further, using the God-provided gifts for God's purpose is a function of good stewardship. Peter's use of οἰκονόμοι (*oikonomoi*) speaks to managing a household or estate; that is, making best use of the resources provided by the master.[24] Though the word choice of *oikonomoi* can sometimes be translated as "administrators," Michaels notes that in the context of the verse, Peter is not limiting the responsibility of administration to "holders of any particular office in the congregations," but this expectation of stewardship is applicable to all who have received gifts which, necessarily, includes all believers.[25] Marshall concurs, pointing out that the gifts are available to, and should be used by, all members of the congregation. These God-given gifts, he writes, "are not in any way confined to the elders or to any other group separated from the rest of the congregation."[26] All believers, then, are equipped with gifts and are expected to steward them.

The interpretation of 1 Peter 4:10 is clear: Peter is reminding the dispersed and oppressed church that each believer has been given a gift. To steward those gifts the way God expects, they are to serve one another with them. As Achtemeier notes, that expectation creates an imperative to serve God's people as a reflection of "God's gracious lordship over human beings."[27]

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[23] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 214.

[24] Vine, Unger and White, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*, s.v. "Steward, Stewardship."

[25] Michaels, *1 Peter*, 249.

[26] Marshall, *1 Peter*, 146.

[27] Achtemeier, "1 Peter 1:13-21," 308.

**First Peter 4:11a Exegesis**

   Continuing in 1 Peter 4:11a, Peter writes, "Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God." With the acknowledgement that God's gifts are varied as a backdrop, Peter begins verse 11 by referencing two specific categories of gifts: speaking and serving. As evidenced from the variety of gifts inferred in verse 10, Peter does not intend a limitation on the number or type of gifts available. Instead, the two broad categories of speaking and serving encapsulate any spiritual gift God chooses to bestow.[28] As a result, it is evident Peter is referring to the breadth of gifts as opposed to specifying any particular gift.[29]

   Further, Peter is describing the manner and spirit in which they should be used. The context of λαλεῖ (*lalei*) "speaks," in proximity to λόγια θεοῦ· (*logia theou*) "oracles of God," indicates that the way Paul is referring to "speaks" transcends regular interpersonal communication, but is intended for a more authoritative situation, such as a public assembly or worship service.[30] At the same time, Davids notes that this type of speech is not necessarily restricted to elders or church officials,[31] while Michaels suggests the emphasis is on Christian believers speaking to each other and encouraging one another in the faith.[32] Timothy Keller identifies three levels of the "ministry of the Word" and suggests this verse is particularly applicable to what he considers level 2: an intentional approach to "counseling, instructing, teaching, or evangelizing" that is outside of a formal

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[28] I acknowledge there is a robust debate regarding the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, but that debate is outside the scope of this project. I am persuaded by the position on cessationism as articulated in Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville: B & H, 2018), 126-127, Kindle.

[29] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 215.

[30] Senior, *1 Peter*, 121.

[31] Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 161.

[32] Michaels, *1 Peter*, 250.

worship service.[33] The underlying purpose of this instruction is that those gifted to teach or preach do so with the seriousness of purpose as if they were speaking God's own words.[34] Not only must those speaking on behalf of the Lord understand the seriousness of his Word, but they have to acknowledge also that the words they speak must be consistent with the Word of God, and are not a function of their own speculations or preferences.[35] Words spoken concerning God and his will must be consistent with the Word of God.

**First Peter 4:11b Exegesis**

In 1 Peter 4:11b, Peter elaborates on serving: "Whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." The concept of serving one another with the gifts provided by God carries from verse 10 into verse 11b with Peter again using διακονοῦντες (*diakonountes*). In verse 10, the author was explicit that the gifts received from God are a function of his grace. In verse 11, Peter informs his audience that the service for which the gifts are to be leveraged can only be accomplished through the "strength that God supplies." Davids points out that χορηγεῖ (*chorēgei*) means "to defray the expenses for something."[36] The strength required for these acts of service, therefore, can only funded by God, not by human effort. Serving, then, is not a function of an individual's strength, it is a function of God's strength. Serving through the strength that God supplies allows for God to be δοξάζηται (*doxazētai*) "glorified" through Jesus Christ. The "ultimate purpose of service in the church," Paul Himes comments, "is that, in everything, God will be glorified."[37]

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[33] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 3.

[34] Grudem, *1 Peter*, 183.

[35] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 282.

[36] Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 162.

[37] Himes, "1 Peter," 1 Pet 4:7-11.

In 1 Peter 4:11, Peter is building upon verse 10 in that the gifts given to believers are to be used to serve one another by explaining that both speaking and serving are to be done through God's will and God's strength for God's glory.

**Summary: Believers Are Expected to Serve
the Body with the Gifts They
Have Been Given**

The audience to which Peter was writing needed encouragement as a body of believers, dispersed as they were across an empire that, if not systematically oppressive, was openly hostile to the fledgling Christian movement. Peter tells the Christian diaspora they have each been given a gift (*charisma*), and more specifically a gift of grace, and they are to use the gifts they are given by God to serve or minister (*diakonountes*) to one another. However, the gifts have a designated reason. Believers are given gifts for the expressed purpose of serving others. It is the responsibility of the recipients to manage the gifts they have been given so that purpose is fulfilled by deploying them in the service of other believers. God equipped individuals in a variety of ways to meet the varied needs within the church. Additionally, God is the source of strength needed by believers to serve one another. The church is dependent on the spiritual gifts God has provided and it is incumbent on people to use those gifts accordingly for the sake of the mission of the church.[38] When Christians recognize and use their gifts in the service of the kingdom, as they are expected to, God receives the glory. Therefore, efforts that help believers identify, develop, and deploy the gifts they have been given serve to grow the kingdom of God and fulfill God's purpose for them.

## Romans 12:1

The theological importance of Paul's letter to the church at Rome cannot be overstated. Martin Luther claimed, "It is the very purest Gospel," and suggested that

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[38] Marshall, *1 Peter*, 146.

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believers should not only memorize the letter but read it daily.[39] Among other purposes

for the book, James D. G. Dunn suggests that the letter to the Romans, and specifically

Romans 12:1-2, "calls for a commitment in daily living," resulting in the possibility of

knowledge of God's will.[40] Schreiner comments that the exhortation of Romans 12:1 can

be summarized as a command for believers to give themselves "wholly to God."[41]

**Romans 12:1 Background**

Likely writing between AD 55 and 58, Paul was addressing the church in Rome,

though he had never been there in person (Rom 1:13).[42] The nature and composition of

the audience to which Paul was writing is worth noting. In AD 49, the Roman emperor

Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, as there was trouble stemming from disputes

within the Jewish community, specifically regarding the nature of Christ.[43] By the time of

Paul's writing, the Jewish Christians were allowed back into Rome, yet they returned to a

church now "dominated by Gentiles."[44] As a result, Paul's epistle was intentionally

addressed to both Jew and Gentile. A variety of purposes behind this letter have been

proposed, including Paul's desire to solicit support for his planned mission to Spain.

Another purpose, suggested by Robert Mounce, was for Paul to clearly elucidate his

theology, as his credibility was continually challenged by Jewish Christians.[45] While the

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[39] Martin Luther, Henry Eyster Jacobs, and Adolph Spaeth, *Works of Martin Luther: With Introductions and Notes* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1932), 6:447.

[40] James D. G. Dunn, "Romans, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and David G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 1993), 849.

[41] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 640.

[42] Schreiner, *Romans*, 642.

[43] Robert Mounce, *Romans*, New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 24.

[44] Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 18.

[45] Mounce, *Romans*, 26.

letter to the Romans does contain elements of Pauline theology, it does not contain the entirety of it. Yet another reason for addressing this church was to seek to engender unity so the members, both Jew and Gentile, would work collaboratively to fulfill the missional work to which they were called. Schreiner comments, "In other words, the Pauline gospel was to be the basis of unity for the Roman congregations."[46]

At the risk of oversimplifying the outline of the letter to the Romans, Mounce describes chapters 1-11 as the "broader sweep of theology," with chapter 12 shifting to an exposition on practical living as Christ-followers.[47] This assessment is strengthened by Paul's use of "therefore" early in the verse. C. E. B. Cranfield states that οὖν (*oun*) reveals the "Christian ethic" outlined in chapters 12-16 are a believer's obedient response to "what God has done for him in Christ, the expression of his gratitude."[48] In short, Paul's explanation in chapters 1-11 of the sacrifice made for them by Jesus Christ "therefore" results in the expectation that believers live out the Christian ethic contained in chapters 12-16. That ethic includes the believer sacrificing the entirety of his life in the service of God's purposes.

**Romans 12:1a Exegesis**

Paul begins this section of the letter to the church at Rome with a parenesis, writing, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God." His use of Παρακαλῶ (*parakalō*) lends itself to several potential translations: the ESV uses "appeal," the KJV uses "beseech," and the NIV uses "urge." Each of those verbs, however, falls somewhat short because there is a missing element of authority. Douglas Moo suggests that "exhort" is a more appropriate choice:

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[46] Schreiner, *Romans*, 22.

[47] Mounce, *Romans*, 50.

[48] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, 6th ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 595.

The English verb "exhort" captures well the nuance of the Greek *parakale* in contexts such as this. Its semantic range lies somewhere between "request" and "command": an exhortation comes with authority, but the authority of a preacher who is the mediator of God's truth rather than the authority of a superior issuing a command.[49]

Cranfield concurs, noting that the sense of urgency and earnestness that exists in "beseech" is supplemented with the authority implicit in "exhort."[50] Paul, then, is providing an "authoritative summons to obedience issued in the name of the gospel."[51] Schreiner, too, emphasizes the authority found in Pauline exhortations. They go beyond suggestions or Paul's preferences and instead represent "the authoritative will of God and are enjoined upon churches in a solemn manner."[52] In this way, Paul is putting on display his authority as befitting an apostle. More importantly, however, this exhortation clearly intended to communicate the appropriate response from believers in acknowledgement of what God had already done for them.

The instruction Paul is communicating to the church is to be obeyed in view of the "mercies of God," and more directly, "because" of the mercies of God.[53] Though in no way a quid pro quo, it is because of the οἰκτιρμῶν (*oiktirmōn*) of God, that believers are expected to obey Paul's command. To do so is the appropriate and acceptable response from Christians who understand and genuinely appreciate the mercy of God and his graciousness. In regard to that response, Moo points out that everything Paul has outlined in the letter to this point "may be summed up under the heading of the mercy of God in action."[54]

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[49] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 748-49.

[50] Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 597.

[51] Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 597.

[52] Schreiner, *Romans*, 642.

[53] Schreiner, *Romans*, 643.

[54] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 749.

**Romans 12:1b Exegesis**

Paul continues in Romans 12:1b, writing, "To present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." As a response to the mercies of God, believers are to present their "bodies as a living sacrifice." In this language there is a clear juxtaposition between the bloody sacrifices found in the Old Testament and the living sacrifice expected of Christians following the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The use of σώματα (*sōmata*) refers to the entire body. Dunn states that the sacrifice in view is of the whole body, not just parts of it; moreover, the reference is to "the person in his corporeality . . . it is because he is body that man can experience the world and relate to others."[55] The totality of bodily life, therefore, encompasses all aspects of a believer's being, including interactions with other peoples and communities.[56] Schreiner agrees, writing that "bodies" is not limited to the physical body but the term refers to "the whole person and stresses that consecration to God involves the whole person."[57] The commitment to God that Paul expects in view of God's mercies comprises every element of a human being.[58] The θυσία (*thysia*) "sacrifice" of bodies is further qualified by ζῶσαν (*zōsan*) "living", ἁγίαν (*hagian*) "holy", and εὐάρεστον (*euareston*) "acceptable." All three adjectives apply to the sacrifice God deserves. Living, holy, and pleasing sacrifices who present themselves to God, according to Longenecker, are those "(1) who are committed entirely to his purposes, (2) who accept at all times his continued cleansing of their lives, and (3) who endeavor always to act in ways that are consistent with his will."[59]

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[55] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38b (Dallas: Word, 1988), 709.

[56] Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina Series 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 363.

[57] Schreiner, *Romans*, 644.

[58] Schreiner, *Romans*, 644.

[59] Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 920.

Believers are to offer themselves as a ζῶσαν (*zōsan*) "living" sacrifice, and the stipulation of "living" is not limited to physical, but spiritually as well. As living sacrifices, Christians are "alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11b), and those who are alive in Christ are called to present their bodies for his glory.[60] Also, in contrast to the Old Testament understanding of sacrifice, believers are to make this living sacrifice freely and willingly, surrendering to God in acknowledgement of his mercies in appreciation of their resultant new life in Christ, understanding they are fully the property of God.[61]

The living sacrifice must be holy. A holy sacrifice would be one separate, or "set apart," from the profane for the purpose of being dedicated specifically to the service of the Lord.[62] For Cranfield, given that God has revealed himself as holy, it is incumbent on the sacrifice in question to live a life that reveals the "continuing process of sanctification."[63] The holy sacrifice is in turn "acceptable" to God, largely in that this act of obedience through sacrifice is consistent with what God ultimately requires.[64] This demonstration of "true and proper sacrifice" is what God desires and therefore is what he will accept.[65] Schreiner summarizes "holy" and "acceptable" by noting that "holy . . . denotes the idea that the sacrifice is dedicated to God, while 'acceptable' evokes Old Testament notions of sacrifices that are pleasing and fragrant to God."[66]

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[60] Schreiner, *Romans*, 644.

[61] Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 599-600.

[62] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 751.

[63] Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 601.

[64] Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 729.

[65] Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 304.

[66] Schreiner, *Romans*, 644.

**Romans 12:1c Exegesis**

Paul concludes Romans 12:1 with "which is your spiritual worship." His use of

λογικὴν (*logikēn*) has been translated as both "spiritual" (ESV, NASB, NIV, RSV) and

"reasonable" (KJV); however, taken in context, these two translations are not necessarily

contradictory. λογικὴν (*logikēn*) can be defined as reasonable or rational and Dunn

contends that had Paul intended a strictly spiritual understanding of worship in this context,

he would have used a different word.[67] Schreiner concurs and, without diminishing the

spiritual aspects of worship, argues that Paul was informing the Roman church that

"yielding one's whole self to God is eminently reasonable."[68] By contrast, he continues,

given God's mercies, "failure to dedicate one's life to him is the height of folly and

irrationality."[69] Further, the worship in view is not limited to a worship service. Instead,

true worship is a daily part of the believer's life and failure to incorporate an active and

ongoing adoration of God would be considered false worship.[70] Worship is not limited to

one place or time but involves intentionality and obedience to God at all times and in all

places.[71]

**Summary: Believers Are to Offer the**
**Entirety of Their Lives as a Sacrifice,**
**as a Response to His Mercies**

Those who have chosen to place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ will

understand the reality of God's mercies in their life, and, in light of that understanding, it

must be their heartbeat to serve the Lord. Paul exhorts the Roman believers to worship

God with the most important thing they have, their lives. They do so by sacrificing the

entirety of themselves as an ongoing act of worship of God. As they continue through the

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[67] Dunn, *Romans*, 712.

[68] Schreiner, *Romans*, 645.

[69] Schreiner, *Romans*, 645.

[70] Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 601.

[71] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 754.

process of sanctification, their willingness to subjugate their own preferences to God's will—that is, their ongoing sacrifice—is acceptable to God. Conversely, believers who do not give of themselves in all facets of life are not fulfilling the expectations Paul placed on all Christians. John Murray contends that in Romans 12:1 Paul is beginning to address "concrete practical application" to the church at Rome.[72] Presenting themselves as a living sacrifice is not a metaphor, it is an expectation that believers offer all of themselves wholeheartedly to God's work as a response to what he has done for them. It is a clarion call to service. Therefore, anything (for example, training, equipping, encouraging) that serves to better prepare Christians as they sacrifice for God's kingdom is valuable in that it furthers the sacrifices of believers that bring God glory.

## Ephesians 2:10

The letter to the Ephesians includes a wide variety of themes that have a broad appeal to churches in the region of Asia Minor. Clinton Arnold notes, "Ephesians summarizes what it means to be a Christian better than any other book of the Bible," and, among other themes, calls out God's plan for the church and the "implications of what it means to live as a Christian."[73] Klyne Snodgrass argues that Ephesians explains how believers are expected to get along with each other and with God.[74]

**Ephesians Background**

Unlike some other Pauline letters, Ephesians does not address a specific situation in a specific church, though it is addressed to the church at Ephesus.[75] Rather, as

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[72] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* Chapters 9-16, New International Commentary on the New Testament(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), 109.

[73] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 21.

[74] Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 17.

[75] Clinton E. Arnold, "Ephesians, Letter to the," in Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 245.

Darrell Bock suggests, the city of Ephesus, as one of the largest in the Roman empire, served as a hub for the letter that was intended for a wider circulation.[76] This explanation clarifies the absence of the personal greeting found in so many of the letters attributed to Paul.[77] Jody Barnard summarizes the purpose of the letter as "to promote unity, particularly between Jew and Gentile, to affirm the supremacy of Christ over every power, and to remind believers of their privileges in Christ."[78] Also seen in the letter is a theme surrounding the nature of the church and the Christian ethic expected of people within the church.[79] Snodgrass adds that a purpose of the letter is to show the readers "what living for Christ looks like."[80]

**Ephesians 2:10a Exegesis**

In chapter 1, Paul is celebrating the blessings found in Christ and informs his audience that he is continually praying for their spiritual enrichment. In chapter 2, he is explaining what God has done for them and in verse 10 of chapter 2 he specifically addresses God's purpose for saving them. In Ephesians 2:10a Paul writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." He begins verse 10a with γάρ (*gar*) to show that the salvation promises of Ephesians 2:4-9 are clearly of God, not of human origin or works. The "for" emphasizes that "we" are "his" workmanship; everything about creation

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[76] Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 4.

[77] There are differing views as to the authorship of the letter to the Ephesians. That debate is not relevant to the biblical and theological foundation of this project. I am persuaded by the position of Hendriksen who contends that the totality of the available evidence points to Pauline authorship in William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 32-56.

[78] Jody Barnard, "Unity in Christ: The Purpose of Ephesians," *Expository Times* 120, no. 4 (2009): 171.

[79] Arnold, "Ephesians, Letter to the," 247.

[80] Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 23.

is solely from God.[81] Along the same lines, Bock suggests the "for" introduces the "why" behind God's salvation; people are saved for the purpose of being God's workmanship in order to accomplish good works on his behalf.[82]

As God's workmanship, believers are masterpieces created by Christ Jesus for the purpose of good works.[83] The use of ποίημα (*poiēma*) reveals the high value inherent in those created by God, his "workmanship." In addition to other uses, *poiēma* refers to the creation itself.[84] Believers, then, are likened to the creation of the world.[85] At the same time, people are individual creations, with attributes and traits that support specific areas of service. To be created in "Christ Jesus" highlights the work of the "divine craftsman" in regard to creating believers with the capacity to undertake the good works set before them.[86] It also references the new life found in the saving grace of Jesus. This new creation represented by *poiēma* transcends a physical entity and acknowledges a new spiritual life.[87] There is purpose in his workmanship, and that is to perform the good works he intends.[88] In his sovereignty, God does not need the workmanship in order to accomplish his plan, but he chooses to use Christians to do good works by creating them for that express purpose.

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[81] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 346.

[82] Bock, *Ephesians*, 70.

[83] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 16, *Ephesians-Thessalonians, Philemon* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 52.

[84] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 114.

[85] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 114.

[86] Simpson and Bruce, *Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 56.

[87] Bock, *Ephesians*, 70.

[88] Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 230.

**Ephesians 2:10b Exegesis**

In Ephesians 2:10b Paul continues, "For good works, which God prepared beforehand." Believers must understand an important distinction: they were neither created *by* or *because of* their good works, but they were created *for* good works. In verse 10b, the ἔργον (*ergōn*) can take a variety of forms. In addition to "work," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG) interprets *ergōn* as deed, task, product, or even occupation.[89] This is a tangible type of intentional activity. The qualification ἀγαθοῖς (*agathois*) reveals that the work in question must be useful, good, or beneficial. These good works for which believers are created, then, are those that are morally good for believers, the larger community, and for God.[90] Markus Barth points out that not only are good works *not* a basis or means of salvation, but they are also not simply goals to be accomplished. Instead, they are the "gift of God provided for those saved from death."[91] Further, good works are solely the creation of God, prepared in advance; believers can claim no credit for their creation or their execution. The good works in view allow believers to be a part of God's work, and they also benefit his kingdom and display both his grace and majesty. F. F. Bruce notes that these good works to be performed by believers reflect "the character and action of God himself" and anything that a believer does that glorifies God is in and of itself a good work.[92]

Paul specifies that the good works have been prepared προητοίμασεν (*proētoimasen*). Andrew Lincoln notes that this advance preparation reinforces the importance and godly origin of the works.[93] For Harold Hoehner, the good works to

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[89] Walter Bauer and William F. Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [BDAG] (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 391.

[90] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 348.

[91] Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 34 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 227.

[92] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 291.

[93] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 115.

which believers are called are displays of God's grace, in that not only did he predetermine eternal glory for believers, but he also predetermined how they would serve him through their good works.[94] In essence, the purpose behind the creation existed before the creation itself did, reinforcing S. M. Baugh's contention that the good works prepared by God beforehand "are not incidental or optional." Those good works "are the necessary outcome of (the believer's) election to holiness and blamelessness."[95]

**Ephesians 2:10c Exegesis**

Ephesians 2:10 closes with Paul writing that "we should walk in them." That God prepared the good works beforehand, as highlighted in verse 10b, does not obviate the responsibility of the Christian to undertake them, as Paul explains in Ephesians 2:10c. The good works God has planned cannot be accomplished purely out of human will or effort. It requires the power of God working in and through believers as they walk by faith to accomplish those tasks.[96] Yet, walking in faith remains the obligation of the believer. Lincoln writes, "The actual living out of God's purpose . . . still has to take place."[97] BDAG provides additional uses of περιπατήσωμεν (*peripatēsōmen*), including "live."[98] Walking in the good works, then, is actively and intentionally living out the Christian life for the glory of God. For Lincoln, "God's saving power reaches its intended goal" when there has been transformation in believers that manifests in how they choose to live their lives.[99] There is a discernible change from "walking in the trespasses and sins of vv. 1, 2"

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[94] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 349.

[95] S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 164.

[96] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 52.

[97] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 116.

[98] BDAG, 803.

[99] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 116.

to walking in the good works to which the believer is called.[100] While it is the believer *peripatēsōmen* in the good works, it is the power of God on display for the accomplishment of the work as he works in and through his people.[101] Given that the believer is created for this purpose, the zeal with which the good works are accomplished should be noteworthy. E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce contend that believers should be pleased to serve their community in keeping with the will of God.[102] Further, it is worth acknowledging the implications of a lack of that walk. The nonexistence of good works may be an indicator of the absence of a relationship with God; it was for the purpose of good works that believers are created by him.[103] Good works are not simply a good idea or a useful thing to do, but are the expectation of God the creator.

**Summary: Believers Are Created
by God for Good Works**

Christians are created by God, alive in him, for the purpose of doing good works. Those works are not enumerated or prescribed by Paul, but they are those actions that reveal the might of God and are consistent with the fulfilment of his mission. Those good works, then, necessarily entail serving God's people and serving God's church. That good works have been created beforehand shows they are not afterthoughts or busy work for God, but they are of genuine benefit to his kingdom. Believers must be warned, however, that failure to do the good works God has put before them is to fail to live out the purpose for which they were created. Though exceptional scenarios may be conceived, for most Christians the absence of good works in their lives would reflect blatant disobedience at best and may be an indicator of the absence of a relationship with the

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[100] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 116.

[101] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 349.

[102] Simpson and Bruce, *Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 56.

[103] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 349.

Creator at worst. Assisting and equipping believers to accomplish the good works for which they were created, therefore, is a good work in and of itself.

## Ephesians 4:11-12

According to Thomas Neufeld, the second half of the letter to the Ephesians exhorts the recipients to lead a life worthy of their calling.[104] Verses 11-12 are included in the pericope that Francis Foulkes contends addresses practical implications regarding the expectations for believers in terms of living with and relating to one another. This practical application is a result of the doctrinal elaboration of the first half of the letter.[105] According to Bock, that same application is manifest in these two verses as a call to "walk in a manner worthy of what has been received" in the form of church leaders equipping believers to they are prepared to serve for the purpose of building up the church.[106]

### Ephesians 4:11 Exegesis

In Ephesians 4:10, Paul writes that the one who "descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." The "he" in view is Christ Jesus. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul writes, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers." The αὐτὸς (*autos*) of verse 11 refers back to Jesus in verse 10; clearly the gifts, directions, and designations to follow are from God.[107] Further, God ἔδωκεν (*edōken*) "gave" the gift of "the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers." The gifts are not necessarily made *to* people, the gifts *are* people with the spiritual endowments necessary for church leadership roles and

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[104] Thomas R. Neufeld, *Ephesians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald, 2002), 169.

[105] Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 20.

[106] Bock, *Ephesians*, 116.

[107] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 541.

the ability to proclaim the Word of God.[108] Bruce argues that Christ is supplying the

church, by way of the roles mentioned, with everything needed to promote the spiritual

growth of the church.[109] Giving these roles is part of the plan to "fill all things" from

verse 10. Lincoln explains, "Christ's giving of ministers of the word to build up the

whole body into his fullness is interwoven with the goal of his pervading the cosmos with

his presence and rule."[110] The provision of these roles for the church was an intentional

step in God's plan for building up the body of Christ.

Paul's list of church leaders that God gifted to the church has been well-parsed,

yet Barth remarks that it is not intended to "enumerate all authorized services rendered in,

to and by a living church and congregation."[111] The first gifted position listed is the

ἀποστόλους (*apostolous*). Hoehner notes that in the New Testament there were three kinds

of *apostolous* identified: (1) those who had been a part of Jesus's ministry and witnessed

the resurrection; (2) Paul, "one untimely born" (1 Cor 15:8-9); and (3) the gift of apostle,

which is not an office of the church but a spiritual gift to the church, with both the church

and the person so gifted tasked with establishing churches in previously unreached

areas.[112] Hoehner has the third usage in view in verse 11.[113] Second in the list of gifted

leaders is that of προφήτας (*prophētas*). Prophets are those who receive the revelation of

God to the church for the purposes of "upbuilding and encouragement and consolation"

so that "all may learn and all be encouraged" (1 Cor 14:3, 31). The third role is the

εὐαγγελιστάς (*euangelistas*). The only other use of "evangelist" in the New Testament is

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[108] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 248.

[109] Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 345.

[110] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 248.

[111] Barth, *Ephesians*, 439.

[112] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 541-42.

[113] I am aware that there is an ongoing debate regarding this topic and that others disagree with Hoehner's view. However, as that debate is outside the scope of this project, I have chosen not to delve into it.

the term as a goal of Timothy's ministry (2 Tim 4:5) and as a descriptor of Phillip (Acts 21:8). In the context of Ephesians 4:11, Bock writes that the evangelist is best viewed as a missionary, taking the gospel outside the church.[114] Best argues against the contention that the role of the *euangelistas* is explicitly outside the church or specifically for unbelievers: "The gospel in fact speaks as much to believers as to unbelievers; they continually need to be brought back to what in the first place led them to become Christians."[115] However, both agree the that primary function of the evangelist is to proclaim the gospel. Verse 11 concludes "*the* shepherds *and* teachers" with "the" (*tous*) and "and" (*kai*), creating significant challenges for expositors. The final two roles, ποιμένας (*poimenas*) and διδασκάλους (*didaskalous*), have long generated scholarly debate because they share the article τοὺς (*tous*) and are joined together by the conjunction καὶ (*kai*), which has resulted in the question "as to whether they represent two different gifted persons or one person with a combination of two gifts."[116] Hoehner leans to the former understanding, whereas Foulkes would subscribe to the latter, suggesting "there is no hard and fast line to be drawn between the two."[117] That is Bruce's view as he comments, "Teaching is an essential part of the pastoral ministry; it is appropriate, therefore, that the two terms, 'pastors and teachers,' should be joined together to denote one order of ministry."[118] John Calvin "partly agrees" with those who suggest shepherd and teacher may be one role, but in the end he contends that is not "a sufficient reason, which I find to differ from each other, should be confounded."[119] Interpretive disagreements

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[114] Bock, *Ephesians*, 126.

[115] Best, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 391.

[116] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 543.

[117] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 126.

[118] Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 348.

[119] John Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 279-80.

notwithstanding, the concept that one person could, as a result of God's gifting, fill the duals roles of shepherd and teacher is compelling; it is the reality in many healthy and God-honoring churches today.

Regarding the shepherds (several translations read "pastors") and teachers, most commentators, despite the unsettled issue of whether "shepherds" and "teachers" are two distinct roles or may be one role utilizing both pastoral and teaching gifts, agree that those two functions are essential to the health of a local congregation. Without conceding an overlap between "shepherd" and "teacher," Baugh suggests that if there was one intended, it would be a result of those two roles being specifically associated with the local church, as opposed to the roles of apostles, prophets, and evangelists which do not necessarily have a local church affiliation.[120] Similarly, Best contends that drawing a "rigid distinction" between the roles may be a mistake, as a minister in the modern church serves both those functions.[121] A comparable perspective is that of Bock, who posits that shepherd and teacher are grouped because those roles "are catalysts that equip the rest of the body to do the work of the church."[122] For Calvin, the roles of "Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets were bestowed on the church for a limited time only,—except in those cases where religion has fallen into decay"; he further argues that only pastors and teachers were intended to be perpetual roles, reinforcing their importance to the health of the local church.[123] Regardless of the differing perspectives, commentators agree that shepherds and pastors are God-given specifically for the benefit of leading in the local church.

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[120] Baugh, *Ephesians*, 335.

[121] Best, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 392.

[122] Bock, *Ephesians*, 126.

[123] Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 280.

**Ephesians 4:12 Exegesis**

In Ephesians 4:12, Paul writes "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." There are very divergent views on the interpretation of verse 12, specifically in regard to what the church leaders of verse 11 are called to do. Bock points out that this verse includes "three distinct phrases: for equipping, for ministry and for edification."[124] At issue, however, is the use of the prepositions πρὸς (*pros*) with the first phrase and εἰς (*eis*) with the next two phrases. Hoehner identifies four primary possibilities for interpreting these phrases, particularly as πρὸς (*pros*) interacts with the ἔδωκεν (*edōken*) "gave" of verse 11, where God gave to the church the gift of the church roles. The first possibility is that each of the three prepositions modifies *edōken*, which suggests the gifts God gave to the church leaders were "for the purpose of preparing the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ."[125] As result, the church leaders of verse 11 do all three functions resulting in the saints doing little ministry. The second possibility articulated by Hoehner is that the first preposition gives the purpose to *edōken*, and the two *eis* are parallel, identical to each other, but different from the first. In this view, God provided the church leaders for "the immediate purpose of the work of the ministry and for the building up of the body of Christ, while the ultimate and final purpose of the gifts is for the preparation of the saints."[126] This is an awkward construction that does not coordinate between the last two prepositions. The third of Hoehner's listed possibilities for interpreting these phrases is that the first preposition applies to *edōken*, then the second and third prepositions are parallel with the first and dependent on *edōken* resulting in no comma after "saints" but one after "ministry." The net effect would be that "he gave gifts for the purpose of preparing the saints for the

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[124] Bock, *Ephesians*, 126.

[125] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 547.

[126] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 548.

work of ministry and for the purpose of building up the body of Christ."[127] The challenge here is that it makes the first and third preposition parallel though they are different and differentiates the second and third preposition though they are the same. The final of Hoehner's interpretive possibilities is that the first preposition gives purpose to *edōken,* the second preposition depends on the first preposition, and the third preposition depends on the second. In essence, the phrases build upon each other. As a result, the "progression indicates . . . that he gave gifted people for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints with the goal of preparing them for the work of the ministry, which in turn as the final goal of building up the body of Christ."[128] According to Hoehner, "View (4) seems to be the simplest interpretation and more importantly, it recognizes the function of each of the prepositions."[129] Foulkes agrees with this assessment: "The AV took each of them [prepositions] separately. The Greek is against this, and at least implies that the latter two are dependent on the first. It is probably correct to understand the second to depend closely on the first, and the third on the two that precede."[130]

While Hoehner's conclusion is the most compelling, it must be noted that other commentators, such as Lincoln and Best (to name just two) would favor the first of the listed views, specifically that the church leaders of verse 11 are expected to accomplish all three of the functions identified: equipping, ministry, and edification. While agreeing with Hoehner's evaluation, Barth does acknowledge that the wording of the Greek does not allow for an entirely conclusive resolution. Yet, in addition to the semantic challenges highlighted by Hoehner and Foulkes, the position taken by Lincoln and Best is inconsistent with other parts of Scripture. Ephesians 4:16 is an example of this inconsistency, as Paul writes that it is the whole body with every part equipped that makes the body of Christ

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[127] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 548.

[128] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 549.

[129] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 549.

[130] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 126.

grow. In Ephesians 4:13, "all" are seeking spiritual maturity, not just church leaders.[131] In Ephesians 4:15 all the believers in a congregation are to speak the truth in love and grow.[132] Bruce correctly notes that the "various forms of ministry were given to the people of God to equip them for the diversity of service which they were to render in the community, so that the community as a whole—'the body of Christ'—would be built up."[133] Foulkes points back to verse 7, suggesting the implication of the verse is that "grace was given to each one of us" because each believer has a "work of ministry" to conduct as part of building up the church.[134] Hoehner summarizes both the debate over interpretation and the implication of the verses:

> In brief, the point is that the gifted persons listed in verse 11 serve as the foundational gifts that are used for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints to minister. Thus, every believer must do the work of the ministry. This is certainly supported from the context, for in verse 16 edification requires the work of each individual member and not a select group. The final goal evolves from the last, namely, that the work of the ministry by every believer is to build up the body of Christ. Therefore, the view [of every believer actively participating in the work of ministry] seems to be the simplest interpretation and more importantly, it recognizes the function of each of the prepositions.[135]

From Paul's use of καταρτισμὸν (*katartismon*) it is clear that at least part of the role of the church leaders named in verse 11 is to "equip" the saints. Further, BDAG defines ἀγίων (*hagiōn*) as "dedicated to God," "holy," "sacred."[136] Rendered by most translations as "saints," *hagiōn* incorporates all believers. The equipping of the saints, therefore, is not limited to a select group of individuals but is to include all who are Christ-followers. The purpose of the equipping, then, is for ἔργον διακονίας (*ergon diakonias*), an active involvement of serving the ministry of the church. Best argues that

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[131] Bock, *Ephesians*, 127.

[132] Barth, *Ephesians*, 445.

[133] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 349.

[134] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 127.

[135] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 549.

[136] BDAG, 10.

*ergon* is more than a moral term in verse 12 and is understood as "ongoing activity seen in service."[137] This intentional participation in the ministry work of the church is what the saints are expected to do. The purpose of the "work of ministry," then, is for "building up the body of Christ." The term οἰχοδομὴν (*oikodomēn*) can also be translated as "edification." The church is edified as believers are equipped for the work of ministry by the church leaders of verse 11.[138] It denotes an active participation on behalf of those church leaders, as well as the members of the congregation. Arnold is more concise: "Christ has given gifted leaders to the church not merely to do the ministry, but to invest their time heavily in developing and preparing fellow believers to engage in ministry to the body."[139] Ultimately, as his church is increased, God is glorified.

**Summary: Church Officials Are to Equip
the Saints for Service so the Church
May Be Built Up**

In his graciousness, God provided roles for leadership within the church, and gifted people accordingly. This was not to create a clerical/laity divide; it best positions the bride of Christ to accomplish the mission set before her. Scholarly debates regarding the specific roles in view do not preclude the fact that the roles do exist and are important to the edification of the church. This is what Calvin had in view when he wrote, "To Christ we owe it that we have ministers of the gospel, that they abound in necessary qualifications, that they execute the trust committed to them. All, all is his *gift*."[140] The best interpretations of these two verses results in a paraphrase such as this: God gave church leaders for the purpose of equipping Christians *so that* Christians are able to do the work of ministry *so that* the church is built up. Barth recaps,

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[137] Best, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 396.

[138] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 127.

[139] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262.

[140] Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 278.

Earlier and later passages in Ephesians show that the 'good works' to be done by the church and her members can be summed up in this way: this community makes known or lets shine the light of God's goodness, wisdom to the powers of this world. . . . All the saints (and among them, each saint) are enabled by the four or five types of servants enumerated in 4:11 to fulfill the ministry given to them, so that the whole church is taken into Christ's service and given missionary substance, purpose, and structure. . . . The whole church, the community of all the saints together, is the clergy appointed by God for a ministry to and for the world.[141]

## Conclusion

In Scripture, God calls believers to develop and utilize their gifts to serve his kingdom. This exegesis of the supporting Scriptures, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Romans 12:1, Ephesians 2:10, and Ephesians 4:11-12 identified God's expectation for the saints to use the gifts he has provided them for the glory of his church and his kingdom. When believers utilize the gifts they have been given in furtherance of God's mission, they are offering themself up as a living sacrifice. From these four sections of Scripture, believers can take away four key principles. First, they have been gifted to do the work of God's ministry (1 Pet 4:10-11). Second, they have been called to offer themselves as a sacrifice for God's ministry (Rom 12:1). Third, they are created to do good works in support of God's ministry (Eph 2:10). Fourth, the church is given the gift of ministerial leadership to equip believers to do the work of God's ministry (Eph 4:11-12.) It is evident, therefore, that God expects Christians to use the good gifts he has given to benefit his church and his kingdom, and church leaders are to play an active role in helping believers develop those gifts.

As a result of this exegesis, it is clear that the project designed to increase the perception of value by enhancing lay leader training at New Vision Baptist Church is consistent with the Scriptures.

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[141] Barth, *Ephesians*, 479.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED
TO EQUIPPING LAY LEADERS TO SERVE

Under the headship of Jesus Christ, the people who comprise the body of Christ, the local church, are expected to play an active role in the work of the church. As the previous exegesis revealed, believers are endowed with spiritual gifts that are given for the express purpose of serving each other and serving the church. Ultimately, those gifts are given to propel the expansion of God's kingdom on earth through the church. Moreover, Christian service is not merely the purview of vocational church staff but is the responsibility of each and every believer. Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby write that the church "will reach its maximum potential only when every member knows how to hear clearly from God *and is willing to respond in obedience.*"[1]

Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck suggest that the first two chapters of Genesis serve as the warrant that mankind was designed to tend to God's purposes on earth through the act of leadership.[2] God gave dominion of his creation to Adam and Eve (1:28), a delegation of authority that continues. Adam was given supervision of the Garden of Eden (2:15) and was delegated the task of naming "every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens" (2:19). Echoing this foundational point of Geiger and Peck, Robert Sloan writes, "Humans have been given the greatest role of leadership with respect to the created order, and it is a functional responsibility directly connected to their being made in God's

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[1] Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 128-29, emphasis added.

[2] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 2.

image."[3] By assuming the leadership mantle given to them by God, people are serving God and his creation. Though also a part of the creation, humans are given a special stewardship task over it.[4] The leadership responsibility over the created order that was delegated by God to mankind can take the form of specific acts of service. This is hands-on leadership of the creation whereby human beings, as Sloan comments, are "to tend it, cultivate it, manage it, and shape it in ways that reflect and honor [God's] original purposes for creation."[5] This mandate, then, is an intersection of leadership and service.

While there is no exhaustive list of what constitutes service in and for the kingdom of God, it bears elaboration that, in this context, service can take the form of Christian leadership just as Christian leadership is a form of service. This is an example of servant leadership, a model of leadership Peter Northouse considers a "paradox" given that its basic premise is that leaders are first considered servants.[6] In this view, the servant leadership concept is one where leaders put their followers first, effectively serving them as followers serve the organization.[7] While some writers contend that Jesus is the quintessential model of servant leadership, Justin Irving and Mark Strauss emphasize that Jesus's leadership was anything but "subservient." They prefer the phrase "empowering leadership," suggesting it is a more accurate description of how Jesus led.[8] Empowering leadership is a model that is also "other-centered, the goal of which is to enable others to

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[3] Robert B. Sloan, "A Biblical Model of Leadership," in *Christian Leadership Essentials: A Handbook for Managing Christian Organizations*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 10.

[4] Rick Langer, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership," in *Organizational Leadership: Foundations & Practices for Christians*, ed. John S. Burns, John R. Shoup, and Donald C. Simmons Jr. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 69.

[5] Sloan, "A Biblical Model of Leadership," 10.

[6] Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice,* 9th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2021), 253.

[7] Northouse, *Leadership*, 253.

[8] Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 4.

fulfill their calling before God, to be all that God wants them to be."[9] Specifics of each model notwithstanding, both concepts equate leading with serving others. In the context of kingdom service, it is useful to remember that biblical models of leadership inherently involve serving others; accordingly, the terms "leader" and "servant" may be used interchangeably. This is an important distinction to note in terms of equipping and developing Christ-followers. J. Oswald Sanders contends that though not every believer is necessarily called to a position of "major leadership in the church . . . every Christian is a leader, for we all influence others."[10] Paul Tripp, suggesting that a servant posture is an essential part of leadership, notes that the "most often used term for a spiritual leader in Scripture is servant."[11] Kenneth Gangel articulates it well, writing, "But, when we start with the Scriptures, we learn that leaders must first see themselves as servants."[12] Serving and leadership go hand-in-hand.

Believers, then, are called to lead and to serve. J. Robert Clinton notes that "the skills necessary to lead effectively are varied," emphasizing that to honor God by leading acknowledges the truth that believers need to be equipped with a variety of competencies to be true servant leaders.[13] David Ulrich, Norm Smallwood, and Kate Sweetman describe "competencies" as those things leaders know and do.[14] Geiger and Peck suggest that there are "character-based" and "skill-based" competencies that are part of an

[9] Irving and Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective*, 4.

[10] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 109.

[11] Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 129.

[12] Kenneth O. Gangel, "The Meaning of Volunteerism," in *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 306.

[13] J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 76.

[14] David Ulrich, Norm Smallwood, and Kate Sweetman, *The Leadership Code: Five Rules to Lead By* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2008), 7.

effective training pipeline.[15] The concept and practice of training for a variety of competencies is broad and is typically context-specific. The essential point here is that for believers to serve in the way God has called them requires that they be equipped.[16]

A leadership competency model for lay-leader training best equips churches for effective ministry to believers and outreach to unbelievers. For believers to live their lives as God expects, and for the church to function as God designed, believers must be willing to serve and be equipped with leadership competencies. To ensure that equipping happens, vocational church leadership is responsible to ensure the training of believers with leadership competencies so that the believers are equipped to conduct effective ministry. Further, as part of the training, believers should be equipped by the church with the biblical view of these leadership competencies so that a Christian perspective of leadership can be carried into the secular world as part of a gospel witness.

## Believers Must Be Willing to Serve and Equipped to Do So

Service is an immutable facet of the Christian life. Donald Whitney notes, "When God calls his elect to himself, he calls no one to idleness. . . . Every believer's Bible exhorts him or her to 'serve the Lord with gladness.'"[17] Nothing is wasted in God's economy, and the call for believers to serve accomplishes multiple desires that God has for his people. First, God uses service to grow believers spiritually. Serving is an essential element of their continual, lifelong spiritual maturation process. Additionally, God leverages the service and leadership of his people to enable his church to function.

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[15] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 194.

[16] A great deal has been written about what constitutes leadership skills/competencies and the best ways for those skills and competencies to be identified and developed. For the purposes of this chapter, the essential point is that Christians do need to be equipped with skills and competencies to serve the others, the church, and the kingdom effectively. A specific approach to improving the perception of leadership training and equipping will be more fully developed as part of this project.

[17] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 144.

Through the exertions of his people the church fulfills its mission. Serving effectively, however, requires not just a willingness to serve but also development and equipping in the competencies necessary to do so effectively. James Kouzes and Barry Posner point out, "People can't do what they don't know how to do."[18] For believers to grow as God desires and for the church to function as God designed, believers must be willing to undertake the spiritual discipline of serving, be a part of the work of the church, and be equipped with servant leadership competencies.

**Believers Must Understand the Spiritual
Purpose Found through Service**

In the high priestly prayer in the Gospel of John, Jesus prays for the sanctification of his followers (17:17-19). He is praying that they are continually being set apart and used for God's purpose and God's glory.[19] D. Michael Martin suggests, "Sanctification designates the Christian as one possessed by God and/or dedicated to the service of God."[20] As believers grow spiritually, then, they are necessarily growing in their passion for, and commitment to, the service of God. This is a fundamental part of the Christian life. A desire to serve others from a biblical perspective entails denying self. For a believer, this self-denial for the benefit of others is part of the sanctification process. Mark Dever contends that by serving as members of a local church, believers are gaining a clearer picture of what "true Christian love is all about."[21] As God incarnate, Jesus was a picture of serving throughout his time on earth; he stated as much to his disciples, telling them that even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (Matt 20:25-28). Not

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[18] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 6th ed (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2017), 235.

[19] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 897.

[20] D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, New American Commentary, vol. 33 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 122.

[21] Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 221.

only did he state it, but he also modeled it practically when he served the disciples by washing their feet (John 13:4-11). In Luke 22:27, Jesus challenged the disciples, "For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves." From those examples, and many others, Blackaby and Blackaby write that believers learn "more specifically what it means to be a spiritual leader."[22] Though spiritually immature Christians may believe their service is solely for the benefit of those being served, the reality is that God is at work in their lives. Crawford Loritts contends, "The real irony is that God's assignments involve changing your life as a leader just as much as they involve changing the people you want to reach. God is constantly at work in building your character—making you more like Christ."[23] Charles Spurgeon writes, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke of service,"[24] suggesting that while serving is often difficult, it is of spiritual benefit. Through serving Christians become more Christ-like.[25]

**Service is how believers develop and deploy their spiritual gifts.** Service provides opportunities for believers to develop and exercise the spiritual gifts they have been given. As previously explored, the apostle Peter establishes the scriptural mandate for believers to use the gifts they have been given to serve one another for God's glory (1 Pet 4:10-11). Mac Lake notes that a primary reason for leadership development is "to cultivate the God-given leadership gifts in others."[26] Development, then, is a continuation of the

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[22] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 72.

[23] Crawford W. Loritts, *Leadership as an Identity: The Four Traits of Those Who Wield Lasting Influence* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 26.

[24] Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel 1876* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876), 197.

[25] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 158.

[26] Mac Lake, *The Multiplication Effect: Building a Leadership Pipeline That Solves Your Leadership Shortage* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2020), 4-5.

spiritual maturation process. Clinton suggests that the second stage of a believer maturing into ministry is when God "develops skills and spiritual gifts to enhance the leader's effectiveness."[27] Describing the spiritual impact of service-focused development on Christians, Leighton Ford explains that the process "involves not only forming them in terms of their skills, abilities, and gifts, but also transforming them in terms of their persons and character."[28] God not only provides the gift but is also involved in developing the gift through opportunities to serve. When believers are given the opportunity to serve through their giftedness, they serve with more impact.[29] That posture helps Christians understand that, as John R. W. Stott notes, "all spiritual gifts, then, are service-gifts."[30]

**Service must have the proper motivation.** While God uses Christian service as a vehicle for spiritual development, that development is best realized when believers have the proper motivation for service. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for church members to feel guilted or harangued into serving at a church for reasons often limited to meeting specific operational needs of the church. This approach may be effective at accomplishing tasks within the church but fails to position believers for the spiritual progression that service is designed to foster. To ensure healthy spiritual growth, believers must have the proper motivation for serving. There are many reasons for God's people to not only actively serve, but also to desire earnestly to serve, including appreciation for what God has already done, the fundamental love for God's people that is inherent in followers of Christ, and obedience to God.

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[27] Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 67.

[28] Leighton Ford, "Helping Leaders Grow," in *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People*, ed. George Barna (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1997), 145.

[29] Kenneth O. Gangel, *Coaching Ministry Teams: Leadership and Management in Christian Organizations* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 121.

[30] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 128.

The psalmist writes, "Serve the LORD with gladness!" (Ps 100:2). With this verse as a starting point, Whitney states, "God expects his servants to serve—not grudgingly, grimly, or glumly—but gladly."[31] The gladness found in serving God is a result of the appreciation for that which God has done in the life of the believer. When believers truly understand their new life in Christ, as Sherwood Lingenfelter notes, they will then "be able to 'serve one another humbly in love.'"[32] Gangel suggests that Christian service to others is compelled by God's love, leading them to "give whatever is necessary" without the expectation of reciprocity.[33] Service, according to William Brackney, "grows out of a love for Christ and a sincere desire for Christian service" as a response to the abundant love God has already poured out for believers.[34] Serving is not salvific, Stott notes, though service is "consequence and evidence" of salvation.[35] Spurgeon states it eloquently in his sermon "Serving the Lord with Gladness":

> He is one with Jesus; nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord, and full well he knows that where Christ is, there shall Christ's servant be, reigning with him for ever. Hence, the heir of heaven serves his Lord simply out of gratitude; he has no salvation to gain, no heaven to lose; all things are his by a covenant "ordered in all things and sure"; and now, out of love to the God who chose him, and who gave so great a price for his redemption, he desires to lay out himself entirely to his Master's service.[36]

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus told his followers that the second greatest commandment is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (22:39). Love for people is at the heart of the Christian life and that necessarily includes Christian service. Jeff Iorg

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[31] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 146.

[32] Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 95.

[33] Gangel, *Coaching Ministry Teams*, 121.

[34] William H. Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism: Theology and Praxis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 117.

[35] Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 60.

[36] Charles H. Spurgeon, "Serving the Lord with Gladness" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 13 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1867), 495.

notes, "Loving God is loving people."[37] A profound Christ-driven love for other people results in a community of believers serving one another, as well as the lost world.[38] This love for others reflects God's love for humanity and brings him glory, which is the ultimate purpose of serving.[39] Tripp states it clearly: "What gives a servant joy in being a servant is service."[40] Loving by serving, then, reveals a love for God in the life of the believer.

In addition to a love for God and a love for people, serving others is a function of Christian obedience. Blackaby and Blackaby write, "God can bring character development and personal growth out of any situation. Whether he does so is conditional on people's willingness to submit to his will throughout the process."[41] God does not force people to serve him; rather, God desires that people serve out of their freedom. Writing to the Galatians, Paul teaches that their freedom should be used to serve one another (5:13). A willingness to sacrifice when they have the self-determination not to do so is a display of godly obedience on the part of the believer, providing yet another glimpse of God at work in his or her life. When a person, following through in obedience, is willing to commit to serving, Sanders points out, "the Bible shows us . . . that person is used to the limit."[42] Every believer should desire to be used to the limit by God.

These three motivations for service (love for God, love for people, obedience to God) are not to be considered "or" statements; rather, the motivations for Christian

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[37] Jeff Iorg, *The Character of Leadership: Nine Qualities That Define Great Leaders* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 120.

[38] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 18.

[39] Loritts, *Leadership as an Identity*, 23.

[40] Tripp, *Lead*, 129.

[41] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 70.

[42] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 17.

service can and should be many.[43] For the believer actively desiring to grow in their faith, each of these elements should be present. Love for God, love for people, and obedience to God are not the totality of the Christian life. All three, however, supply significant and substantial inspiration for people to live out the expectation to serve that has been placed on them as believers.

**Service requires sacrifice.** As the suffering servant, Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. In so doing, he modeled the reality that serving is difficult and costly. Whitney articulates it well, writing, "Serving God is not a job for the casually interested. It's costly service. God asks for your life. He requires that service to him become a priority, not a pastime. He doesn't want servants who offer him the leftovers after their other commitments."[44] Dietrich Bonhoeffer is more direct: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."[45] As believers grow in their love for and relationship with Jesus, however, they understand that "come and die" is exactly what Jesus did for them. Tripp notes, "There is no such thing as a call to servanthood that isn't also a call to suffer."[46] Just as Jesus assured his disciples that they would face tribulation, so it is the case that serving is often inherently difficult, though ultimately rewarding (John 16:33). Resultingly, Christians who have a proper view of service recognize that, despite the cost, the mission of God and the goals of the kingdom are worth the suffering they might endure.[47] R. Kent

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[43] In *Spiritual Disciplines*, Whitney has a compelling and comprehensive chapter on service as a Spiritual Discipline. He identifies "at least six motives" from the Bible for Christians to serve the kingdom: obedience, gratitude, gladness, forgiveness not guilt, humility, and love. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 144-51. While there is not an exhaustive list, the point to be emphasized is that regardless of the specific motivation(s) that cause believers to serve, for the service to be God-honoring, the motivation(s) must be God-honoring as well.

[44] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 142.

[45] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 89.

[46] Tripp, *Lead*, 135.

[47] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 18.

Hughes sums up this reality: "Ministering hearts are disciplined to labor, for they regularly move beyond their comfort zones, they put themselves in vulnerable spots, they make commitments which cost, they get tired for Christ's sake, they pay the price, they encounter rough seas. But their sails billow full of God's spirit."[48]

**God Uses Believers to Accomplish the
Mission of His Church**

In the book of Romans, Paul writes to the church at Rome to give the believers guidance regarding interactions of individual members, specifically in terms of contributing to the church. Providing practical church application, Romans 12:4-8 says,

> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Paul is clear that the members of a local body of believers have a responsibility to use the gifts given to them through the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the "one body in Christ." God designed the church to function through the skills, gifts, and experiences of believers. James Plueddemann explains that spiritual gifts, including the gift of leadership, are given "to build up the body of Christ. . . . One legitimate definition of leadership is the ability to influence others. In this important sense, all believers are called to be influencers, using gifts for the sake of the church."[49] Church members are not called to be bystanders, but to be active participants in the life of the church. Dever notes, "Members of the church are to teach each other. That's part of what knits us together as the body of Christ."[50] This is a

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[48] R. Kent Hughes and W. Carey Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Young Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 165.

[49] James E. Plueddemann, *Leading across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 164.

[50] Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 224.

picture of the interconnectedness found in the early church as described in Acts 2:44-47.

The need for active participation includes serving in leadership roles within the church.

Sanders suggests, "Churches grow in every way when they are guided by strong, spiritual

leaders. . . . The church sinks into confusion and malaise without such leadership."[51]

**Christian service is for everyone, not just vocational ministers.** Church

history is rife with examples of a clerical-laity divide, a demarcation of roles that continues

to exist. The division is not limited to specific faith traditions but extends to some

Protestant congregations as well, at least in practice if not in doctrine. As a result, the work

of ministry within a congregation is sometimes to be considered the purview of

vocational ministers. Disputing this notion, Martin Luther writes,

> It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimated by it, and for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it severs the others. This is because we all have one baptism, on gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel, and faith along make us spiritual and a Christian people. . . . As far as that goes, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, "You are a royal priesthood and a priestly realm."[52]

Noting that the Greek word for laity, *laos*, means "the people of God," R. Paul Stevens

points out, "The clergy-lay distinction was neither in the mind of the apostles nor of Jesus.

People and pastor are together the laity of God."[53] Stott argues that Ephesians 4:10-11 is

the "undeniable evidence that the New Testament sees ministry not as the privilege of a

clerical elite but as the calling of all the people of God."[54] Leonard Doohan notes,

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[51] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 18.

[52] Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," in *Three Treatises*, trans. Charles M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 12.

[53] R. Paul Stevens, *The Equipper's Guide to Every-Member Ministry: Eight Ways Ordinary People Can Do the Work of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 10.

[54] Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 126.

"Laypersons do not belong to the church, nor do they have a role in the Church. Rather, through baptism they are Church, and, in unison with Christ, their mission is the mission of the church itself."[55] Without minimizing the importance of pastoral ministry, Derek Prime and Alistair Begg agree that the "unhelpful concepts of 'clergy' and 'laity' should be discarded."[56] God gifted all believers through the power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of serving the church. Not serving would be a waste of God's graciousness and a disregard for his purposes.

Gangel acknowledges that some people might believe ministry should be done exclusively by paid staff, but that would "grieve the heart of God."[57] Rather, as Stott points out, vocational ministers are "directed . . . to enable the people of God to be a servant people, ministering actively but humbly according to their gifts in a world of alienation and pain."[58] For a church not to use its lay members in active ministry is to disregard the God-given giftedness of Christ-followers, each with unique experiences and gifts who are called to be an active part in the body of Christ. Moreover, it is inconsistent with Peter's words when he writes to the dispersed churches: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). Commenting on the "royal priesthood" assertion found in 1 Peter 2:5, Duane Elmer notes, "First Peter 2:5 declares all believers a holy priesthood. All members of the church, worldwide, are priests."[59] Referencing the horizontal function of the Old Testament

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[55] Leonard Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church: Theology and Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1984), 24.

[56] Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 224.

[57] Gangel, "The Meaning of Volunteerism," 308.

[58] Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 127.

[59] Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 117.

priests who were responsible for "mediating" the relationship between God and the Israelites, Elmer continues by highlighting the implications of the "priesthood of all believers" concept identified in 1 Peter, writing, "As New Testament believers we too have a similar horizontal function—to share our understanding of God and his purposes to each other."[60] Scripturally, particularly as pertains to church service, there is no substantive clergy-laity distinction to be made. Oscar Feucht summarizes convincingly, "It is unmistakably clear that the term 'priest' as used in the New Testament does not refer to officiants in a church building, but describes all Christians in their role as the priesthood of all believers."[61]

It merits mention that the "priesthood of all believers" construct does not obviate the need for vocational staff within the church. David Platt notes that over the course of his ministry "there were occasions when Paul worked to support his ministry, and there were occasions when he didn't."[62] Paul is clear that it is permissible for an elder of the church to receive renumeration for their service, unlike a lay person. In 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Paul writes to Timothy, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" According to William Mounce, the message to Timothy from Paul, then, was that "the elders who were following his instructions and doing a good job not only were worthy of the peoples' respect but should also be paid for their work ('double honor')."[63] That vocational ministry leaders may be paid for their service does not necessarily make

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[60] Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 117.

[61] Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 40.

[62] David Platt, "1 Timothy," in *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Christ-Centered Exposition, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 88.

[63] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 306.

their ministry more effective than that of lay people, but it is a way of honoring those elders who rule well.

**Christian service is necessary for the effectiveness of the church.** Practically, failure to incorporate believers into the ministry of the church hinders God's mission. For Christians not to serve the church, or not be allowed to serve the church, is to disregard God's desire and plan for a key aspect of Christian service. In addition, it denies believers the opportunity to see the full power of God at work through them.[64] By contrast, equipping and developing believers is essential to the effectiveness of the church. Gangel notes, "The church's strategic task can only be accomplished through the use of an army of volunteers serving effectively under the direction of a few professional leaders."[65] Moreover, empowering believers in ministry is the essence of taking the gospel into the world. John Jefferson Davis writes, "The Great Commission is the work not only of ministers, but of the whole church; the laity is called to cooperate with, aid, and encourage the ministers in the fulfillment of the task until the end of the age."[66] Ferdinand Nweke articulates the power of the church fully engaged in service: "Imagine what will happen if every believer can be brought to see they are full-time servants of God—as full-time as the pastor in the church."[67] God's desire to incorporate his people into the functioning of his church is not to be construed as a limitation on his sovereignty; God does not *need* to

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[64] Loritts, *Leadership as an Identity*, 25.

[65] Kenneth O. Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry: Using Multiple Gifts to Build a Unified Vision* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 337.

[66] John Jefferson Davis, "'Teaching Them to Observe All That I Have Commanded You': The History of the Interpretation of the 'Great Commission' and Implication for Marketplace Ministries," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25, no. 1 (January 2001): 75.

[67] Ferdinand Nweke, "Every Believer, Every Platform, Every Nation: Unleashing an Army of the Whole House through Marketplace Ministry," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (October 2021): 27.

use his people, he *chooses* to use his people. Sanders expounds on the importance of servant leaders in the church:

> If the world is to hear the church's voice today, leaders are needed who are authoritative, spiritual, and sacrificial. Authoritative, because people desire reliable leaders who know where they are going and are confident of getting there. Spiritual, because without a strong relationship to God, even the most attractive and competent person cannot lead people to God. Sacrificial, because this trait follows the model of Jesus, who gave Himself for the whole world and who calls us to follow.[68]

As important as serving and leading in the church is, it is essential to consider that the effective operation of the church is not God's "ultimate goal," as Tripp argues, "but a means to a greater, more glorious goal: the rescue and transformation of his people."[69] This is an important reminder of the eternal importance of servant leadership in the church.

**Believers Need to Be Equipped
and Trained in Serving**

In the context of the local church, Geiger and Peck contend that leadership development should be considered as a type of discipleship.[70] Davis notes, "Taking seriously Christ's mandate to make disciples by teaching them 'to observe all that I have commanded' implies concrete, practical training for all the people of God."[71] In that regard, servant leadership development is part of the ongoing process of sanctification. As a result, all believers need to be regularly trained and equipped, as this is another example of God at work in the life of his people. Gangel defines equipping and training as "purposive directive action whereby (church leaders) train believers to fulfill the ministry for which God has gifted them and to which he has called them."[72] Sloan suggests that Jesus

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[68] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 18

[69] Tripp, *Lead*, 53.

[70] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 153.

[71] Davis, "Teaching Them to Observe," 80.

[72] Kenneth O. Gangel, *Feeding and Leading: A Practical Handbook on Administration in Churches and Christian Organizations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 242.

demonstrated the importance of development as he led his disciples, using "the opportunities available to him to teach and instruct."[73] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini point to Acts 18:26 as a warrant for leadership development, noting that after Apollos spoke boldly and accurately in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila still "took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."[74] Clinton presents the importance of training, writing, "Ministry skills development offers a twofold challenge: (1) to see the leading of God in each skill learned and to recognize that each is part of a long-term process of training by God, and (2) to maintain the attitude of a seeker in order to benefit from learning opportunities."[75] If Christians are not properly trained and equipped for ministry, while they may be willing to serve, they will also hesitate to do so out of their own sense of inadequate preparation.[76] "Effective service," suggests Gangel, "requires more than willingness; it requires training."[77] More importantly, as Feucht contends, "If the church continually inspires but does not equip for service it fails its chief Commissioner, the Lord Jesus Christ."[78]

## The Church Is Responsible to Train Believers with Leadership Competencies

Geiger and Peck argue that the church should be "the locus of leadership."[79] As such, it is incumbent on the church to prioritize leadership development. They make an

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[73] Sloan, "A Biblical Model of Leadership," 14.

[74] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 98.

[75] Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 76-77.

[76] John Borek, Danny Lovett, and Elmer Towns, *The Good Book on Leadership: Case Studies from the Bible* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 221.

[77] Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry*, 337.

[78] Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 74.

[79] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 3.

important distinction that while the church should be the locus of leadership development, leadership development is not the locus of the church; the church is focused on the gospel, and accomplishing the gospel mission requires Christian leaders.[80] Plainly, the church does not exist for the purpose of leadership development. Given, though, that lay leaders are key contributors to productive ministry, for them to be effective both inside and outside the church necessitates that they be developed and equipped with servant leadership competencies. Feucht notes, "The pastor's role is not merely to keep people with Christ but to 'develop' them for Christ's service in the church and in the world."[81] Clinton contends, "God develops a leader over a lifetime," which means there are a variety of "events and people" involved in the process; the church must play an influential role, if not the most influential role, in that development process.[82] Malphurs and Mancini also place the training and development responsibility on the church, noting that the leadership of the church bears a responsibility to provide "continual leadership training" to anyone and everyone who is leading in ministry.[83] "Leadership development, with God's global mission in mind," argue Geiger and Peck, "requires the church to have an intentional plan to develop leaders."[84] It is the role of the church and its vocational ministers, then, to do this developing and equipping as part of fulfilling the mission of the church. Further, the nature of the equipping must extend beyond skills that merely meet the functional needs of the church; they must address character as well as competence.

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[80] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 4.

[81] Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 95.

[82] Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 22.

[83] Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 27.

[84] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 179.

**It Is the Responsibility of Pastors**
**to Equip Church Members**

As the scriptural leaders of the church, it is the responsibility of pastors to undertake the equipping of the saints as referenced in Ephesians 4:12.[85] Geiger and Peck suggest that the commitment to developing others is a "conviction that is deeply connected to what it means to be a Christ-follower."[86] Richard Leyda asserts that the role of the church in development is "vital" both to the believer being developed and to the church itself.[87] Albert Mohler reinforces the role of the pastor leader in terms of development, stating, "Leadership is explicitly centered in the responsibility to teach. . . . This, in essence, comes down to teaching one's followers, as Jesus himself modeled."[88] Though the term "teaching" is inclusive of preaching sermons, it is not limited to preaching. Teaching is also the active development of individuals through various types of training. Prime and Begg point out that the qualifications for elders include "not only the ability to teach Christian doctrine and conduct, but also the passing on of information and skills so that people achieve the works of service God has foreordained for them."[89] Bredfeldt is succinct when he notes, "Equipping is what leader-teachers do."[90]

It was previously established that God uses service as a vehicle for spiritual growth among his people. Blackaby and Blackaby expand on that point: "The ultimate

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[85] In Eph 4:11, Paul referenced those leadership roles given by God to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. While the exegesis reveals diversity among each of those roles, for the purposes of this section, the term "pastor" in regard to the responsibility for training will be used.

[86] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 154.

[87] Richard Leyda, "Developing Leaders," in *Management Essentials for Christian Ministries*, ed. Michael J. Anthony and James Estep Jr. (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 302.

[88] Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2012), 70.

[89] Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 224.

[90] Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 128.

goal of spiritual leadership . . . is to take their people from where they are to where God wants them to be."[91] Gangel concurs, suggesting that "placing God's servants in God's service is important and eternal business" within the purview of the pastor.[92] Pleuddemann proposes that facilitating the development of people is the "primary goal of leadership."[93] Given that serving is part of a believer's spiritual development, and serving as God intended requires equipping, it follows that a critical element of the ministry of a spiritual ministry leader is the development of believers. Developing servant leaders is a principal way the pastor meets the needs of the church. However, developing servant leaders also demands intentionality on the part of the pastor.

**Pastors are called to equip believers to meet the needs of the church.** For the church as an organization to fulfill the mission God has established requires the involvement of the members of the body. Not only has God equipped believers within the church with unique and varied gifts, but he has also directed them to use those gifts in the service of the church. "In the best ordered congregation, volunteers . . . do the ministry of the church," states James Berkley. "They are the ministers."[94] Jesus modeled the development of ministry leaders as he taught and spent time with his disciples. Paul, too, demonstrated the importance of development when he selected, equipped, and empowered Timothy.[95]

As leaders of the congregation, pastors serve the church when they equip the people of the church to leverage the gifts God has given them to serve the church. Firmly

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[91] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 127.

[92] Gangel, *Feeding and Leading*, 270.

[93] Plueddemann, *Leading across Cultures*, 163.

[94] Berkley, *Leadership Handbook*, 301.

[95] Stacy E. Hoehl, "The Mentor Relationship: An Exploration of Paul as a Loving Mentor to Timothy and the Application of This Relationship to Contemporary Leadership Challenges," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2011), 36.

rooted in Scripture, this principle is an imperative of any well-functioning organization. Mark Semter writes, "The wise leader realizes God has provided the local church with all of the spiritual gifts necessary to function in a healthy manner. All the leader needs to do is support the members of the body, help them discover their areas of giftedness, and strengthen . . . their passion for ministry."[96] From the secular perspective, Kouzes and Posner contend, "Developing competence and building confidence (within the members of the organization) are essential to delivering on the organization's promises."[97] Servant leadership development is beyond consideration as merely a helpful function, it is an indispensable requirement. "The Christian leader has no more critical task than preparing future leaders," argues Leyda. "This is essential both for any particular Christian organization's continued survival and effectiveness as well as for its mission of sending emerging leaders out to multiply God's work in the world."[98] The responsibility for development belongs to the pastor, according to Larry Purcell: "Vocational leaders must take on the task of developing the members whom God has provided them for the fulfillment of the Great Commission."[99]

The failure to grow and develop believers within the church has long-term implications on the church itself. Mohler explains, "Organizations that do not learn will be left behind, and this is true across the spectrum of business and institutional life."[100] The mission of the church is too important not to be stewarded well, and the failure to equip and to develop people is poor stewardship. "In short," writes D. A. Carson, "Christian leaders dare not overlook their responsibility to lead the people of God in living

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[96] Mark H. Semter III, "Supporting Volunteers," in Berkley, *Leadership Handbook*, 339.

[97] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 233.

[98] Leyda, "Developing Leaders," 297.

[99] Larry Purcell, "Recruiting and Screening Volunteers," in Anthony and Estep, *Management Essentials*, 246.

[100] Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 68.

that is in conformity" with the expectations placed upon them by God, including the expectation to serve.[101]

**Developing and equipping requires intentionality on the part of the pastor.** Blackaby and Blackaby are direct when they write, "Whether by design or neglect, failing to develop leaders in an organization constitutes gross failure by the leader."[102] Success in effectively developing servant leaders can only be accomplished when the leader is intentional about the development process.[103] Emphasizing the importance of development processes, Simon Sinek notes, "The best companies" have "a robust curriculum" designed to train in a variety of relevant skills.[104]

The absence of a deliberate approach to development leaves potential servant leaders feeling ill-equipped to serve and, ultimately, as Kouzes and Posner suggest, "overwhelmed and disabled."[105] It is incumbent on pastors, then, to create and implement processes that allow people to grow in their skills and empowerment for the good of the organization.[106] For Ford, it is the responsibility of people in leadership positions to have a vision to develop and nurture younger servant leaders.[107] Leyda articulates the importance of development, commenting, "Developing other leaders may be the most crucial responsibility given to leaders in Christian ministry."[108] Pastors must be deliberate in

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[101] D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 129.

[102] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 134.

[103] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 135.

[104] Simon Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2017), 293.

[105] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 233.

[106] Irving and Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective*, 111.

[107] Ford, "Helping Leaders Grow," 126.

[108] Leyda, "Developing Leaders," 311.

viewing equipping and development functions as a critical part of their shepherding responsibility. "Part of wise and selfless stewardship," contend Geiger and Peck, "is developing others and preparing them for their impending time to lead."[109]

**Pastors Must Equip in the Areas
of Character and Competence**

Bearing in mind that equipping is primarily a pastoral function, it is essential that church leaders have in view the spiritual growth of believers for whom they are responsible. As a result, even as there is the need for development in skill-based competencies, intentional development in character-based competencies must be paramount for pastors. The leadership equipping process for the church is transformational, according to Ford, who argues the expectation is "to start with Jesus as the leader and to let him shape us into his model."[110] He continues, for leaders "both the being and the doing, the character and the skills are important. The *being like Jesus*, however, brings to the doing the eternal kingdom perspective."[111]

**Character-based competencies have primacy.** Geiger and Peck warn of development apart from a biblically informed foundation:

> If leaders are developed apart from Jesus, the emphasis is inevitably on skills and not the heart transformed through Christ. Divorcing leadership development from discipleship can leave people more skilled and less sanctified. And when competency and skill outpace character, leaders are set up for a fall. We don't serve leaders well if we teach them how to lead without teaching them how to follow him. We don't serve leaders well if we develop skills without shepherding their character.[112]

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[109] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 18.

[110] Ford, "Helping Leaders Grow," 125.

[111] Ford, "Helping Leaders Grow," 126.

[112] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 160.

Ford concurs, noting that, especially within the church context, development in the areas of character and spiritual growth are more important than skill-based competencies.[113] Given the importance of ministry service as part of the sanctification of believers, this is a rational and consistent prioritization. Commenting on the leader qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Tripp points out, "In God's eyes, character trumps performance."[114] Loritts stresses that an imperative for church leaders is to "avoid preferring competence over character. . . . We tend to ignore character flaws and even sin in the life of a leader because of his more worldly leadership."[115] Both those who develop people and those people who are being developed must not underestimate the importance of Christian character, for, as Alexander Strauch comments, "Our obedience or disobedience affects many people for good or evil—even whole churches and denominations."[116]

Character-based competencies are important beyond the efficient operation of the church; they are essential for the existential operation of the church. When character as a competency is not prized, or when a person in a leadership role is intentionally and regularly operating outside of godly character, there are significant ramifications for the leader, the people being led, and the church. Loritts is concise: "Simply stated, God never ignores or excuses sin."[117] Therefore, training and equipping believers with spiritual and character-based competencies is an essential leadership function. Carson sums up the expectation for servant leaders and those pastors training them: "Faithful Christian leaders

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[113] Ford, "Helping Leaders Grow," 135.

[114] Tripp, *Lead*, 104.

[115] Loritts, *Leadership as an Identity*, 23.

[116] Alexander Strauch, *A Christian Leader's Guide to Leading with Love* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 2006), 176.

[117] Loritts, *Leadership as an Identity*, 23.

must make the connections between creed and conduct, between the cross and how to live. And they must exemplify this union in their own lives."[118]

As a corollary, it is worth noting that while it is essential to train believers in character-based competencies, it is equally important that those pastors doing the training stay close to the Lord as well. Blackaby and Blackaby encourage Christian leaders to continue to emphasize their own spiritual development: "Leaders cannot take their people into a relationship with Christ that goes any deeper than where they have gone themselves. . . . Thus spiritual leaders must continually be growing themselves if they are to take their people into a more mature relationship with Christ."[119] All leaders are susceptible to the mindset that they are successful based on what they perceive as their own achievement; this is when pride seeps into the life of the leader.[120] This potential for pride is a threat to their ministry, of which leaders must remain aware. Whitney rightly notes the importance of Christian leaders resisting the temptation of pride, arguing, "He also called us to serve with humility because that leads to Christlikeness."[121] Ford summarizes the need for servant leaders to remain committed to their own spiritual health: "If we want to raise up leaders like Jesus who have a clear voice and a strong and compelling touch, those of us who are called to develop them need to embody the same. We need to have a clear message of what leadership is."[122] The implications of church leader failures to act out of Christ-like character are apparent. A January 2023 Gallup survey revealed that only 34 percent of Americans assess the "honesty and ethical standards" of clergy as high or very high, and 17 percent rate the honesty and ethical

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[118] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 126.

[119] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 128.

[120] Tripp, *Lead*, 38.

[121] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 150.

[122] Ford, "Helping Leaders Grow," 145.

standards of clergy as low or very low.[123] That is a decline from the previous year's "historic low" of 36 percent and is the lowest rating of a twenty-year decline.[124] The absence of character in ministry has a negative kingdom effect.

**Skill-based competencies are important to develop.** In explaining the skills approach to leadership, Northouse offers a clear distinction between the being (character-based competencies) and the doing (skill-based competencies) when he writes, "Skills are what leaders can accomplish whereas traits are who leaders are."[125] While character-based competencies are the priority in terms of servant leader development, the need for skill-based competencies is real and important. In short, skill-based competencies are essential for the work of the church to be successful. "But what about an incompetent leader who is a person of high moral integrity?" asks Bredfeldt. "In this case, the leader is of exemplary character; but without competence, an inertia and lethargy occurs."[126] The absence of skill-based competencies is a hindrance to the mission of the church. According to Kouzes and Posner, leaders who value the development of those they are equipping understand that "developing the competence and confidence of their constituents so that they are more qualified, more capable, and more effective, and so that they are leaders in their own right" is essential to significant accomplishment within an organization.[127] Neil Cole argues that "skill development is a crucial part" of developing and equipping leaders

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[123] Megan Brenan, "Nurses Retain Top Ethics Rating in U.S., but Below 2020 High," Gallup News, January 10, 2023, https://news.gallup.com/poll/467804/nurses-retain-top-ethics-rating-below-2020-high.aspx.

[124] Aaron Earls, "Public Trust in Pastors Falls to Historic Low," Lifeway Research, January 30, 2023, https://research.lifeway.com/2023/01/30/public-trust-in-pastors-falls-to-historic-low/.

[125] Northouse, *Leadership*, 57.

[126] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher*, 113.

[127] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 237.

for ministry.[128] Bredfeldt summarizes neatly, "The essence of balance and effective

leadership is found in this simple principle: character must be accompanied by

competence."[129]

Much has been written attempting to provide categories of skills.[130] Robert

Katz refers to the distinction between technical, human, and conceptual skills.[131] Gangel

addresses the variables of cognitive, affective, and conative skills. He likens those terms

to "knowledge commitments, attitude development, and skill emphasis."[132] Though no

one category is more important than another in terms of the needs of the church, Dennis

Hollinger argues that people tend to resonate with one more than the others, as they are

motivated by an affinity for one element of the "head, heart, or hands" construct.[133] Simply

put, an abundance of skill-based competencies may be developed, there are multiple ways

to classify them, and it is important for pastors to recognize that. Referencing Psalm 139,

Leyda notes that God has uniquely created people with "innate capabilities and talents"

that are intended to be used in servant leadership for God's glory.[134] Skill-based

development, then, can engage servant leaders in their specific areas of giftedness, resulting

in more responsiveness to training and higher and more effective levels of service.[135]

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[128] Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 215.

[129] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher*, 116.

[130] The principles and theories of developing leaders in skill-based competencies are many and the subject of much writing and thinking. Developing that further is outside the scope of this project. The reason behind addressing skill-based competencies in this chapter is to acknowledge their importance in the overall function of any organization, including the church.

[131] Northouse, *Leadership*, 57.

[132] Gangel, *Feeding and Leading*, 242.

[133] Dennis P. Hollinger, "Preaching to the Head, Heart and Hands: A Holistic Paradigm for Proclaiming and Hearing the Word," *Journal of Evangelical Homiletics Society* 7, no. 1 (March 2007): 19.

[134] Leyda, "Developing Leaders," 301.

[135] Gangel, *Feeding and Leading*, 241.

This, too, is an important concept for pastors to grasp when implementing development processes. Gangel notes, "Training works best when we recruit people on the basis of their gifts and interests."[136] Without lessening the emphasis on character-based development, it is an inescapable responsibility for pastors to develop the skills of those they shepherd. Moreover, pastors should engage in the work of helping believers develop those skills with which they have been gifted and those that they feel called to deploy.

**Competencies are transferable.** Equipping servant leaders is essential for the church, but that development is not limited to application within the church context. Research conducted by Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman reveals that the majority of competencies that result in effective leadership are context-independent; that is, they are equally applicable across a variety of contexts. They determined the leadership "code represents about sixty to seventy percent of what makes an effective leader. It represents the basics, the fundamentals, or the essentials of leadership."[137] As a result, they argue that "mastering the code becomes the foundation on which effective leadership established."[138] The implications of this conclusion are significant relative to leadership equipping and development within the church. As believers are trained in leadership competencies through the church, that training will have practical application for those same leaders outside the walls of the church. The result is Christian servant leaders taking biblically informed leadership principles and skills into their homes, schools, workplaces, and anywhere else they interact with people. Geiger and Peck suggest that "as leaders are developed in the church, they are simultaneously developed for all spheres of life, to be

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[136] Gangel, "The Meaning of Volunteerism," 325.

[137] Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman, *The Leadership Code*, 12.

[138] Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman, *The Leadership Code*, 12.

men and women who represent our King and steward responsibilities and opportunities for his glory and on his mission."[139]

## Competencies with a Biblical Worldview Equip Believers with a Christian Perspective of Leadership

Outlining the purpose for the church, Wayne Grudem states that the "evangelistic work of declaring the gospel is the primary ministry that the church has toward the world."[140] Stevens contends that the "church itself is created through the mission of God and participates in the mission of God."[141] Given that believers are called to serve the church in all aspects as servant leaders, it follows that they are expected to play an integral role in its mission of carrying the gospel into the world. While this can take the form of purely evangelistic and missionary efforts, the fulfillment of the Great Commission is not limited to those two approaches. "Mission is not our project, something we do, or a few people we send out," argue Gea Gort and Mats Tunehag. "Instead, it is part of the DNA of every Christian since his Spirit dwells within us."[142] Geiger and Peck address the breadth of the mandate for leadership development:

> Ultimately, the development of leaders within the church serves as a locus for developing leaders for places of leadership all over the world. Leadership constructs should not only result in leaders developed for ministry within a church, but also for leadership in the home, workplace, and world. The Church is able to multiply the Christ-empowered leaders the world desperately needs.[143]

Accordingly, there is purpose in developing servant leaders that transcends the operational needs of a church. Timothy Keller points out, "Just as God equips Christians

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[139] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 177-78.

[140] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 1064.

[141] R. Paul Stevens, *Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 87.

[142] Gea Gort and Mats Tunehag, *BAM Global Movement: Business as Mission Concepts & Stories* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2018), 10.

[143] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 29.

for building up the body of Christ, so he also equips all people with talents and gifts for various kinds of work, for the purpose of building up the human community."[144] Pastors need to ensure servant leaders are prepared to deploy their skills and gifts in the context of a biblical worldview. With that worldview as a backdrop, pastors are tasked with helping servant leaders understand their missional role outside the walls of the church as part of equipping processes. When this happens, the world will see the body of Christ at work fulfilling God's mission.

**Believers Must Be Equipped**
**with a Biblical Worldview**

For Christians to have the impact in the world that God intended, they must not only see the importance of their participation in the world, but must also have a biblical worldview as they go about their interactions with other people. Tawa Anderson, Michael Clark, and David Naugle define a worldview as "the conceptual lens through which we see, understand, and interpret the world and our place within it."[145] Pastors are responsible to equip servant leaders with a biblical, or God-centered, worldview, which Mohler suggests "brings every issue, question, and cultural concern into submission to all that the Bible reveals, and frames all understanding within the ultimate purpose of bringing greater glory to God."[146] As Christians engage the world around them, they must be able to reflect a biblically accurate view of Christian living. A Christian worldview, argue Gayne Anacker and John Shoup, "is not just a set of beliefs; it is a way of life. To be a Christian is to live all of life in a new way, according to new principles—God's principles."[147]

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[144] Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 55.

[145] Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 8.

[146] Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 45-46.

[147] Gayne J. Anacker and John R. Shoup, "Leadership in the Context of the Christian Worldview," in Burns, Shoup, and Simmons, *Organizational Leadership*, 50.

In a manner of speaking, a biblical worldview can be considered a character-based competency that needs to be prioritized as the primary lens through which other character- and skill-based competencies are to be developed. Anderson, Clark, and Naugle suggest a key reason it is important to understand worldview is to help believers "live more consciously and consistently."[148] Mohler suggests that a biblical worldview leads to a "way of life that grows out of Christian reflection on the Bible."[149] The net effect is that as believers grow in their appreciation for a biblical worldview they will be more reflective of a Christ-honoring lifestyle to the world. Yet another purpose in developing a worldview competency is that it can assist Christians, as Anderson, Clark, and Naugle explain, "in building bridges with neighbors who hold different worldviews—with those bridges ideally leading to the cross of Jesus Christ."[150] Believers, then, must have an appreciation for developing within themselves that worldview. Being equipped with a proper biblical worldview is an important step in the believer carrying the gospel with them into the world.

**Believers' Ministry Is Not
Limited to the Church**

In the context of the mission of the church, Stevens notes that the mission is furthered "not only in its gathered (ecclesial) life but in its dispersed (diaspora) life as members fan out into the world as agents of the Kingdom of God Monday to Saturday."[151] Feucht offers a helpful reminder to Christians, writing,

> Being a Christian is not an escape from the world into the church. It is taking the Gospel and its healing ministry out where the people are. . . . The Christian faith is not a cloak we put into the coat closet when we come home from church. It is a lively, life-giving thing; it cannot but do the works of God which the Holy Spirit puts

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[148] Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 51.

[149] Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 45.

[150] Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 53.

[151] Stevens, *Doing God's Business*, 87.

into the heart. Faith in Christ is dynamic. It cannot be confined to static church membership, as this is commonly understood.[152]

His emphatic point is well-taken. Too often, believers leave their faith at the church or reserve it for what they consider their private moments. Nweke warns of the tendency of believers to live their lives "sharply demarcated into spiritual (or sacred) and secular" when the reality is that distinction should not exist for a believer.[153] Rather, as Stevens points out, the believer is expected to live in the broader society as God's representative.[154] Hendrik Kraemer notes the laity "form the daily repeated projection of the Church into the world."[155] Living in the world, in this context, necessarily involves living among unbelievers and finding opportunities to share and live out the gospel with them. Sabastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert comment that Christians are to be encouraged and motivated "by the thought that we've been deployed by our King to a specific network of friends and relationships into which we can speak truth that has seldom been heard."[156]

**Ministry is found throughout daily life.** The psalmist wrote, "Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening" (104:23). The result, as Bonhoeffer notes, is that "work plunges men into the world of things."[157] The workplace, then, is a significant opportunity for servant leaders to leverage both their character-based and skill-based competencies for a kingdom impact. "There is a growing awareness," argue Dion Forster

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[152] Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 69.

[153] Newke, "Every Believer, Every Platform, Every Nation," 27.

[154] Stevens, *The Equipper's Guide to Every Member Ministry*, 15.

[155] Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), 170.

[156] Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 125.

[157] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: HarperOne, 1954), 70.

and Johann Oostenbrink, "that the Great Commission can only be successfully addressed in the environment where people spend most of their laboring and productive hours."[158]

For many believers, however, growing in this awareness and the appropriate appreciation for their role in the workplace requires intentional effort of the part of pastors to teach that expectation. Noting that work is an act of worship, Keller writes,

> Christians should be aware of this revolutionary understanding of the purpose of their work in the world. We are not to choose jobs and conduct our work to fulfill ourselves and accrue power, for being called by God to do something is empowering enough. We are to see work as a way of service to God and our neighbor, and so we should both choose and conduct our work in accordance with that purpose. The question regarding our choice of work is no longer "What will make me the most money and give me the most status?" The question must now be "How, with my existing abilities and opportunities, can I be of greatest service to other people, knowing what I do of God's will and of human need?"[159]

Jonathan Leeman concurs, suggesting, "Christians should submit their vocations to their churches."[160] Though for many believers this type of thinking relative to their employment is revolutionary, the kingdom opportunity is profound. Robert Bellah et al. contend that understanding vocation as a calling serves to position work "as a contribution to the good of all and not merely as a means to one's own advancement."[161]

While Bellah et al.'s approach is primarily secular, the concept of viewing work as being of benefit to the community is a biblical concept. Gort and Tunehag echo Bellah et al.'s view, noting that believers "don't live to work but work to live for a higher purpose."[162] Further, there are practical aspects to viewing the workplace as a mission field.

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[158] Dion Angus Forster and Johann W. Oostenbrink, "Where Is the Church on Monday? Awakening the Church to the Theology and Practice of Ministry and Mission in the Marketplace," *In Die Skriflig* 49, no. 3 (2015): 2.

[159] Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 56-57.

[160] Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*, Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 100.

[161] Robert N. Bellah et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), 288.

[162] Gort and Tunehag, *BAM Global Movement*, 20.

Forster and Oostenbrink write that the workplace is "identified by the kind of activities (church) members are engaged in beyond the life of the gathered, worshipping, congregation or church. The marketplace, in this context, is where church members are when they are not 'at church' for worship services, teaching, or fellowship."[163] Feucht suggests that not only are believers called to view their work as a ministry opportunity, but that they are uniquely positioned to do so: "Lay people, and they alone, in their daily lives and occupations encounter the society in which they live. They form in a very particular way the spearhead of the church's true mission."[164]

While most adult believers spend a significant portion of their waking hours working, that is not the full extent of their interactions with other people, including those people who have not received Jesus Christ as savior. Accordingly, servant leaders need to be equipped to engage lost people in all aspects of their life and routine. Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul explains, "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches" (1 Cor 7:17). Here is an invitation, suggests Thomas Schreiner, for believers to "rest in the places where God has planted them and fulfill their roles in the places where God called them to salvation."[165] Feucht notes that the "Christian is to be 'visible' every day on his job," a notion that expands into every arena of life.[166] "In biblical truth," concludes Stevens, "the layperson's ministry is more important where it really counts—in the world."[167] Kingdom service can happen wherever believers find themselves.

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[163] Forster and Oosterbrink, "Where Is the Church on Monday?," 2.

[164] Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 81.

[165] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 152.

[166] Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 77.

[167] Stevens, *The Equipper's Guide to Every Member Ministry*, 13.

**Ministry is found in the intersection of worldview and leadership.** When believers are equipped with a biblical worldview and understand missional opportunities in front of them, they are well-positioned to make a kingdom impact. Simply living out their faith in full view of those they engage will make a statement in any context. As part of their study of leaders throughout history, Howard Gardner and Emma Laskin uncovered a key leadership trait: "The ways in which direct leaders conduct their lives— their embodiments—must be clearly perceived by those who they hope to influence. . . . People who do not practice what they preach are hypocrites, and hypocrisy mutes the effectiveness of their stories."[168] This is one of the implications of professed believers who live inconsistent with a biblical worldview. By contrast, Anacker and Shoup detail the value of Christian leadership on an organization:

> A Christian model of leadership is one in which leadership perspectives, practices, and habits are congruent with the tenets and habits of the Christian faith. Whether a leader is in a secular or Christian organization, the Christian leadership model equips leaders to serve transcendent purposes utilizing the transforming power of the Word of God, the example and mind of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the community of believers, and prayer to walk in truth and in a manner worthy of the Christian calling.[169]

For Christian servant leaders, leading with the proper perspective is critical. Mohler argues that all leaders should develop a biblical worldview, but "leaders face that duty in a way that is even more urgent."[170] Leading out of anything else has the potential to damage the leader's Christian witness. However, as Christian leaders live and work out of their biblical worldviews, unbelievers will observe and recognize the consistency. The net effect can be a significant impact on society at large as those Christian servant leaders leverage the character- and skill-based competencies developed as part of their overall spiritual development.

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[168] Howard Gardner and Emma Laskin, *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York: Basic, 2011), 9.

[169] Anacker and Shoup, "Leadership in the Context of the Christian Worldview," 60.

[170] Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 47.

## Conclusion

The need for Christians to serve and to lead is paramount, and that need is not limited to the functioning of the church. Indeed, the Great Commission is invariably advanced when believers are trained and equipped with a biblical view of both character- and skill-based competencies that can be applied in the world. This review of both Christian and secular literature reveals the importance of equipping leaders. Further, biblical examples of Christian leadership demonstrate that development is one of the primary duties of the church leader. As a result of this review, the project designed to increase the perception of value by enhancing lay leader training at New Vision Baptist Church is consistent with historical and contemporary thought and literature.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION AND DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

The exegesis of chapter 2 revealed that believers are gifted by God for the purpose of serving him and that church leaders are called to equip believers to do so. The literature review of chapter 3 demonstrated that one of the ways Christians serve is through their leadership. To lead effectively, lay leaders must be equipped with a variety of leadership competencies, and it is the role of vocational ministers to do that equipping. While leadership training can happen in various ways, one of the ways that is particularly relevant at NVBC is the use of organized training events. Historically, those leader trainings events have emphasized the church- or ministry-specific tasks associated with lay leader roles; however, that focused approach lessens the perception of value of NVBC training, resulting in decreased training event attendance. Moreover, the narrow focus of development de-emphasizes the cultivation of leaders who are more fully developed for kingdom service, both inside and outside the walls of the church. This project was designed to leverage the training of leadership competencies that are valuable in the myriad contexts in which Christians find themselves for the purpose of increasing the perception of the value of training at NVBC.

This chapter will provide an overview of the project, including both the planning and implementation phases, as well as a summary of the goals designed to achieve the project purpose. This will provide an understanding of what the project was intended to accomplish and will provide a roadmap of the process that culminated in the training event.

**Project Planning Phase**

In addition to the theological imperatives of leadership development, there were important and valid practical reasons to increase the perception of the value of lay leader training. Simply put, NVBC ministries are dependent on trained volunteer leaders who are willing to grow continuously in their leadership capacity by investing their time in church-sponsored leadership development. When lay leaders are trained in leadership skills that they can apply in multiple areas of their lives, their overall perception of the value of training offered by NVBC will increase. The outcome will translate into improved participation, which will eventually result in more, and more equipped, people leading from a biblically-informed perspective across the broad spectrum of their lives. William Yount reinforces this presumption: "If minister-leaders want people to participate in church (training) programs," he writes, "then it is only fitting that we provide programs that church members deem valuable. Over time, programs that prove themselves worthy of members' time will be supported by members' participation."[1]

To accomplish the project goals, the project design allowed for the evaluation of the perception of lay leader training, the determination of what leadership competencies would be the most valuable to incorporate into the training event, and the development of the curriculum for those competencies.[2] Those requirements were encapsulated in two distinct components: (1) the development of the training content and the training approach that would positively influence perception; and (2) the survey instrumentation necessary to quantify and assess the current perception, as well as gauge any change in perception after the training event. Project goals 2 and 3 pertained to developing the training

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[1] William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 395.

[2] For this project, "value" corresponds to the willingness of lay leaders to prioritize their attendance at church training events. This was evaluated using specific questions on the New Vision Training Perception Survey.

components while project goals 1 and 4 evaluated perception before and after the training event.

Planning also included developing the training event itself. At NVBC, general leadership development events such as the one envisioned in this project are not common, and hosting anything on a Saturday morning in the summer is a further challenge. Therefore, the event plan considered factors such as the time of day of the event, its duration, and an invitation worded in such a way that people would understand what it was to which they were invited. A risk to the project would have been an attendance turnout too small to garner the fifty survey responses required for the success of goal 4.

## Project Implementation Phase

The training event was intended to increase perception by leveraging the curriculum created to teach leadership competencies identified as most important by respondents to the Leadership Competency Identification Survey (LCIS).[3] This multi-session event was characterized as general leadership development; it was not associated with any specific ministry. The New Vision Training Perception Survey (NVTPS) determined a pre-training event baseline and measured change post-training event.[4]

**Curriculum Development**

The first step of curriculum development was to determine what transferable leadership competencies should be taught to increase the perception of training. To provide objectivity in the selection of the competencies, input was sought from a broad array of people at NVBC, including approximately ninety pastoral staff members, twenty-one strategic ministry team members, and over one hundred deacons.[5] That feedback was

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[3] See appendix 1 for the Leadership Competency Identification Survey instrument.

[4] See appendix 2 for the New Vision Training Perception Survey instrument.

[5] Strategic ministry team members constitute the lay governance at NVBC. Those twenty-one individuals break down into four ministry teams: the Church Leadership Council, the Personnel Team, the

collected via the LCIS and was the primary determinant in selecting the three competencies for which training curriculum would be created and delivered.

After analyzing the responses to the LCIS, the three leadership competencies selected for training were humility, self-awareness, and verbal communication. The final selection was determined by using both the average rating from the survey, as well as the number of respondents that rated the competency the most important for a leader. This resulted in leveraging the leadership competencies that had the most advantageous intersection of those two key metrics.

Upon identification of the competencies to be trained, the curricula were developed. This involved using a variety of sources, including some secular, to create a training session for each of the leadership competencies identified. The curriculum for each competency was designed to provide the biblical basis and guidance for the competency in question, while also addressing the relevance of the competency in contexts other than the church. The intent was to clearly demonstrate the transferability of each leadership competency being taught without losing the importance of the biblical authority undergirding them. This required intentionality in articulating unequivocally that each competency is important to develop purely because Scripture is clear that believers are to live out that competency. The teaching was explicit that, although the competency in question is valuable and useful in secular contexts, secular relevance alone is not the reason Christians should develop that skill. Rather, believers are to be obedient to what Scripture expects; God's sovereignty means that a byproduct of obedience is Christians who are better equipped for life and leadership.

Budget and Finance Team, and the Vision Team. Strategic ministry team members are both male and female and, while not considered biblical elders, are spiritually mature, high-capacity lay leaders. They are carefully vetted for theological consistency, demonstrated church service, and other behaviors (e.g., consistent pattern of giving, participation in a small group) that reveal their commitment to the ministries of NVBC. They are nominated by the staff leadership team and are approved by the church annually during a business meeting.

The development of the curricula to train attendees in the selected leadership competencies emphasized three main areas: the competency's scriptural basis, its transferability to other contexts, and its practical application and means of development. Of primary importance was the scriptural foundation for each competency. To demonstrate the transferability of each competency, the lessons incorporated examples of how each competency had value in contexts other than the church. The intent was that people would learn about the leadership concept from an additional perspective, one that allowed them to see the clear applicability of the competency in other areas of their lives. Further, each curriculum addressed practical application, including useful steps for developing the competency. Collectively, these three main points intended to establish the value of the training, as well as the competency itself.

To demonstrate increased value, multiple transferable leadership competencies were taught to create a breadth of development. To ensure the overall efficacy of the curricula, eight pastoral staff members were asked to complete an evaluation rubric for each of the three training sessions.[6] This was a collaborative process of refining the training such that the content was theologically sound and of practical value to the training participants.

The sessions were not designed to teach everything that could be addressed about the different topics, but to provide the biblical foundation for each competency and illustrate that the competencies were relevant and beneficial in other areas of their lives. The general outlines of each session were consistent with one another. They started with the stated learning objectives for each lesson, followed by the "big idea"—the desired takeaway for participants within a sentence or two. Each outline consisted of an "anchor" Scripture verse as the theological foundation for the competency. Supplementary verses further illustrated the biblical perspective and demonstrated applicability of the

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[6] See appendix 3 for the Competency Training Evaluation Rubric.

competency. Following the biblical core, the lesson outline addressed the importance and implications of the leadership competency in the secular world. The outline concluded with practical steps for developing the competency. Each session included a handout that provided blanks for major thought completion and to capture the Scripture references shared so that participants were able to follow along and interact with the content.[7] Below are the main elements for each session.

**Session 1: Humility.**[8] The objectives for this competency were that participants would learn the importance of biblical humility and understand that being humble is essential for believers to recognize and appreciate their identity in Christ. Participants learned that living in humility is a way to reflect Christ's sacrifice for them and that humility on the part of a leader demonstrates appreciation and value for those being led. The final learning objective of the session was to identify several practical approaches to growing in humility.

The big idea for the session was, "Humility is seeing yourself as God sees you, neither valuing yourself too highly nor estimating yourself too lowly. Humble leaders are effective leaders because of how they prioritize those people they lead."

The anchor Scripture for this competency was Philippians 2:3-11. Developing the biblical foundations of humility included a brief exegesis of the verses set the context for participants. Supplementary verses addressing multiple aspects of humility included Matthew 23:11-12, James 4:6-8, 1 Peter 5:5-6, Colossians 3:12, and Luke 18:9-14. The lesson taught that the most compelling reason for a believer to pursue humility is because Jesus modeled it (Phil 2:3-1) and proclaimed it (Matt 23:11-12). James recalls Proverbs 3:34, warning that God opposes the proud, then gives the antidote to pride (Jas 4:7-8).

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[7] Stephen D. Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 107.

[8] See appendix 4 for the complete lesson outline for the leadership competency of humility.

Peter, likewise, invokes Proverbs 3:34 as he instructs believers to humble themselves to one another (1 Pet 5:5-6). Paul's writing to the Colossians instructs them that humility is part of the Christian life (Col 3:12). To provide clarity through comparison, the lesson highlighted the notion that pride is the opposite of humility, as evidenced in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14.

For this lesson, the implications of humility in the secular world were demonstrated primarily through article headlines and excerpts from well-known publications. The main point of this section was that organizations increasingly value humble leaders at all levels because they are more effective; performance metrics bear that out. People are more likely to flourish when leaders are humble because the people being led feel valued and appreciated. This is not limited to companies; it is the case for any team or group of individuals.

Practical steps to growing in humility began by focusing on Jesus and his sacrifice and include (1) reflecting on the humility of Jesus, (2) reflecting on the true power of Jesus, (3) reflecting on God's Word, (4) serving others, (5) demonstrating gratitude, and (6) being teachable.

The lesson concluded with an affirmation that when believers are humble, they honor God, honor others, and become more effective leaders.

**Session 2: Self-Awareness.**[9] The objectives for this competency were that participants would understand a definition of self-awareness consistent with Scripture. Participants learned the importance of self-awareness and its necessity, both as part of the Christian life and as a leadership skill. The final objective of the session was to cover several practical approaches to growing in self-awareness.

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[9] See appendix 5 for the complete lesson outline for the leadership competency of self-awareness.

The big idea for this session was, "Self-awareness is having a proper estimation of your standing in God's eyes, your own eyes, and in the eyes of others. Leaders who are self-aware have healthy interactions with God, themselves, and other people."

The anchor Scripture for this competency was Romans 12:3. Developing the biblical foundations of self-awareness included a brief exegesis of Romans 12:3 to set the context for the participants. Supplementary verses addressing multiple perspectives of self-awareness included John 13:35, Ephesians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 15:10, and Psalm 139:13-14. The text of John 13:3-5 was used to demonstrate Jesus's self-awareness, specifically his understanding that he had come from God, was going back to God, and had a mission to accomplish while on earth. Ephesians 2:10 was incorporated into the lesson to communicate that any gift believers have is not a result of their own efforts but is a gift from God given for the purpose of doing good works. Paul's writing to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:10 reveals that even though Paul claimed to outwork the apostles, it was not his effort but the grace of God that allowed him to accomplish what he did. That believers are valuable to God was illustrated by Psalm 139:13-14; the lesson reminded participants that they are created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27) and must remain cognizant of the fact that they represent him. This section concluded with a quote from Robert Cheong, noting that self-awareness "is not the ultimate goal; it is a means by which we become aware of our desperate need for Jesus."[10] This was a point of emphasis throughout the session.

The section on the importance of self-awareness (or the lack thereof) in secular contexts began by referencing research which determined that self-aware leaders are better leaders.[11] Self-aware leaders generate better results. There was a caution to participants

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[10] Robert Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness," Biblical Counseling Coalition, April 8, 2020, https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2020/04/08/the-wonders-of-self-awareness/.

[11] Tasha Eurich, "What Self-Awareness Really Is (and How to Cultivate It)," *Harvard Business Review*, January 4, 2018, https://hbr.org/2018/01/what-self-awareness-really-is-and-how-to-cultivate-it.

not to be misled by secular views of self-awareness, which tend to place too much emphasis on self. While self-awareness is a key leadership competency, for the believer, it must be approached and developed within a biblical worldview.[12]

The section on practical application contained three main elements: (1) implications of a lack of self-awareness, (2) determining one's personal level of self-awareness, and (3) growing in self-awareness. A lack of, or deficiency in, self-awareness can manifest in a person's relationships with God and other people to the detriment of the people involved. Participants were taught that a God-honoring approach to assessing self-awareness includes prayer and seeking insight from trusted believers, emphasizing the importance of those trusted confidants having a close walk with the Lord of their own. Further, the honest reflections that constitute part of self-examination should yield insights and opportunities for growth, not unhealthy guilt. The section concluded with actions for growing in self-awareness, including (1) prayer, (2) time spent in the Bible, (3) feedback from trusted believers, (4) identifying and following through on ways to serve others, (5) gospel-centric resources, and (6) a desire and willingness to change for the express purpose of becoming self-aware.

The lesson concluded with a reminder that, while growing in self-awareness is a journey in self-discovery, the ultimate goal must be a closer relationship with the Lord. Improving that relationship translates into better human relationships of all types. Additionally, while growing in self-awareness can be a difficult process, it is part of God's plan of sanctification for the believer.[13]

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[12] Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness."

[13] Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness."

**Session 3: Verbal Communication.**[14] This session began by recognizing humility and self-awareness as character-based competencies. Accordingly, those two competencies address who a leader is. Verbal communication is differentiated by virtue of being more of a skill-based competency. It is part of what a leader does. However, what leaders do is influenced by who they are. Character specifically as applied to verbal communication was the main emphasis of this session.

The objectives for this competency were that participants would understand the importance of verbal communication consistent with biblical principles; and the words believers choose to use can have a substantial impact on their relationship with the Lord and with others. Participants learned God-honoring ways to improve verbal communication skills, with a particular emphasis on using language for building people up versus tearing them down. Participants recognized that a result of using godly words with others is stronger relationships and, therefore, enhanced leadership influence.

The big idea for this session was, "Words can have a powerful effect on people.[15] They can weigh down, they can hurt, they can encourage, or they can bless. Believers have the opportunity to reflect Christ to those they encounter when they are intentional about communicating in ways that demonstrate the grace of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit."

The anchor Scripture for this competency was Ephesians 4:29. Developing the biblical foundations of godly verbal communication included a brief exegesis of Ephesians 4:29 to set the context for the participants. Supplementary verses addressing multiple approaches to, and implications of, godly communication included Ephesians 4:31 and 5:4, Colossians 3:8 and 4:5-6, Titus 3:2, Matthew 12:36-37, and a representative

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[14] See appendix 6 for the complete lesson outline for the leadership competency of verbal communication.

[15] The first statement "Words can have a powerful effect on people" was adapted from "What Does the Bible Say about the Power of Words?," Got Questions, accessed May 12, 2023, https://www.gotquestions.org/power-of-words.html.

sampling of Proverbs. In Ephesians 4:31 and 5:4, Paul provides examples of language that tears down instead of builds up. His commands to new believers in Colossians 3:8 emphasize that words of anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscenity are not to be used by Christians. There are also evangelical implications for the type of language a believer uses, as explained in Colossians 4:5-6. Teaching about the importance of words is a function of the pastor, as evidenced by Titus 3:2. Further, Jesus warns that Christians will be held accountable for their words in Matthew 12:36-37.

The lesson acknowledged the importance of verbal communication as a leadership competency in the secular world, emphasizing the importance of communicating with people in a way that respects and encourages them. A respectful approach to communication has a relationship with how people respond to leaders, as evidenced by a research project wherein the results indicated a correlation between verbal communication styles and job satisfaction.[16]

The practical application of this session outlined six elements of verbal communication consistent with the biblical teaching. The first element was maintaining a genuine heart for those on the receiving end of the communication. While it is not limited to verbal communication, 1 Peter 3:8 provides guidance as to how believers are to interact, that is, with "unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." Applied to communication, this mindset facilitates language that builds up others. The other elements of practical application include (2) practicing active listening, (3) maintaining awareness of body language, (4) understanding the audience, (5) embracing authenticity when communicating, and (6) emphasizing clarity.

The session concluded with the point that oratory skills are not the most important elements of biblically-centered verbal communication. Rather, Christian leaders

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[16] Wenchen Guo, Tingting Li, and Ning Wu, "Empirical Study on the Effects of Leader's Verbal Communication Style on Employee's Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies*, no. 3 (2015): 223.

must remember they are impacting a person made in the image of the Creator with their words, as well as representing that Creator.

**Training Event Implementation**

       The training event was conducted at NVBC on Saturday, June 17, 2023. Any NVBC adult lay leader who had actively served in one or more ministries in the past twelve months was invited to participate in the training event. The content was delivered in a lecture-style format with each leadership competency lesson lasting approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes. The event began at 9:00 a.m. and a light breakfast was provided. The three sessions were conducted over the course of the morning, with a brief break between the second and third sessions. There were 109 people in attendance, and five were NVBC staff members. The other attendees were NVBC lay leaders.

**Assessing Lay Leader Training Perception**

       The NVTPS determined the perception of the value of the NVBC lay leader training both pre- and post-training event. The pre-training event survey was distributed electronically to adults who had participated in an NVBC training in the prior twenty-four months. This was a broad qualification criterion designed to capture a substantial number of responses. The post-training event survey was distributed to the lay leaders at the conclusion of the training event, and they were asked to complete it and return before leaving. There were 102 completed surveys. The project methodology was such that, although some who completed the post-training event survey likely also participated in the pre-training event survey, there were attendees at the training event who did not. The pre-training event survey was distributed to NVBC lay leaders who had previously attended a training session, while those invited to the project training event included any currently serving lay leader.

## Overview of Project Goals

Four goals for this project were established to improve the perception of the value of lay leader training at NVBC and to measure the change accordingly. The nature of the goals shaped the design of the project.

### Goal 1

The first goal of the project was to assess the perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders through a survey. The intent of this goal was to establish a baseline of that perception in advance of implementing the project training event. This was accomplished with the NVTPS. The survey was designed to assess respondents' perceptions of the quality and value of NVBC training, as well as their willingness to participate in future training sessions. This goal was to be considered successful with one hundred survey responses that, upon analysis, established a baseline of willingness to participate in future training sessions.

### Goal 2

The second goal of the project was to develop a catalog of ten leadership competencies that benefit the ministries of NVBC and also equip lay leaders to exhibit biblically-based leadership competencies within other contexts, such as their homes, workplaces, schools, etc. This catalog was developed based on input from the NVBC pastoral staff, strategic ministry team members, and deacons via the LCIS. The methodology leveraged the competency rankings as well as the number of respondents that selected a competency as most valuable. This goal was to be considered successful when thirty respondents identified ten different leadership competencies as most valuable, based on their opinions and experience. Taking into account both of these metrics, the leadership competencies of humility, self-awareness, and verbal communication surfaced as the most valued by the respondents.

**Goal 3**

The third goal of the project was to develop the curriculum to train lay leaders in three of the transferable leadership competencies described in the second goal and to develop and implement a one-day, multi-session leadership training event that will equip lay leaders with those leadership competencies. The goal was to be measured by at least four members of the staff pastoral team utilizing the Competency Training Evaluation Rubric to determine biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. The goal was to be considered successful when each competency training achieved an aggregate average score of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale, as measured by the rubric.

**Goal 4**

The fourth goal of the project was to increase the perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders. The goal was to be measured by administering the same NVTPS identified in the first goal. This goal was to be determined successfully met when a $t$-test based on at least fifty post-training event surveys demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the willingness of the respondents to participate in future training events, based on the baseline established in the first goal.

**Conclusion**

This chapter described the details and implementation of the project designed to increase the perception of value of lay leader training at NVBC. It outlined the primary teaching points for each of the training event sessions designed for each of the three leadership competencies covered at the training event. The following chapter provides a thorough evaluation of the training event and the project as a whole, including each of the goals that facilitated the project.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This project represented an opportunity to leverage the concept of transferable leadership competencies so that lay leaders would recognize the value of leadership development at NVBC and, as a result, emphasize their own training participation in training events. This chapter will provide an evaluation of the multiple phases of the project, including specific results for the various goals, as well as reflections on the project and things I would have done differently.

**Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose for this project was to increase the perceived value of leadership training participation among lay leaders by leveraging leadership competencies that are transferable among multiple contexts. More simply put, I intended to entice people to attend leadership training events at NVBC by teaching them about leadership competencies that they would readily recognize as being valuable in other aspects of their lives. The primary anticipated benefit of this approach, assuming a successful project, was better equipped leaders conducting the ministries at NVBC.

Peering into the future, however, another benefit from this project was leaders equipped with a biblical perspective leading in a variety of contexts. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck write, "Leaders who will ultimately transform communities and change the world will come from the Church."[1] I agree with that sentiment and, in my view, effective Christian leadership in non-church environments is a strategic opportunity to advance God's mission

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[1] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 4.

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throughout the culture. To get to that point, however, NVBC lay leaders need to be willing to invest meaningful amounts of time in leadership development, which is the reason increasing the perception of training value was at the core of the project.

One of the challenges of this project was that I was attempting to influence perception, specifically the perception of value, as opposed to demonstrating some type of cognitive growth. Success was to be found when people increased in their assessment of the value of leadership training. In the context of this project, I used the word "value" as the willingness of lay leaders to prioritize their attendance at church training events, whenever possible. At its essence, the effort was about creating a training environment wherein lay leaders would see the value of NVBC training to the extent they would prioritize it over the other things that compete for space on schedules. Over the course of the project, I realized that my thinking had to change as I increasingly understood that influencing the perception of training was not as important as increasing the perception of the *value* of that training. My operating hypothesis was that when lay leaders deem leadership development through NVBC valuable to them, then their participation will increase. As I progressed into the project, I had to keep in mind that measuring the change in perception of value is different than measuring either the overall perception of NVBC training or any other type of cognitive improvement.

As I evaluate the totality of the project, I believe its purpose was legitimate, important, and relevant to the ministry of NVBC.

## Evaluation of the Project's Goals

There were four goals for this project. They were mostly linear, with each goal building upon the results of the one preceding. Conveniently, the results of some of the

goals will provide ancillary benefits to NVBC in the future beyond the project, but all of them were essential to the overall execution of the project.[2]

**Goal 1**

Given that the purpose of the project was to generate a measurable increase in the perception of the value of lay leader training, the first goal was to assess the existing perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders through a survey. To accomplish that, I used the New Vision Training Perception Survey to quantify pre-training event perception. That survey was distributed to any NVBC adult lay leader who had participated in any NVBC training in the prior twenty-four months. There were 174 lay leaders who responded to the survey. This step effectively established a baseline of the perception of the value of lay leader training. Further, the survey design was broad in that it included questions crafted to evaluate the perception of overall training, in addition to the value perception. As a result, the survey yielded feedback that addressed the execution aspects of training at NVBC, such as "Q2, Training event agendas are well-planned" and "Q4, Training events are well-run."

As useful as that feedback may prove to be for the church, the project itself was more specific in that its purpose was to increase the perception of the value of leadership training. Of the nineteen questions included in the survey, seven were designed to assess value such that the respondent indicated a willingness (or unwillingness) to attend future training sessions. This included one question (Q19, As a result of this training event, I will make every effort to attend future New Vision training events) that explicitly addressed respondents' willingness to do so. The other six questions (Q3, Q12, Q13, Q16, Q17, and Q18) addressed the applicability of NVBC

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[2] Specifically, NVBC now has a catalog of leadership competencies that have been identified by key church leaders as important and valuable to them, which can serve as a springboard for future leadership development and has, in fact, already been incorporated into deacon meetings. Similarly, general feedback from the project training event has been useful and disseminated to shape future events.

training in other contexts. The pre-training event survey revealed that those seven questions had an average score of 4.577, lower than the survey-wide average score of 4.693. While not statistically conclusive, I found this intriguing and suggestive in that the perception of value of prioritizing NVBC training is in fact lower than other sentiments regarding those training events. Interestingly, respondents did indicate that training events were a good time investment, but they also scored lower in their willingness to prioritize attendance at future training events.

One area of opportunity in the development of the NVTPS was to clarify some of the labels within the questions. As an example, the average score for "Q17, Overall, the training material helped me be a better leader" outperformed the survey-wide average, yet similar questions revealed that the training was not particularly relevant in other leadership contexts, such as the workplace, at school, or at home. My assumption is that the respondents interpreted the "leader" in Q17 to mean church lay leader.

The first goal was to be considered successfully met when one hundred surveys were completed, and the data analyzed to determine a baseline of willingness to participate in future training sessions. This goal was successfully met, insofar as the data was analyzed and the baseline established by the pre-training event survey. Though of secondary value, it also captured useful data regarding the perception of overall NVBC training. Table 1 shows the average scores of the seven value questions compared to the survey-wide average score, as well as the aggregate average score of the other twelve survey questions.

Table 1. Average scores of value questions

| Question | Average Score | Variance to Survey-Wide Average |
|---|---|---|
| 3. Training events are a good investment of my time. | 4.920 | 0.227 |
| 12. The training material was relevant and useful to me in my workplace or school. | 4.517 | -0.176 |
| 13. The training material was relevant and useful to me in my home or family life. | 4.374 | -0.319 |
| 16. The training material better equips me as a leader in other areas such as family, work, or other personal relationships. | 4.454 | -0.239 |
| 17. Overall, the training material helped me be a better leader. | 4.810 | 0.117 |
| 18. Overall, the training material has made my life better. | 4.293 | -0.400 |
| 19. As a result of this training event, I will make every effort to attend future New Vision training events. | 4.672 | -0.021 |
| Aggregate average score of the other twelve survey questions | 4.761 | 0.068 |

**Goal 2**

The second goal of the project was to develop a catalog of ten leadership competencies that benefit the ministries of NVBC and also equip lay leaders to exhibit biblically-based leadership competencies within other contexts. It is an understatement to say that leadership is a broad concept. A result of that breadth is a multitude of opinions and perspectives regarding what constitutes valuable leadership competencies. To accomplish the second goal while avoiding my own bias as to what represents the most important skills and traits for leaders, I solicited input from a variety of proven leaders at NVBC. The collective input of pastoral staff, strategic ministry team members, and deacons served as a reasonable proxy for lay leaders at the church. Through the Leadership Competency Identification Survey, respondents were asked to rank leadership competencies in order of importance based on their experience and opinion. To make it a more manageable exercise, I provided a curated list of twenty competencies that would be important not only for NVBC leaders in their roles at the church but would have clear transferability into other areas of their lives. The survey yielded seventy-nine responses.

While analyzing the results, two metrics presented as informative and compelling. The first, overall ranking, was relevant as a direct indication of how the respondents valued the competencies. The second metric manifested through the analysis of the data. It was the number of respondents who selected a given competency as the most valuable. Among the average overall rankings, the differences between competencies were measured in tenths of a point, or less. The variances in percentages of respondents considering a given competency to be the most valuable, however, were more pronounced. To best incorporate both metrics, I first sorted the results by the average overall ranking, then sorted by percentage of respondents who selected the competency as most important. The three leadership competencies with the highest rated intersection of the two metrics were chosen for the training event.[3] Those three were humility, verbal communication, and self-awareness. It is worth noting that those were not the three I would have selected had the decision been up to me. I believe that was a benefit of this goal—the process identified three leadership competencies that most closely resemble the values of a group of key leaders at NVBC.

The second goal was to be considered successful when thirty respondents identified ten different leadership competencies as most valuable to them, based on their opinions and experience. This goal was successfully met with the seventy-nine responses and the identification of ten leadership competencies. Additionally, this goal served an important function in the development of the training curriculum by identifying the three leadership competencies to be taught at the training event. Though only conjecture, I believe the solid response to the training event invitation was partly because the selected competencies represented the opinions of a larger collection of leaders.

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[3] See table A1 in appendix 7 for complete LCIS results.

**Goal 3**

The third goal of the project was to develop the curriculum to train lay leaders in three of the transferable leadership competencies described in the second goal and to develop and implement a one-day, multi-session leadership training event that would equip lay leaders with those leadership competencies. Accordingly, the third goal represented the essence of the project. It culminated in the execution of the leadership training event that was the method chosen to influence the perception of value. Hosting the event itself was straightforward. Every active adult lay leader within the church database was invited to participate in the training event, and 109 attended.

To manage expectations, at the beginning of the training I explained that each session was not to be considered exhaustive on the topic, but that the emphasis was for attendees to understand the three main areas of each competency, specifically the competency's scriptural basis, its transferability to other contexts, and its practical application and means of development. Anecdotal feedback from the training event was encouraging, with many participants stating that this type of training was needed. Some were able to see direct and immediate application relative to specific events that were occurring in their lives at the time of the training.

The third goal was to be measured by at least four members of the NVBC staff pastoral team utilizing a rubric to determine biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curricula. Similar to the LCIS exercise of goal 2, it was important to me that perspectives other than mine were solicited prior to sharing this content with a large group of church lay leaders. To ensure a breadth of feedback, I selected eight pastoral staff members to conduct the evaluation. Each of them has a role at NVBC wherein teaching within their ministry areas is an essential part of their job. The diversity in age and ministry area among this group was representative of NVBC lay leaders. Further, these staff members have a good sense of the church culture, as well as a high degree of spiritual maturity. Most of them contributed at least one specific suggestion that was incorporated into the curriculum. This goal was to be considered

successful when each competency training achieved an aggregate average score 3.5 on a 4.0 scale. The average rating for each of the three outlines was 3.8 on a scale of 1 to 4.[4] As a result of the average rating, the third goal was successfully met.

**Goal 4**

The fourth goal of the project was to increase the perceived value of NVBC leadership training among lay leaders. Although all the goals were necessary for the execution of this project, the fourth goal was, in my opinion, the best indicator of success for the project. The first goal established the baseline of the perception of value of lay leader training perception, and the fourth goal, utilizing the same NVTPS as goal 1, measured change in that perception after the training event. The second survey was taken by training event participants at the conclusion of the event. This goal was to be considered successful when a *t*-test with at least fifty post-training event surveys demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the willingness of the respondents to participate in future training events, based on the baseline established in the first goal. There were 102 survey responses following the event. A two-sample *t*-test assuming unequal variances showed a significant increase in the perception of the value of NVBC lay leader training: $t_{(271)} = -10.553$, $p < .0001$.[5] Based on the results of the *t*-test that included 102 post-training event surveys, this goal was successfully met.

Another view of the data shows that the pre- and post-training event average scores for each of the seven questions indicating value perception increased by an average of 1.043 versus the pre-training event survey. Table 2 shows the comparison of the average scores of those seven questions pre- and post-training event, as well as the

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[4] See table A2 in appendix 8 for a listing of the staff who rated the curricula, their roles at NVBC, and their formal theological education.

[5] See tables A3 and A4 in appendix 9 for complete *t*-test results.

aggregate average score of the other twelve survey questions. The overall survey average

score increased to 5.515, up from the 4.693 of the pre-training event survey.[6]

Table 2. Average scores of value perception questions pre- and post-training event

| Question | Pre-Training Average Score | Post-Training Average Score | Pre- and Post-Training Average Score Variance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3. Training events are a good investment of my time. | 4.920 | 5.578 | 0.658 |
| 12. The training material was relevant and useful to me in my workplace or school. | 4.517 | 5.706 | 1.189 |
| 13. The training material was relevant and useful to me in my home or family life. | 4.374 | 5.784 | 1.410 |
| 16. The training material better equips me as a leader in other areas such as family, work, or other personal relationships. | 4.454 | 5.686 | 1.232 |
| 17. Overall, the training material helped me be a better leader. | 4.810 | 5.598 | 0.788 |
| 18. Overall, the training material has made my life better. | 4.293 | 5.480 | 1.187 |
| 19. As a result of this training event, I will make every effort to attend future New Vision training events. | 4.672 | 5.510 | 0.838 |
| Aggregate average score of the other twelve survey questions | 4.761 | 5.453 | 0.692 |

**Strengths of the Project**

Leadership, and to a lesser degree leadership development, is a common topic

around NVBC, yet it tends to be decentralized; that is, individuals and individual ministry

areas within the church have their own perspectives of leadership, its implications, and how

to grow leadership in volunteers. While the general desire to address leadership is laudable,

the multiple, and sometimes divergent, views of it is inefficient at best and confusing at

worst. Two strengths of this project will, prayerfully, provide a consistent approach to

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[6] See table A5 in appendix 10 for complete pre- and post-training event NVTPS scores.

leadership development and reinforce the importance of constantly and consistently equipping church members with gospel-centric leadership competencies.

One of the strengths of this project was the impact it had on many of the pastoral staff. Throughout the development and implementation of this project I had numerous formal and informal conversations with NVBC ministry leaders, including the senior pastor, regarding this approach to leadership development. As my thoughts refined and clarified, I shared them in these conversations; the net effect is an increasingly clear vision being cast in terms of leadership development at NVBC. In fact, some ministries have already adjusted their training rhythms such that they are doing ministry task training through video teaching while leveraging in-person trainings for general leadership development. Additionally, the emphasis on training transferable leadership competencies has already been incorporated into some ministry-level training events. I expect there will be a substantial impact in terms of how and why we bring our lay leaders together in 2024 in regard to training.

Another strength of this project is that the lay leaders who participated in the training event have been exposed to the concept of the importance of leadership shaped by a biblical worldview. Results of the NVTPS, the general feedback from the participants immediately following the session, and general conversations resulting from the surveys suggested that many people had not previously considered how they were called to serve the kingdom by taking biblically-based leadership skills into a variety of contexts. In the days following the training I had several conversations with participants who said that what they learned had immediate practical application of leadership competencies relevant to current struggles in their work and home lives, and they were looking forward to incorporating these leadership competencies into their approach to navigating the issues. One participant wrote on their survey that the sessions represented a "wealth of material that gives me more to work to do in my work and personal life." This is a continuation of an increasing awareness within NVBC of the concept the church as the "locus of

leadership," as Geiger and Peck write.[7] As more of the church is developed with transferable leadership competencies, the more impact they will have wherever they are.

## Weaknesses of the Project

Upon reflection, there were some weaknesses in the project of which I became aware, and likely others of which I am not aware. Throughout the process I worked to identify and eliminate, or at least minimize, any weaknesses, but some still presented themselves.

The first weakness of this project is related to its order of magnitude. While this project was a starting place for transitioning NVBC to a more holistic view of leadership development, it was still a small step for a larger church with a long way to go. Over seven hundred people had attended a training session in the two years prior to the first NVTPS, and over 1,100 lay leaders were invited to the training event. While I was grateful for each person who attended, only about 9 percent of those who were invited did so. There is gathering momentum for this type of leadership development among both staff and church members, but it is going to be a long process of helping current, and future, lay leaders experience genuine value in the training events, as well as to help them understand that they are expected to take that biblical perspective into their various leadership environments. The challenge will be to maintain that momentum in order to transition from a specific project to a cultural expectation of NVBC.

A second weakness of the project design was the reliance upon the need to quantify perception. While a reasonable methodology, the pre- and post-training event surveys attempted to measure something that is more nuanced than a standalone survey can fully capture. In hindsight, I should have included some type of qualitative research approach, such as a series of focus groups. Leveraging focus groups prior to the NVTPS would have helped me navigate the nuances during the later goals of the project. Also, I

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[7] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 3.

made some assumptions that the people invited to participate would understand why they were asked to participate in surveys or in the training event. More than one person approached me during the implementation phase concerned they were mistakenly invited to something. From their perspective, they simply serve their church; they do not consider themselves leaders. More intentionality in the various invitations would have alleviated some of the confusion.

While the *t*-test results clearly suggest an increase in the perception of training, a third weakness results from the fact that the pre-training event survey was done online, while the post-training event survey was conducted immediately following an in-person training session. Certainly, the experience was fresher in the minds of the event attendees, as opposed to the pre-training event survey respondents who were asked to recall as far back as twenty-four months. In short, there was a "halo effect" of sorts, wherein participants responded more positively to the immediacy of the interaction. That said, the quantifiable change in the pre- and post-training event surveys is greater than what would be realistically attributed to the effects of the in-person training event. A potential solution would be to follow up with the training event attendees with an email within a couple of days with a link to the survey so at least the survey delivery would be consistent. Another approach would have been to solicit the date(s) of the most recent training(s) attended to incorporate recency into the analysis of the two surveys.

## What I Would Do Differently

While the overall project design did serve to increase the perception of the value of training, there were four things I would do differently.

Given the opportunity to make some changes to this project, one change would be to make the training event more interactive. I was very focused on keeping each session to twenty minutes of lecture. Part of the reason for that was to incorporate multiple sessions into a single training event with a total time investment of one and a half hours. This was a mistake. The topics were too broad and too important to address within that amount of

time, even at a high level. Several participants expressed frustration that more time was not allotted for each session. One participant wrote on their survey form: "A lot of great info—went through a bit fast though." Further, while handouts allowed participants to follow along, the narrow timeframe did not allow for questions or even conversation at the individual tables. What I would do differently would be to cover two leadership competencies instead of three and provide time for interaction at tables. In the future, I anticipate leadership development events on a much bigger scale that can span an entire morning instead of simply an hour and a half.

Another change would be within the process of selecting the leadership competencies to be trained. One challenge with the LCIS was that some respondents were frustrated in being limited to select only ten competencies from the list of twenty. Further, having to rank the ten they selected created a little more difficulty. Also, per the comments of several participants, the ambiguity within the labels of each competency created some confusion. In the future I would still maintain the total universe of twenty potential competencies (all but three had at least one rating as the most important of the twenty competencies), however, I would provide more clarity regarding the reasons for selecting only ten in the survey instruction. Specifically, I would be clearer in stating that all represent important elements of leadership. The process does not mean a lower ranked competency is not important. I would also explain that these competencies were to be considered in any leadership context, not specifically a church context.

Something else I would have done different is conceivably reflective of my own perception more than reality: each of the curriculum raters reports to me in some way. I asked for objective and honest feedback, and I trust they delivered on that; each provided some sort of constructive comment and there was evident variability in ratings. However, the reality of the reporting relationships may have been a barrier. In hindsight, in addition to the NVBC raters, I should have solicited input from people in other

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churches. Though that might have resulted in a potential cultural gap, it would have mitigated any potential hierarchy-related inhibitions on the part of the raters.

Although the NVTPS provided interesting information regarding NVBC training events in general, I should have been more selective in the number and nature of questions included on the survey. For the sake of clarity for the respondents, the survey should have been limited to questions that directly related to the perception of training value such that future attendance will be prioritized. As an example, while it was gratifying to see that Q4 (Training events are well run) was scored highly, that question is likely less of a determinant of future attendance than one of the seven key questions listed previously. Limiting extraneous questions would have created more focus within the survey itself. Further, I should have allowed an "NA" option, given the specificity of some of the questions. One training event participant told me after the fact that Q12 (The training material was relevant and useful to me in my workplace or school) was not applicable because she was a stay-at-home mother and did not know the best way to navigate the question.

## Theological Reflections

During one of the foundational seminars, I had an epiphany in terms of understanding leadership models that was reinforced during the research into servant leadership in chapter 3. Typically, if a company articulates a servant leadership model within its operation, it is because the company's leadership believes servant leadership is the model most likely to generate positive results. However, if they became aware of different model that increases productivity, the organization would shift to that. Biblical servant leadership is fundamentally different—there is no *quid pro quo*. Jesus did not model serving the disciples because doing so would have the best ministry results. Rather, he modeled serving because he loved the people he served. My realization was that the same must be true for me and for those being trained to lead. As a leader, I need to serve people because they are valuable to God and created in his image, and as a believer, let

alone a pastor, I am called to love because God first loved me (1 John 4:19). The process of crafting the curriculum for the training event helped crystallize my understanding that true biblical leadership starts and ends with people, because it is people that God values. As a result, that pastoral concern was front of mind when I was developing the training curriculum.

Another theological reflection is in the arena of pastoral leadership responsibility. Over the course of the project, and specifically in the writing of chapter 2, it became increasingly evident that, as a pastoral staff, we have an obligation to develop church members to assume leadership roles, both in the church and in the other aspects of their lives. It is easy for a church staff member to leverage Ephesians 4:12 as the warrant to ask people to serve the ministries of the church; however, the exegesis suggests that such a perspective minimizes the magnitude of that verse. Equipping the saints is not about procuring resources for ministry, it is preparing people to do that which for God has created them, as evidenced by Ephesians 2:10. There must be a caution regarding the church hijacking both verses for the purpose of having bodies in place in order to conduct ministry. This is a disservice to church members who may be jaded or even hurt by such tactics. As pastors, we are called to take care of the sheep as opposed to merely using them.

A final theological reflection that has begun to manifest with an increased sense of urgency is the importance of Christian leaders in the world. Church attendance is on the decline. A May 2023 Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) study revealed that only 43 percent of Americans attended religious services at least a few times in 2022, down from 56 percent in 2013.[8] However, the Great Commission does not change, which means that church members need to be reaching people outside the walls of the church to effectively spread the gospel. Through my study, and through extensive prayer for this project, I have come to believe strongly that equipping people with a biblical perspective

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[8] "Religion and Congregations in a Time of Social and Political Upheaval," PRRI, May 16, 2023, https://www.prri.org/research/religion-and-congregations-in-a-time-of-social-and-political-upheaval/.

of leadership and training them practically how to live out that perspective is one of the biggest evangelism opportunities in front of the western church today. Therefore, it is the obligation of pastors, myself included, to train, mobilize, and deploy those they lead.

**Personal Reflections**

Upon beginning this program, one of my goals was to become a better leader. Only time will bear that out. However, I do feel that each phase of the project has made me a better believer. I am grateful that early in the program *A Little Book for New Theologians* by Kelly M. Kapic was assigned reading. That book was instrumental in helping me separate theological studies from my personal spiritual growth. To be sure, as I read, studied, and researched, my spiritual life was positively impacted. However, I was challenged by that book and reminded throughout not to let hours spent on scriptural exegesis become a replacement for personal time with the Lord. Also, as the program and the project challenged me to think in different ways, I found myself more dependent on God and his graciousness. I embarked on this degree program to become a better leader and ended up a better follower of Christ.

Another personal reflection is a humbling continuation of one of my theological reflections. In my role I have the privilege of leading many people. Prior leadership and organizational experience were significant reasons I was placed in this role at NVBC. However, I have learned that my primary duty is to shepherd the people under my charge first, and then lead them to fulfill the ministry God has put before us. It is not an either/or situation, but I believe I had the sequence incorrect. At the conclusion of this project, I understand that I am called to care for people first, which earns me the right to lead them.

**Conclusion**

In my role at NVBC I have the privilege of leading and developing leaders. This program and this project helped me understand that it is more than a privilege, it is a responsibility to emphasize leadership development. Moreover, my obligation to train the

leaders I serve is not solely, and arguably not even primarily, for the purpose of supporting the ministries of the church. Rather, I am entrusted with a kingdom responsibility: to develop and equip leaders to serve fulfill their roles as essential elements of God's plan on earth. That is daunting and thrilling. A doctor of ministry project is by its nature an exercise in discipline and rigor. I look forward to applying that same discipline and rigor as part of an ongoing commitment to the development of leaders for God's purpose and God's glory.

APPENDIX 1

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY
IDENTIFICATION SURVEY

This survey instrument was used to identify a catalog of the ten most valued leadership competencies as determined by the survey respondents. NVBC pastoral staff, strategic ministry team members, and deacons were invited to participate in the survey. The respondents were provided a list of twenty leadership competencies and asked to rank in order the ten most important to them, based on their experience and opinion. The three most valuable competencies from the list of ten were selected for the multi-session leadership training event.

# Leadership Competency Survey

This survey is to determine the ten leadership competencies that you believe are the most important for a leader.

## Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to rank the importance of specified leadership competencies, in your opinion. This research is being conducted by Greg Freeman for purposes of developing a ministry project that will teach specific leadership competencies with the goal of increasing the overall lay leader perception of training at NVBC. In this research, you will rank from 1 to 10 the competencies that, in your opinion, are most valuable for a leader where 1 is the highest valued competency. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

From the list provided, rank the top 10 competencies that, in your opinion, are the most valuable.[1] Rank them 1 through 10, with 1 being the highest-valued competency and 10 the lowest. If a competency is not on your top 10, select NA.

| Competency | Rank |
|---|---|
| Self-Awareness | |
| Problem Solving | |
| Planning | |
| Organizational 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 | |

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[1] This list is adapted from work from The Austin Stone Community Church and competencies from the Acts 29 Network, expressed in Kevin Peck, "Building and Deploying Leaders," Leadership Pipeline Presentation (seminar presentation, Strategic Leadership Community Online, February 25, 2021).

APPENDIX 2

PRE- AND POST-NEW VISION TRAINING
PERCEPTION SURVEY

This survey instrument was used to establish a baseline regarding the perceived value of NVBC training among lay leaders who had participated in any NVBC training event within the twenty-four months prior to the survey. This same survey was conducted at the end of the training event associated with this project by the lay leaders who attended. The first set of survey statements assessed the respondents' perception of the quality of the logistical and scheduling aspects of NVBC training events. The second set of survey statements quantified the impact that NVBC training had on different aspects of the respondents' ministry and life in general. The final statement quantified the willingness of the respondents to attend future NVBC training events.

# New Vision Training Perception Survey

This survey is to assess your perception of the leadership training offered by New Vision for people who serve. The information you provide will be held strictly confidential and your name will not be shared or connected to your responses. Your honest feedback is greatly needed and appreciated.

## Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the perceived value of NVBC lay leader training events. This research is being conducted by Greg Freeman for purposes of measuring the perception of lay leader training at NVBC. In this research, you will answer the questions with your assessment of your training experiences at NVBC. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

1. To the best of your recollection, how many New Vision training events have you attended in the past two years? _____

2. To the best of your recollection, how many New Vision training events have you been invited to in the past two years? _____

| Reflecting on the most recent training event you attended, give your honest response to the statements below using the following scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree. Please select only ONE answer that is most appropriate. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Thinking about your experiences with New Vision training events, please respond to the following statements.*** | | | | | | |
| 1. Training events are convenient for me to attend. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 2. Training event agendas are well-planned. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 3. Training events are a good investment of my time. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 4. Training events are well-run. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 5. New Vision offers enough training events to develop me as a leader. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 6. I am able to attend at least half of the New Vision training events I'm invited to. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |

| | *Thinking about the most recent New Vision training event you attended, please respond to the following statements.* | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. | The training material helped me serve better at my volunteer role at New Vision. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 8. | The training material was mostly new information that I had not previously received. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 9. | The training material was well-researched. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 10. | The training material was authoritative. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 11. | The training material reflected how I think a good leader should act. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 12. | The training material was relevant and useful to me in my workplace or school. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 13. | The training material was relevant and useful to me in my home or family life. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 14. | The training material was relevant and useful to me in my personal relationships. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 15. | The training material better equips me as an employee or student. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 16. | The training material better equips me as a leader in other areas such as family, work, or other personal relationships. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 17. | Overall, the training material helped me be a better leader. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 18. | Overall, the training material has made my life better. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |
| 19. | As a result of this training event, I will make every effort to attend future New Vision training events. | SD | D | SLD | SLA | A | SA |

APPENDIX 3

COMPETENCY TRAINING EVALUATION RUBRIC

This rubric was used by the members of the pastoral staff who evaluated the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the training designed for each of the leadership competencies. This rubric provided eight different rating criteria for each leadership competency, using a scoring system of one to four, whereby a rating of one meant the content was insufficient and four meant the content was exemplary. Goal three required an aggregate average of 3.5 for the curriculum to be ready for delivery at the training event. A separate rubric was used to evaluate each of the three identified training outlines.

**Competency Training Evaluation Rubric**

This rubric is to evaluate the overall efficacy of the curriculum designed to train NVBC lay leaders in specific leadership competencies. You are asked to review each competency training based on the rubric below. This assessment will be used to determine when the curriculum is sufficiently appropriate and robust for use in an NVBC lay leader training event.

**Agreement to Participate**

The research which you are about to is designed to ascertain the quality and appropriateness of the curriculum created for the purpose of training a specific leadership competency to lay leaders at New Vision. This curriculum development is being conducted by Greg Freeman for purposes of developing a ministry project that will teach specific leadership competencies with the goal of increasing the overall lay leader perception of training at NVBC. In this evaluation, you will rate each curriculum from 1 to 4 the competencies based on the criteria indicated. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential.* Your name is requested for the purpose of soliciting feedback and clarifying comments, as necessary. *Participation in this evaluation is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the evaluation at any time.*

Name of Evaluator: _____  Date: _____

Leadership Competency Evaluated: _____

| Competency Training Evaluation Tool | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 = insufficient  2 = requires attention  3 = sufficient  4 = exemplary | | | | | |
| Criteria | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments |
| **Biblical Accuracy** | | | | | |
| The leadership competency is clearly found in the Bible. | | | | | |
| The competency training was faithful to the theology of the Bible. | | | | | |
| **Scope** | | | | | |
| The content of the training sufficiently covers the competency it is designed to address. | | | | | |
| The training sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology. | | | | | |
| **Pedagogy** | | | | | |
| Each competency training was clear, containing a big idea. | | | | | |
| Each training competency provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material. | | | | | |
| **Practicality** | | | | | |
| The competency training clearly details how to deploy the leadership competency, including its appropriateness in multiple contexts. | | | | | |
| At the end of the training, participants will be improved in this leadership competency. | | | | | |

Other Comments:_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 4

CURRICULUM OUTLINE FOR THE LEADERSHIP
COMPETENCY OF HUMILITY

This is the curriculum outline for the leadership competency of humility that was taught at the leadership training event.

# Humility

**Session One**
Humility/Teachability

**Objectives**
By the end of this session:
- We will learn the importance of humility, as demonstrated by Jesus, in the life of the believer.
- We will learn that humility is an important element in understanding our identity in Christ. We will learn that living in a posture of humility reflects Christ's sacrifice for us and demonstrates genuine appreciation and value for those we lead.
- We will cover some practical approaches to growing in humility.

**Anchor Scripture**
"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." – Philippians 2:3-11, ESV

**Big Idea**
Humility is seeing yourself as God sees you, neither valuing yourself too highly nor estimating yourself too lowly. Humble leaders are effective leaders because of how they prioritize those they lead.

## Lesson Outline

**INTRODUCTION**
- As we begin, we can all agree the natural opposite of humility is pride.
- "Pride is the main handle by which he (the devil) has hold of Christian persons and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces to clog and hinder a work of God." – Jonathan Edwards[1]
- "There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility." – Benjamin Franklin[2]

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[1] Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (Boston; S Kneeland and T. Green, 1724), 196.

[2] Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (North Charleston, SC: Createspace, 2015), 73.

**BIBLICAL HUMILITY**

- Exegesis of Phil 2:3-11.
  - In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul was writing to believers to address issues with false teachers from the outside the church (Phil 3:1-3) and the threat of disunity from the inside (Phil 4:1-3).
  - In these verses, he is encouraging the church to think of others first, using Jesus as the example.
  - Though Jesus is "equal" to God as part of the Trinity, He instead willingly chose to humble Himself to the point of death.
  - Jesus chose to put the needs of others before Himself.
- What Jesus modeled and lived out is something we always need to pay attention to.
- Not only did Jesus model humility, He expects it of us.
  - "The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." – Matt 23:11-12
- The Bible addresses humility and pride well over 100 times in both the Old and New Testaments.
  - James writes about it.
    - "But he gives more grace. Therefore it says 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" – Jas 4:6
      - The "it" James is referencing is Prov 3:34, "Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor."
      - The antidote to pride according to James is submitting to God (Submit yourselves therefore to God. Jas 4:7a), nearness to God (Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Jas 4:8a), confessing to God (Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Jas 4:8b).
  - Peter addresses humility.
    - "Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you," – 1 Peter 5:5-6
  - Paul instructs the church at Colossae that humility is part of the Christian life.
    - "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience," – Col 3:12
- This small sampling of Scripture clearly shows us that humility is what is expected of a believer.
- Theologians and church leaders have long taught on the importance of humility and the dangers of pride.
  - "We must view humility as one of the most essential things that characterizes true Christianity." – Jonathan Edwards[3]
  - "God created the world out of nothing, and so long as we are nothing, He can make something out of us." – Martin Luther

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[3] Thomas A. Tarrants, "Pride and Humility," C. S. Lewis Institute, December 4, 2011, https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/pride-and-humility/.

- o "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels." – St. Augustine
  - o "Humility is nothing else but a right judgment of ourselves." – William Law
- So, what is humility? Humility is seeing yourself as God sees you, neither valuing yourself too highly nor estimating yourself too lowly.
  - o It is a right and realistic understanding of who you are, to God, and to others around you.
    - You are fundamentally neither more valuable nor less valuable than others based on anything you do or do not do.
  - o It's a right view of ourselves in relation to the Lord and acting accordingly.[4]
  - o Note the apostle Paul's progression of humility[5]:
    - "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." – 1 Cor 15:9.
    - "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given," – Eph 3:8a.
    - "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." – 1 Tim 1:15.
  - o This is not false humility from one of the greatest missionaries in the history of the world. All of these are true statements.
    - In them, Paul recognizes his sin nature and therefore his limitation, so he effectively and literally gives credit to the Lord for anything that he (Paul) accomplishes.
    - Paul demonstrates humility by seeing himself in relationship to God. He's not comparing himself to other church leaders, other Christians, or other people.
- What is it that makes humility difficult to attain? Pride.
  - o Humility is something Christians must pursue; pride comes naturally.
  - o "According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind." – C.S. Lewis[6]
    - When we exhibit pride, we are placing ourselves ahead of God; that is anti-God behavior.
  - o Parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector.
    - "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax

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[4] Tarrants, "Pride and Humility."

[5] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 62-63.

[6] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 121-22.

collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.'" – Luke 18:9-14

  o "At every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, <u>pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend</u>." – John R. W. Stott

- If humility is having an accurate view of who we are relative to God, pride is having an exalted view of ourselves.
- In pride, we lessen God, and when we lessen God, we lessen how He works in and through us.

**WORLDLY HUMILITY**

- As Christians, we should pursue humility because the Scriptures command it.
- When we are obedient to what Jesus expects of us, we reflect him to those around us.
- So, it should be no surprise that, despite what some people believe, genuine humility makes us better leaders, no matter where we are or where we lead.
- People flourish when humility is present.
- Humility is a key aspect of healthy leadership whether we are:
  o Leading inside or outside the church.
  o Leading believers or nonbelievers.
  o In a formal leadership position or have informal leadership influence.
- Some recent headlines in major secular publications.
  o "The Case for Humble Executives," *Wall Street Journal*[7]
    ▪ *"Companies increasingly prize humble leaders because they listen well, admit mistakes, and share limelight, recruiters and coaches say."*
    ▪ *"If you have to act humble, it won't work. You either are or you're not, concurs Mr. Morgan (former Krispy Kreme CEO)"*
    ▪ This is an example of pride masquerading as humility.
  o "Tomorrow's CEOs Are Shifting From Heroic to Humble," *Forbes*[8]
    ▪ *"The business world is growing tired of the hero CEO – the one who puts themselves first, leads with a false sense of arrogance, needs to compete and doesn't reflect on their actions or behavior."*
  o "The Best Bosses Are Humble Bosses," *Wall Street Journal*[9]
    ▪ *"Humility is a core quality of leaders who inspire close teamwork,*

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[7] Joann S. Lublin, "The Case for Humble Executives," *Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 2015, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-case-for-humble-executives-1445385076.

[8] Nicole Heimann, "Tomorrow's CEOs Are Shifting from Heroic to Humble," *Forbes*, December 9, 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2021/12/09/tomorrows-ceos-are-shifting-from-heroic-to-humble/?sh=604348fe2d31.

[9] Sue Shellenbarger, "The Best Bosses Are Humble Bosses," *Wall Street Journal*, October 9, 2018, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-best-bosses-are-humble-bosses-1539092123.

rapid learning, and high performance in their teams, according to several studies in the past three years."

- "Humble leaders can also be highly competitive and ambitious. But they tend to avoid the spotlight and give credit to their teams, Dr. Sherman says. They also ask for help and listen to feedback from others, setting an example that causes subordinates to do the same."
- "Teams with humble leaders performed better and did higher-quality work than teams whose leaders exhibited less humility, according to lead researcher Bradley P. Owens, an associate professor of business ethics at BYU."

o "The Best Leaders Are Humble Leaders," *Harvard Business Review*[10]
- "Without humility, you are unable to learn," Lazlo Bock

o "Why Humble Leaders Make the Best Leaders," Forbes[11]
- "Psychological research actually indicates…that humility is most closely associated with a cluster of highly positive qualities including sincerity, modesty, fairness, truthfulness, unpretentiousness and authenticity."

- Some of the largest for-profit companies are increasingly understanding and appreciating the importance of humility from their leaders.
- There is a great deal of academic secular research on the importance and value of humility.[12] That research summarizes humility as:
  o A demonstrated high self-awareness
  o A demonstrated commitment to constant learning and improvement
  o An appreciation of and for the talent, worth, and capabilities of others

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION**
- We all understand the importance of humility for leaders
  o Because the Bible commands us to be humble…
  o Because the world wants and needs us to be humble…
  o When we are humble…
  o …We have more leadership impact
- How do we grow in humility?
  o We start by focusing on Jesus, Jesus's nature, and our relationship with Christ.
    - "Where God's Spirit does not reign, there is no humility, and men ever swell with inward pride." – John Calvin[13]

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[10] Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth Salib, "The Best Leaders are Humble Leaders," *Harvard Business Review*, May 12, 2014, https://hbr.org/2014/05/the-best-leaders-are-humble-leaders.

[11] Jeff Hyman, "Why Humble Leaders Make the Best Leaders," *Forbes*, October 31, 2018, https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffhyman/2018/10/31/humility/?sh=75a67b481c80.

[12] Verl A. Anderson and Cam Caldwell, eds, *Humility as Enlightened Leadership: Management Science–Theory and Applications* (New York: Nova Science, 2019), 6-7.

[13] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol 4, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848), 52.

- o We grow in humility by:
    - ▪ <u>Reflecting on the humility of Jesus</u> – Jesus was the perfect example of humility, willingly dying the most humiliating death imaginable.
    - ▪ <u>Reflecting on the true power of Jesus</u> – Jesus the King ascended in glory and will return in glory; His humility on earth only heightens His glory.
    - ▪ <u>Reflecting on God's Word</u> – the Bible is clear that believers are expected to live a life of humility so as to put all glory on the Lord. (John the Baptist, John 3:30)
    - ▪ <u>Serving others</u> – actively demonstrate humility by putting the needs of others in front of your own.
        - • "Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. Humility is thinking more of others." – Rick Warren[14]
        - • This can also involve giving up things that are valuable to you in the work environment:
            - o Responsibility
            - o Credit
            - o Time for the purpose of developing/equipping others
            - o Acknowledging faults and failures, being vulnerable
    - ▪ <u>Demonstrating gratitude</u> – Acknowledge that skills are gifts from God, not accomplishments from yourself.
        - • "Humility does mean understanding that everything we are and everything we have has come to us as a gift. Leaders have unique abilities, but they received those talents and the ability to develop them as gifts from God, given for the good and welfare of others." – Al Mohler[15]
    - ▪ <u>Being teachable</u>
        - • Teachability is an active demonstration of humility.
        - • It reveals an absence of pride and demonstrates value for others by being willing to learn from them.
        - • How do we become/remain teachable?[16]
            - o Spend time listening to others
            - o Solicit and value feedback from others
            - o Ask questions
            - o Ask for help

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[14] Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For*? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 148.

[15] Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2012), 154.

[16] Adapted from "Humility," Skills You Need, accessed May 5, 2023, https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/humility.html.

**CONCLUSION**

- The humble believer turns their attention away from themselves and towards others.
- When we are humble, when we have a right view of ourselves relative to God and to other people, we:
    - Honor God.
    - Honor others.
    - Demonstrate respect for others.
    - Become more effective leaders. (In terms of Kingdom work and in other aspects)

APPENDIX 5

CURRICULUM OUTLINE FOR THE LEADERSHIP
COMPETENCY OF SELF-AWARENESS

This is the curriculum outline for the leadership competency of self-awareness that was taught at the leadership training event.

**Session Two**
Self-Awareness

**Objectives**
By the end of this session:
- We will learn a definition of self-awareness consistent with Scripture.
- We will learn the importance of self-awareness and why it is essential for us as believers and as leaders.
- We will learn the importance of self-awareness in regard to our relationship with God.
- We will cover some practical steps for growing in Biblical self-awareness.

**Anchor Scripture**
"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." – Romans 12:3, ESV

**Big Idea**
Self-awareness is having a proper understanding of your standing in God's eyes, your own eyes, and in the eyes of others. Leaders who are self-aware have healthy interactions with God, themselves, and other people.

**Lesson Outline**

**INTRODUCTION**
- Self-awareness is the capacity to be honest and sincere when it comes to both our strengths and weaknesses.[1]
  - Pastor Sam Storms summarizes:
    - To be aware is to be conscious and forthright about our tendencies and inclinations.
    - To be self-aware is to have a sense of the way we impact other people.
    - To be self-aware is to have a clear grasp on why we react the way we do when we encounter adversity or threatening circumstances.
    - To be self-aware is to understand what we think, what we value, and why we make the choices we do.
- For a believer, to be self-aware we must recognize our need for the spiritual transformation that only comes through a relationship with Jesus.
- Self-awareness is a proper and healthy understanding of our place in the world around us and in light of God's Word.

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[1] Sam Storms, "Self-Awareness and the Sufficiency of Christ," *Enjoying God* (blog), May 26, 2014, https://www.samstorms.org/enjoying-god-blog/post/self-awareness-and-the-sufficiency-of-christ.

**IMPORTANCE OF SELF-AWARENESS IN THE BIBLE**

- Exegesis of Rom 12:3.
  - In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul was intentionally addressing both Jews and Gentiles.
    - About ten years earlier, the Jews had been expelled from Rome.
    - Now they were returning to a church dominated by Gentiles.
    - Part of the reason for the letter was to encourage unity for congregations in Rome.
    - Both Jews and Gentiles had to learn they were not greater than the other, but that God is the greatest and everything else follows from that.
  - Here, Paul is reminding believers to have sober judgement when they think about themselves and their roles.
    - The Greek word for "sober" is *sophroneo*
    - It can be understood to mean be sensible/be reasonable/have understanding
  - He'll go on in Rom 12 to write about the gifts God has given Christians and how those gifted believers are needed parts of the body of Christ.
    - Gifts should not breed arrogance.
    - The recipients of the gift have done nothing to earn them. They are sovereignly provided by the Creator.
    - We need to understand this reasonably or sensibly so that the grace of God does not turn into self-promotion or self-exaltation.
  - We recognize and utilize the gifts for God's glory, but we don't take credit for them.
- Jesus understood this.
  - "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him." – John 13:3-5
    - The Son of Man was aware of who he was and what he was called to do and how he was called to serve.
- What Jesus modeled and lived out is something we always need to pay attention to.
- Anything we have, including our very existence, is for the purpose of serving God and bringing him glory.
  - "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." – Eph 2:10
- Paul, too, was careful to be aware of what he could do in his strength versus what God did through him.
  - "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." – 1 Cor 15:10
    - Paul has written in 1 Cor 15:9 that he wasn't worthy to be called an apostle.
    - Then in v10 he claims to have outworked all the other apostles.

- ▪ The important thing, though, is Paul's awareness that it wasn't a function of his efforts, "but the grace of God that is with" him.
- Like humility, healthy self-awareness is a function of understanding our identity in Christ and our inherent value to God.
  - o "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." – Ps 139:13-14
- "Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God…without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self." – John Calvin[2]
- Further, as human beings and believers, we must be constantly aware that we are created in the image of God and therefore reflect him.
  - o "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." – Gen 1:26-27
- When we focus on becoming self-aware, we are ultimately becoming more aware of God, our need for him, and his amazing graciousness to us.
  - o Dr. Robert Cheong, a pastor and author on discipleship writes: "A knowledge of self, particularly of who we are in relationship to God, is part of God's good design for us… However, we must not seek self-awareness for the sake of sheer introspection. Self-awareness – and the various techniques we use to cultivate it – ought to show us how our fears, insecurities, anger, envy, apathy, self-righteousness, and other struggles keep us from loving God and others with freedom and fullness. **Self-awareness, then, is not the ultimate goal; it is a means by which we become aware of our desperate need for Jesus**."[3]

**SELF-AWARENESS IN SOCIETY**
- As Christians, we should pursue self-awareness because the Scriptures command it.
- When we are obedient to what Jesus expects of us, we reflect him to those around us.
- So, it should be no surprise that, despite what some people believe, self-awareness makes us better leaders, no matter where we are or where we lead.
- Self-awareness is not a new concept.
  - o 6th century Chinese philosopher Lau Tzu: "He who knows others is wise. He who knows himself is enlightened."
- An article in a Wharton School of Business magazine suggests self-awareness is more important than self-confidence for a leader.[4]

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[2] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, accessed May 28, 2023, https://reformed.org/books/institutes/books/book1/bk1ch01.html.

[3] Robert Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness," Biblical Counseling Coalition, April 8, 2020, https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2020/04/08/the-wonders-of-self-awareness/.

[4] Xinjin Zhao, "On Leadership and Self-Awareness," *Wharton Magazine*, December 10, 2021, https://magazine.wharton.upenn.edu/digital/on-leadership-and-self-awareness/.

- o "People with high self-awareness understand where they are headed and what makes them motivated."[5]
  - o "By knowing their strengths and weaknesses, values and aspirations, and how they affect actions and the actions of others, they are likely able to make better decisions and ultimately lead others."[6]
- Research out of Harvard suggests that when we see ourselves clearly, we are more confident and more creative.
  - o "We make sounder decisions, build stronger relationships, and communicate more effectively. We're less likely to lie, cheat, and steal. We are better workers who get more promotions. And we're more effective leaders with more satisfied employees and more profitable companies." – Dr. Tasha Eurich[7]
- A Forbes article suggests self-awareness is valuable because:[8]
  - o Self-awareness helps leaders become more understanding.
  - o Self-awareness improves decision making.
  - o Self-awareness helps leaders keep their emotions in check.
  - o Self-awareness lets leaders build trust and credibility.
- Companies value self-awareness among their leaders not only because of the concrete results self-aware leaders generate, but also because of their positive impact on company culture.
- One danger: secular views of self-awareness tend to emphasize self. As believers, we need to understand ourselves through the perspective of God's Word and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
  - o Secular approaches to self-awareness or self-actualization lean towards humanism.
  - o As believers, we know that we are all constantly battling a sin nature. (Rom 3:10, "as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one")
  - o We know too that our emotions, while real and important, are not always right. (Jer 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?")
- For us, it is true that self-awareness is a vital leadership skill, but it's very important that we approach it and develop it through a biblical lens.

## PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-AWARENESS

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[5] Zhao, "On Leadership and Self-Awareness."

[6] Zhao, "On Leadership and Self-Awareness."

[7] Tasha Eurich, "What Self-Awareness Really Is (and How to Cultivate It)," *Harvard Business Review*, January 4, 2018, https://hbr.org/2018/01/what-self-awareness-really-is-and-how-to-cultivate-it.

[8] William Arruda, "Why Self-Awareness Is the Most Important Skill for Hybrid Leadership," *Forbes*, January 10, 2023, https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamarruda/2023/01/10/why-self-awareness-is-the-most-important-skill-for-hybrid-leadership/?sh=7e4c06f3654f.

- We've seen that being self-aware is a valuable leadership characteristic. But what are the implications of a lack of self-awareness?
    - Dr. Cheong says it very well: "When we lack self-awareness, we misunderstand ourselves, and that leads to misunderstanding God as well. Our pride blinds us with inaccurate ideas about who we are in relationship with God. A lack of self-awareness can also hinder our awareness of the hearts and lives of others, which impacts how we love and lead those around us…"[9]
- How do you know your level of self-awareness?
    - A quick Google search will show you hundreds of self-awareness quizzes.
    - As believers though, as we work to understand ourselves, we have to be focused on biblical truth.
    - Some God-honoring steps to assess your self-awareness:
        - Prayer
        - Ask trusted others
            - Important note: this needs to be a few trusted, worthy Christian friends who have demonstrated their love for God and for you
            - "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." – Prov 27:6
        - Intentionality about regularly reflecting on:
            - Acknowledgement and confession of sin in your life
            - Interactions with others, in light of the fruits of the spirit of Gal 5
            - Responses in stressful moments
            - The things in your daily life that motivate you
            - The things in your daily life that demotivate you
            - The reactions of others to your words and deeds
    - Honest reflections can help you identify growth areas.
    - Honest reflections should not lead you into a posture of guilt; that is not God's plan.
- How do you grow in your level of self-awareness?
    - First, recognize that as flawed human beings we will never be completely self-aware. The journey is the important part because it draws us closer to God.
        - It is part of the process of sanctification
    - The Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and other Christians are the instruments God has provided for us to become more self-aware.
    - Anything other than these three should be secondary to God's chosen and never-changing means.[10]
    - Some concrete steps for increasing self-awareness that you can take that are consistent with God's plan and provision:
        - Prayer
        - Regular time spent in the Bible

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[9] Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness."

[10] Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness."

- Seek feedback from trusted others and listen without justifying or defending
- Look for additional ways to focus on and serve others (Matt 20:28)
- Seek Gospel-centric resources (e.g., books, journals, Bible studies, etc.)
- Be open to change

**CONCLUSION**
- This is a journey of self-discovery, but the ultimate goal has to be a closer relationship with the Lord.
- As we are walking increasingly closer to him, we become better spouses, parents, family members, friends, employees, leaders because we are increasingly reflecting him.
- Keep in mind too that the journey of self-awareness can feel difficult and painful but know that God understands you intimately even when you don't understand yourself.[11]
  - God created you.
  - God knows every moment of your life.
  - "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." – Ps 139:16
  - God knows what you've endured as a result of sin in the world as well as your own sin.
- Dr. Cheong: "As the Son of Man who took on flesh, Jesus understands the complexities and troubles of living in a fallen world… God not only knows your story and your struggles, but he has also freed you from your sin through his sacrifice on the cross."[12]

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[11] Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness."

[12] Cheong, "The Wonders of Self-Awareness."

APPENDIX 6

CURRICULUM OUTLINE FOR THE LEADERSHIP
COMPETENCY OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION

This is the curriculum outline for the leadership competency of verbal

communication that was taught at the leadership training event.

**Session Three**
Verbal Communication

**Objectives**
By the end of this session:
- We will learn the importance of biblically consistent communication and the impact that our words can have on our relationship with God and others.
- We will cover some practical, God-honoring ways to improve our verbal communication skills that will strengthen relationships and enhance our leadership influence.
- We will cover some techniques that honor those with whom we are communicating.

**Anchor Scripture**
"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." – Ephesians 4:29, ESV

**Big Idea**
Words have can have a powerful effect on people.[1] They can weigh down, they can hurt, they can encourage, they can bless. As believers, we have the opportunity to reflect Christ to those we encounter when we are intentional about communicating in ways that demonstrate the grace of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit.


## Lesson Outline

**INTRODUCTION**
- So far, we have talked about the character-based competencies, and now we move into a skill-based competency.
- Earlier I told you that the leadership competencies we would cover today are based on a survey sent to about 150 leaders at New Vision.
- In the overall ranking, verbal communication was fifth, though it was close. However, of the twenty leadership competencies proposed, it was **number two** among the people who ranked it the most important.
- Clearly, verbal communication is a skill valued in leaders.
- That isn't unique to church leadership; verbal communication is a key leadership competency, regardless of setting.

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[1] Adapted from "What Does the Bible Say about the Power of Words?," Got Questions, accessed May 12, 2023, https://www.gotquestions.org/power-of-words.html.

**VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN SCRIPTURE**

- Exegesis of Eph 4:29.
  - Clinton Arnold suggests that "Ephesians summarizes what it means to be a Christian better than any other book of the Bible…and addresses the implications of what it means to be a Christian."[2]
  - In this letter, Paul is giving broad guidance to churches, not addressing any specific situation in Ephesus.
  - His direction about how to speak to people, then, is broadly applicable to believers.
  - Breaking down the text gives specific guidance.
    - The Greek word for "corrupting" is *sapros*, anything that is bad or worthless, or rotten.
      - Rotten is a good word picture. Imagine rotten fish or rotten fruit.
      - It doesn't nourish, it makes you sick.
    - It's not a comprehensive list, but Paul gives the Ephesians, and us, some examples of corrupting talk.
      - In v.31 he warns against "all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander…along with all malice.
        - Here is what is rotten then:
        - Words of bitterness
        - Words of wrath
        - Words of anger
        - Words of clamor (which is shouting, screaming, crying)
        - Words of slander
        - And all malice
      - In Eph 5:4 he tells the church there should be "no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place."
    - Corrupting talk is contrasted to good; the Greek word *agathos* which can also be read as "gentle," in addition to good.
      - Good and gentle words build people up. They are encouraging.
      - "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver." – Proverbs 25:11
  - Part of being a Christian, according to Paul, is to encourage people when you communicate with them, not speaking to them in ways that do anything but build them up.
- Paul continues that theme in Col 3:8.
  - He is telling new believers what life in Christ now, as contrasted compared to how they previously behaved.
  - "But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth." – Col 3:8
    - Paul is consistent here with Eph 4:29 in terms of what should be avoided: anger, wrath, malice, and slander

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[2] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 21.

- Proper speech is part of evangelism as well.
  - Concluding the letter to the church at Colossae, Paul tells them, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person" (Col 4:6) as the Colossians "Walk in wisdom towards outsiders (referring to lost people)" (Col 4:5.)
- Paul encourages Titus to teach his people about the importance of words. It is a discipleship function.
  - "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people." – Titus 3:2
- Jesus tells us there will be consequences for what comes out of our mouths.
  - We are going to be held accountable for the words we use with people.
  - "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." – Matt 12:36-37
- The wisdom of Proverbs extensively addresses the words we say to one another:
  - There are well over twenty Proverbs that instruct as to how we're to speak to each other.
  - Here is just a sampling:
    - A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 15:1
    - Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. 18:21
    - A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. 15:4
    - Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. 16:24
    - There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. 12:18
    - The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. 15:28

**IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN THE WORLD**
- That verbal communication is an essential competency for a leader is clear.
  - Al Mohler writes that "To be human is to communicate, but to be a leader is to communicate constantly, skillfully, intentionally, and strategically… Leaders communicate because they cannot not communicate."[3]
  - A former Harvard Business School professor Nitin Nohria wrote "communication is the real work of leadership."[4]

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[3] Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 91.

[4] Deborah Blagg and Susan Young, "What Makes a Good Leader?," Harvard Business School, April 2, 2001, https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/what-makes-a-good-leader.

- Another HBS leader states bluntly that "if you want to be an effective leader, you need to excel in communication."[5]
- In a survey of human resource professionals, 58% believe that lack of verbal communication skills will keep a leader from being promoted, only behind emotional intelligence (very comparable to self-awareness.)[6]
- However, the importance of verbal communication as a leadership competency isn't the main point today. We're going to be focusing on growing our understanding of how the Bible tells us to communicate with other people.
  - A 2015 peer-reviewed research study concluded that "leaders verbal communication styles have significant effects on job satisfaction," a primary determinant of a company's success.[7]
    - The study shows that an autocratic, impersonal style reduces job satisfaction "thus decreasing the organization's productivity."
    - By comparison, a "supportive communication style can improve employees job satisfaction thus leading to better productivity."
- We saw the truth of it in the Scripture and, unsurprisingly, we see it play out in the secular world as well – verbal communication is best when used to build people up instead of tearing them down.

## PRACTICAL STEPS TO GOD-HONORING COMMUNICATION
- Begin with a genuine love and concern for the person/people with whom you are communicating.
  - "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." – Prov 4:23
  - Peter provides some elements of God's expectation for believers when interacting with one another
  - "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." – 1 Pet 3:8
  - When talking to people, all of us as believers are to have:[8]
    - <u>Unity of mind</u> – Not uniformity or unanimity, but an agreed upon focus on what is most important and guiding in life, that is, a desire to love God and obey his Word
    - <u>Sympathy</u> – Acknowledge and appreciate the emotions of others. Respond to feelings, not just words
    - <u>Brotherly love</u> – All believers are a family, all are children of God

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[5] Lauren Landry, "Eight Essential Communication Skills," Harvard Business School *Business Insights Blog*, November 14, 2019, https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/leadership-communication.

[6] Lyle Opolentisima, "Executive Skills: What Tops the List of Attributes," Daily Infographic, February 7, 2023, https://dailyinfographic.com/executive-skills-what-tops-the-list-of-attributes.

[7] Wenchen Guo, Tingting Li, and Ning Wu, "Empirical Study on the Effects of Leader's Verbal Communication Style on Employee's Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies*, no. 3 (2015): 223.

[8] Adapted from Steve Cole, "Godly Communication," Bible.org Series: The Christian Family, October 22, 2017, https://bible.org/seriespage/6-godly-communication-1-peter-38-12.

- - - Tender heart – Similar to sympathy, the Greek *eusplanchnos* can mean compassion. Exhibit genuine care and concern for others
    - Humble mind – Value those you're communicating with higher than yourself
  - Use gracious words, even in difficult conversations people can be honored by the words you choose.
- Techniques for communicating with people in ways that honor and encourage them include:
  - Practice active listening. In this way, you value people.
    - "When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen." – Ernest Hemingway (from the novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*.)
    - True communication is not discourse. It is a two-way street.
    - Listening demonstrates care. It shows the person with whom you are communicating that they are important.
      - Maintain focus on them, minimize distractions, and avoid interrupting.
      - Pay attention to what they are saying and not what you are going to say in response.
      - Do not cut someone off before they are done speaking.
      - Ask clarifying and open-ended questions.
      - Repeat back what you have heard as a paraphrase to demonstrate a desire for genuine understanding.
    - "Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen." – attributed to Sir Winston Churchill
  - Be aware of body language, yours and theirs.
    - Researcher Albert Mehrabian broke down the components of a face-to-face conversation.[9]
      - Face-to-face communication is 55% nonverbal, 38% vocal (tone and intonation), and 7% words
    - To be clear, this research was specific to using facial and vocal components to determine attitude if there was an apparent inconsistency between what a person said and what their posture said.
    - In short, body language has a significant impact on verbal communication
    - Things to consider in terms of body language:
      - *Mind your vocal tone* – maintain a pleasant tone and be aware of sounds[10]

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[9] Jeff Thompson, "Is Nonverbal Communication a Numbers Game?," *Psychology Today*, September 30, 2011, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/beyond-words/201109/is-nonverbal-communication-a-numbers-game.

[10] Ashley Stahl, "Five Body Language Tips for Success," *Forbes*, September 13, 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleystahl/2017/09/13/5-body-language-tips-for-success/?sh=2102cf0e6419.

- *Smile with purpose* – smiling is literally contagious[11]
- *Choose your pose* – research from Harvard University and Columbia University suggests that how you stand or sit, a high-power pose vs. a low-power pose, affects how people respond to you[12]
- *Make the right amount of eye contact* – maintain eye contact 30%-60% of the time, depending on context. Use more eye contact when listening compared to when speaking. Too much eye contact can be creepy[13]
- *Use your hands* – making speech-associated gestures increases brain activity in a region called Broca's area. This helps the speaker but also has been shown to improve listener comprehension[14]
   - Be sensitive to signs the other person is not engaged and be comfortable to revisit the conversation later.
- Contextualize your communication to your "audience."[15]
   - Large group, small group, or individual audiences will determine the most appropriate approach and what is essential for each.
      - Large group – consider group size, group culture/personality, level of knowledge or background (assume lowest level), what they need to know, what you are trying to accomplish
      - Small group – consider group culture/personality (formal, informal), level of knowledge or shared experience, what they need to know, what you are trying to accomplish
      - Individual – consider the nature of the relationship with the individual and his or her personality and preferences and motivations. Remember they are an individual person created in God's image and for his glory
- Be authentic and transparent when communicating.
   - It's okay to say "I don't know"
   - Authenticity is a precursor to a trusting relationship
   - "Teamwork begins by building trust. And the only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability." – Patrick Lencioni

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[11] Stahl, "Five Body Language Tips for Success."

[12] Julia Hanna, "Power Posing: Fake It Until You Make It," Harvard Business School Working Knowledge, September 20, 2010, https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/power-posing-fake-it-until-you-make-it.

[13] Stahl, "Five Body Language Tips for Success."

[14] Stahl, "Five Body Language Tips for Success."

[15] Jamie Birt, "10 Effective Ways to Improve Verbal Communication Skills," *Indeed*, September 30, 2022, https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-improve-verbal-communication-skills.

- o Be intentional about clarity when communicating.
    - ▪ Understand and respect your audience, use words that will resonate with them
    - ▪ Be specific with what is expected
    - ▪ Respect time by not over speaking; don't ramble, be prepared
    - ▪ "If you have nothing to say, say nothing." – Mark Twain

**CONCLUSION**

- Verbal communication is important, and as Christians we need to value and emphasize the caring aspect of it.
- Words matter. They have the potential for significant impact on others, so we have an obligation to be wise and intentional in what we say.
- There are plenty of techniques and tips and tricks to make you a great orator; that isn't communication.
- The most important thing is to keep in mind that you are a child of God, representing your Creator with your words.

APPENDIX 7

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY IDENTIFICATION
SURVEY RESULTS

The complete results of the LCIS are in the table that follows. Two metrics were used to determine the overall ranking of the leadership competencies evaluated in the survey. One metric was average rating among all respondents. The second metric was the number of respondents who selected a given leadership competency as most important.

To arrive at the list of the most valued competencies was a two-step process. First, the leadership competencies were sorted by the average rating. In this methodology, the higher the competency was ranked in importance by the respondent (i.e., most valuable was ranked with a "1"), the lower the numerical rating was. Based on this sorting, the competencies were ranked from one to twenty in ascending order.

Next, the leadership competencies were sorted by the number of responses indicating the competency was the most important (i.e., the number of people ranking the competency with a "1") in descending order. Based on this sorting, the competencies were ranked from one to twenty in descending order.

By comparing the two sorts, the leadership competencies of humility/teachability, verbal communication, and self-awareness surfaced as the most valued by the respondents.

Table A1. LCIS actual rank and ratings

| Leadership Competency | Overall rank | Average rating | Number of respondents rating competency as most valuable |
|---|---|---|---|
| Humility/Teachability | 1 | 3.65 | 28 |
| Verbal Communication | 2 | 5.02 | 11 |
| Self-Awareness | 3 | 4.98 | 6 |
| Empathy/Understanding | 4 | 4.75 | 5 |
| Leadership - Empowering | 5 | 5.08 | 7 |
| Leadership - Motivation | 6 | 5.02 | 6 |
| Organizational Awareness | 7 | 4.71 | 2 |
| Self-Management | 8 | 5.41 | 3 |
| Leadership - Developing | 9 | 5.63 | 3 |
| Leadership - Organizing | 10 | 5.10 | 2 |

APPENDIX 8

COMPETENCY TRAINING EVALUATION
RUBRIC RATERS


The following table includes the names, positions, formal theological education (if any), and the average scores per leadership competency of those raters who completed the Competency Training Evaluation Rubric on the curriculum outlines for each of the leadership competencies that were taught at the training event. These pastoral staff members were selected because they were in roles in which teaching is an essential function. They also represent an experience and demographic diversity that is representative of NVBC lay leaders.

Table A2. Name, position, theological education, and average ratings by raters

| Rater | Position | Theological Education | Overall rating for each competency | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Humility | Self-Awareness | Verbal Communication |
| Joseph Brasher | Pastor of Adult Ministries | PhD, Mid-America Baptist Theological Survey; MDiv, Liberty University | 4.0 | 3.9 | 4.0 |
| Ben Curtis | Campus Pastor | MDiv, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary | 3.5 | 3.9 | 3.8 |
| Delaney Degelow | High School Associate | None | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.0 |
| Danny Hardy | Young Adult Pastor | None | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Ross Harvey | Middle School Pastor | MDiv, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 |
| Barton Henley | Children's Ministry Associate | MDiv, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (in progress) | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.8 |
| Josh Reyenga | Children's Ministry Pastor | MACE, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Paige Robinson | Preschool Minister | None | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Total average rating for all raters | | | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 |

APPENDIX 9

TWO-SAMPLE *T*-TEST SCORES

The following tables display the comparative results of the pre-training event and post-training event surveys. Due to the composition of the two groups being surveyed, the comparison between the two surveys used a two-sample t-test assuming unequal variances.

Table A3 shows the *t*-test results for all the NVTPS questions. Table A4 shows the *t*-test results for the seven key questions from the NVTPS that best indicate the perception of value. In both cases, the absolute *t* stat exceeds the *t* critical two-tail demonstrating a statistically significant increase in the perception of the value of lay leader training.

Table A3. Two-sample *t*-test results for all NVTPS questions

|  | Pre-Training Event | Post-Training Event |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 89.16666667 | 104.254902 |
| Variance | 241.1339114 | 67.14230247 |
| Observations | 174 | 102 |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 |  |
| df | 271 |  |
| *t* Stat | -10.55331687 |  |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 2.44618E-22 |  |
| *t* Critical one-tail | 1.650495779 |  |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 4.89236E-22 |  |
| *t* Critical two-tail | 1.968756314 |  |

Table A4. Two-sample *t*-test results for the seven key NVTPS questions

|  | Pre-Training Event | Post-Training Event |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 32.04022989 | 39.34313725 |
| Variance | 48.8134011 | 10.2276257 |
| Observations | 174 | 102 |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 |  |
| df | 262 |  |
| *t* Stat | -11.83431084 |  |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 1.7946E-26 |  |
| *t* Critical one-tail | 1.650690284 |  |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 3.58921E-26 |  |
| *t* Critical two-tail | 1.969059715 |  |

APPENDIX 10

NVTPS AVERAGE SCORES PRE- AND POST- TRAINING
EVENT FOR ALL QUESTIONS

The following table provides the average score for each question on the

NVTPS for the pre-event survey and for the post-event survey, as well as the numerical

variance between the two survey scores.

Table A5. NVTPS average scores per question and variance

| Question | Pre-Training Average Score | Post-Training Average Score | Pre- and Post-Training Average Score Variance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Training events are convenient for me to attend. | 4.782 | 5.255 | 0.473 |
| 2. Training event agendas are well planned. | 5.167 | 5.578 | 0.411 |
| 3. Training events are a good investment of my time. | 4.920 | 5.578 | 0.658 |
| 4. Training events are well-run. | 5.201 | 5.627 | 0.426 |
| 5. New Vision offers enough training to develop me as a leader. | 4.885 | 5.082 | 0.197 |
| 6. I am able to attend at least half of the New Vision training events I'm invited to. | 4.954 | 5.149 | 0.195 |
| 7. The training material helped me serve better in my volunteer role. | 4.782 | 5.559 | 0.777 |
| 8. The training material was mostly new information that I had not previously received. | 3.862 | 4.618 | 0.756 |
| 9. The training material was well-researched. | 4.902 | 5.765 | 0.863 |
| 10. The training material was authoritative. | 4.678 | 5.627 | 0.949 |
| 11. The training material reflected how I think a good leader should act. | 5.121 | 5.794 | 0.673 |
| 12. The training material was relevant and useful to me in my workplace or school. | 4.517 | 5.706 | 1.189 |
| 13. The training material was relevant and useful to me in my home or family life. | 4.374 | 5.784 | 1.410 |
| 14. The training material was relevant and useful to me in my personal relationships. | 4.448 | 5.745 | 1.297 |
| 15. The training material better equips me as an employee or student. | 4.345 | 5.639 | 1.294 |
| 16. The training material better equips me as a leader in other areas such as family, work, or other personal relationships. | 4.454 | 5.686 | 1.232 |
| 17. Overall, the training material helped me be a better leader. | 4.810 | 5.598 | 0.788 |
| 18. Overall, the training material has made my life better. | 4.293 | 5.480 | 1.187 |
| 19. As a result of this training event, I will make every effort to attend future New Vision training events. | 4.672 | 5.510 | 0.838 |
| Average | 4.693 | 5.515 | 0.822 |

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ABSTRACT

LEVERAGING TRANSFERABLE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES
TO INCREASE LAY LEADER TRAINING PERCEPTION AT
NEW VISION BAPTIST CHURCH,
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

Gregory James Freeman, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
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The purpose of this ministry project is to increase the perception of the value of leadership training among lay leaders at New Vision Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The result of accomplishing the project goals is to increase lay leader participation in training events, resulting in leaders equipped to take leadership competencies grounded in a biblical worldview into a variety of contexts. Chapter 1 details the context, rationale, purpose, goals, and methodology of the project. Chapter 2 outlines the biblical and theological foundation surrounding the equipping of lay leaders to lead inside and outside the church context. Chapter 3 reviews current leadership development literature surrounding the leadership competencies that are consistent in effective leaders. Chapter 4 lists the detailed steps of the project from the pre-training event survey regarding the perception of NVBC training to the implementation of the multi-session training event to the post-training event survey and analysis of the comparison of the two surveys. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project's purpose and goals, its strengths and weaknesses, what I would do differently, and theological and personal reflections.

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