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DEVELOPING A TRAINING PROGRAM TO EQUIP MEN  
FOR LEADERSHIP AT HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST  
CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
Matthew Joseph Phipps  
December 2024

**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING A TRAINING PROGRAM TO EQUIP MEN  
FOR LEADERSHIP AT HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST  
CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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To my wife, Dr. Christa Phipps, who encouraged me throughout  
the process of my research and work.

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## PREFACE

This ministry project results from a challenge from my pastor, the provision and acceptance from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, an opportunity and leadership from Dan Dumas and Dr. Beau Hughes, support from Hickory Grove Baptist Church, and inspiration and encouragement from my wife and daughter.

First, I am thankful for my pastor, Clint Pressley, who challenged me one evening on our annual staff retreat to pursue my doctoral degree. Clint, someone I have known since high school, has influenced my life not only with my physical condition but, most of all, my spiritual growth and biblical knowledge as a believer and pastor.

Second, I would like to thank The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for providing and accepting me into this doctoral program. It has theologically and practically challenged me. I am thankful for a seminary committed to the Word of God and the training and equipping of pastors.

Third, I would like to thank Dan Dumas and Dr. Beau Hughes for allowing me to participate in this cohort and equipping me with principles of executive leadership and pastoral ministry. I am thankful for Dan, who was open and honest about the program's purpose and shared great insight and examples of leadership. I am grateful for Beau's encouragement and patience as my supervisor while I wrote this project.

Fourth, I thank Hickory Grove Baptist Church for allowing me to continue my education. The church has supported me and allowed me to take time away from my ministry responsibilities to spend time with my cohort and focus on my studies. More specifically, I want to thank Dr. Kyler Smith for allowing me to use this training program to equip men at Hickory Grove Baptist Church. He has been supportive in each step of the process.

Fifth, I would like to thank my wife, Dr. Christa Phipps, and my daughter, Margaret Phipps, for inspiring me and encouraging me to pursue my doctoral degree and during the research and work on this project. My wife, who sought and received her PhD, had always hoped that I would go back to seminary and get a doctorate. She has continually encouraged me through the entire process. Also, my daughter has consistently asked how I was doing on my degree and, more specifically, my project.

This project has confirmed my calling as a pastor to shepherd and equip others. It has given me an even greater desire to see men and fathers at Hickory Grove Baptist Church grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Bible, biblical doctrines, and spiritual disciplines to lead well within the church and in their homes. May the Lord be honored and glorified through this training program as it continues to equip men for leadership.

Matthew Phipps

Charlotte, North Carolina

December 2024

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In a letter to the church of Ephesus, Paul writes that God has gifted the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to equip all believers to prepare them for the work of the ministry, resulting in the building up of the body of Christ. Gifted leaders equipping believers brings unity in the church and spiritual maturity for the individual believer and the church. The purpose of bringing about spiritual maturity is so individual believers will not be easily confused and influenced by every wind of doctrine and that they will grow in Christ in all areas of their lives. The church grows as believers mature spiritually in Christ, utilizing their gifts and providing mutual support (Eph 4:11–16).

Gifted leaders in today's church should equip believers by finding multiple ways to prepare believers for the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ. This project developed a training program for men at Hickory Grove Baptist Church (HGBC) in Charlotte, North Carolina, to strengthen their understanding of what it looks like to be a disciple who provides leadership within the church and at home.

#### **Ministry Context**

Understanding the history and location of HGBC over the past forty years is significant in looking at the purpose and goals of this project. HGBC, established in 1955, experienced tremendous growth in the 1980s, 1990s, and early part of the twenty-first century, going from 3,293 members in 1986, to 12,781 members by 2001. HGBC witnessed a significant number of its members undergo profound spiritual growth, demonstrating a deepening of their faith, a hunger to share this faith with others, and a readiness to take on various leadership roles within the church. This positive growth

underscored the congregation's active engagement and commitment to serving and leading within the church.

Growing up at Hickory Grove as a child and teenager in the 1970s and the 1980s, most members seemed to believe in God and were active in church during this time. People did not seem to question their faith or encounter others who challenged it. The church was led not only by the pastors but also by church members, particularly men of faith who loved the Lord, their families, and their church. The men of the church made it a priority to support and lead the church.

HGBC's ministries gradually transitioned toward an attractional model in the late 1980s into the 1990s, emphasizing reaching the lost in any way possible. Following a trend seen in many other American churches, HGBC developed programs and events designed to appeal to a broad audience, all intending to attract non-believers to the church. Jared Wilson, in his book *The Prodigal Church*, speaks of attractional churches by saying,

The genesis of the seeker/attractional movement addressed very real problems—namely, that church members were not reaching their unsaved neighbors, and the unsaved neighbors could not see how Christianity had any relevance for modern life. Seeker churches sought to address such problems with very practical solutions. They wanted to make the experience of church as comfortable and comprehensible as possible so that those untrained in insider church lingo and unfamiliar with the Bible would see how utterly practical Christianity is. The goal, as we used to say, was to remove every stumbling block but the cross from between the lost and Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The location of HGBC is Charlotte, North Carolina, a city that has grown in population over the last thirty years. The city of Charlotte began to see this substantial growth in the late 1990s and gained recognition as a major hub for banking, drawing in a significant influx of new residents. According to David Francis, “Like Phoenix, Las Vegas, and other Sun Belt cities, Charlotte’s growth was powered by the economic prosperity of

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<sup>1</sup> Jared Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto against the Status Quo* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 26.

the 1990s.”<sup>2</sup> This growth also led to increased sports and entertainment opportunities. For instance, Charlotte gained an NBA franchise in 1988, and landed an NFL franchise in 1995. Additionally, the construction of the sports arena and stadium brought concerts and other sporting events to the city.

As Charlotte grew, at least two factors contributed to an unfortunate numerical decline of HGBC and, even more significant, a spiritual decline of its members. The peak of HGBC’s growth was in 2005, with an average worship attendance of 5,617 and Sunday school attendance of 4,668. However, by 2010, average worship attendance dropped to 4,539, and Sunday school attendance dropped to 3,402.

One factor that led to the decline in attendance was that with the continued growth of Charlotte, new churches were established, leading to HGBC members moving their membership. One church in Charlotte went from 121 in 2006 in attendance to more than 17,000 in attendance by 2015.<sup>3</sup> By 2016, the Charlotte Metro had “about 1,500 places of worship, including 1,246 churches, catering a population of 1.9 million. Baptist Churches have the greatest representation with 453.”<sup>4</sup> Some of these new churches were established outside the city, and many HGBC members moved outside the city and further away from HGBC, thus attending and moving their membership to those churches.

However, a more significant factor that led to the decline in attendance was that many members found other activities in Charlotte, as described previously, to fill their time instead of committing to the church and the Lord, reducing attendance and participation. The problem became a lack of spiritual depth among the church members. The attractional

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<sup>2</sup> David Francis, “Anatomy of a Boomtown: The Real Story behind the Rise of Charlotte,” *Bloomberg*, September 4, 2012, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-09-04/anatomy-of-a-boomtown-the-real-story-behind-the-rise-of-charlotte?embedded-checkout=true>.

<sup>3</sup> Tim Funk, “From 121 to 17,000-plus: Charlotte’s Elevation Church Congregation Keeps Growing,” *WBTV*, March 15, 2015, <https://www.wbvtv.com/story/28524334/from-121-to-17000-plus-charlottes-elevation-church-congregation-keeps-growing/>.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Pearce, “Why Charlotte Is known as ‘The City of Churches,’” *ChrisPearce52*, January 22, 2016, <https://chrispearce52.wordpress.com/2016/01/22/why-charlotte-is-known-as-the-city-of-churches/>.

model of ministry seen at HGBC and many of the churches established in Charlotte and the surrounding cities became the driving force of ministry. Worship services at many of these churches were about entertainment and less about doxology and spiritual growth. For HGBC, some members became consumers and spectators rather than participants.

At the end of 2011, HGBC cast a new vision on being a church that “Exalts Christ, Makes Disciples, and Passes the Torch,” and began to focus on discipleship programs and activities more than attractional programs and activities. The church began to move from a program-driven attractional church to a gospel-driven church. The new senior pastor, Clint Pressley, had a goal to take the church from what he called a cruise ship to a battleship.<sup>5</sup> In 2012, Pressley began a sermon series entitled “The Year of the Bible,” encouraging the congregation to choose a Bible reading plan that would take them through the entire Bible in one year.

The church did see 942 new members join the church from 2012 to 2018, but the desire for programs and entertainment was still widespread among many members, which created the problem of members leaving HGBC to find the type of church that would provide entertaining programs and activities and less of a commitment. HGBC continued to see a drop in average worship attendance during this time, with the average worship attendance in 2012 being 3,718, compared to the average worship attendance in 2018, dropping to 2,622.

In 2019, the church laid plans to grow members and guide them through a Discipleship Pathway, which would be the first step in member’s spiritual growth. However, churches worldwide, including HGBC, had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Plans for a greater focus on discipleship and spiritual growth took a backseat while the church’s leadership navigated ways to continue to have church during a pandemic. After much planning and praying toward the next steps to equip and disciple

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<sup>5</sup> Clint Pressley, “Road Map to The Future,” Hickory Grove Baptist Church, December 11, 2011, Vimeo video, 5:28, <https://vimeo.com/33869411>.

the church as the pandemic ended, the effects on the church had done its damage. As the pandemic ended, people accepted staying at home and watching online. Staying at home seemed justifiable, thus affecting participation in the church. This stay-home mentality led people to believe that the church was meant to entertain and meet individual needs. Church became an option, and people lost interest. According to 2023 Gallup Research,

U.S. church attendance has shown a small but noticeable decline compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the four years before the pandemic, 2016 through 2019, an average of 34% of U.S. adults said they had attended church, synagogue, mosque, or temple in the past seven days. From 2020 to the present, the average has been 30%.<sup>6</sup>

HGBC saw average worship attendance drop from 2,562 in 2019, to 1,739 by the end of 2021.

While HGBC has had some faithful and spiritually equipped leaders take the place of leaders who stopped attending, the problems within the church of members being too busy for church, wanting more programs and more entertainment at church, and even the loss of interest in going to church during COVID 19, created a near-empty leadership pipeline of men equipped and ready to teach and serve, along with a great deal of apathy toward marriage and family. This led to a lack of believers who understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ, causing a deficit of leadership in the church and at home. In *Deep Discipleship*, J. T. English speaks to the lack of basic discipleship in the church today, noting that many studies point to the fact that Christians do not have a good knowledge of the Bible, do not understand the basics of Christian doctrine, and are not practicing personal spiritual disciplines.<sup>7</sup>

In *The Gospel According to Satan*, Jared Wilson discusses the anatomy of a lie. In his opening chapter, he investigates Genesis 3—specifically the question posed to Adam

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<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, “U.S. Church Attendance Still Lower than Pre-Pandemic,” Gallup, June 26, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/507692/church-attendance-lower-pre-pandemic.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B & H, 2020), 85.

and Eve, “Did God really say that?”<sup>8</sup> Answering this question remains a problem for many Christians because they lack knowledge of the Bible. Many Christians are not sure what God did say, so they try to remember something they heard, something they saw, or something they watched. Then, they claim it as the truth when it is not.

In August 2021, HGBC presented to the church a Discipleship Pathway to guide people in understanding the discipleship plan for the church. However, the church still needed to address this issue of preparing men to lead. The new member class, Discover HG, introduced people to the Discipleship Pathway, which encourages every member to be involved in public worship and private worship, a community group for Bible study and fellowship, and a discipleship group for accountability and discussion, and then encourages members to be on a mission to make disciples. However, a discipleship program to prepare and provide the church’s men to lead as teachers, deacons, husbands, and fathers was missing.

### **Rationale**

In collaboration with The University of Chicago in 2023, the *State of the Bible* research team at the American Bible Society surveyed American adults on topics related to the Bible, faith, and the church and found that “fewer people in America are engaging with the Bible.”<sup>9</sup> Based on year-over-year statistics, “Scripture engagement is not rising yet; it continues on a downward trajectory.”<sup>10</sup>

Another research survey done in 2020 by Arizona Christian University reported, “The context for the changing views on faith in America is exemplified by the fact that almost two out of every three adults (63%) say that having some type of

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<sup>8</sup> Jarred Wilson, *The Gospel According to Satan: Eight Lies about God That Sound Like the Truth* (Nashville: Nelson, 2020), xv.

<sup>9</sup> American Bible Society, “State of the Bible,” accessed January 19, 2024, <https://sotb.research.bible/>.

<sup>10</sup> American Bible Society, “State of the Bible.”



religious faith is more important than which faith a person aligns with.”<sup>11</sup> This included a large majority of people that describe themselves as Christians. And among those Christians, a majority “accept a works-oriented means to God’s acceptance.”<sup>12</sup> The survey reported that large portions of the people affiliated with a church where their official doctrine says salvation comes through Christ believe “that a person can qualify for Heaven by being or doing good.”<sup>13</sup>

These two surveys give some evidence that people are not reading their Bible, and there are “Christians” who do not understand some of the fundamental biblical doctrines. As the focus shifts to Christian men, there is evidence that their spiritual health is eroding. In a 2022 survey of men, it was found that areas such as missions, evangelism, and outreach were declining among men, along with their dissatisfaction with the local church.<sup>14</sup>

For ministries of HGBC to be led by spiritually mature and well-equipped men who can use their gifts to grow the church, the pastors must prepare these men. A program needed to be developed to prepare men to understand what it looks like to be a disciple who makes disciples. This program needs to equip men to know how to lead both within the church and at home.

First, this program at HGBC aimed to equip men on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, after looking at several surveys, many Christians neglect Bible reading, resulting in a growing number of individuals struggling to

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<sup>11</sup> Tracy Munsil, “AWVI 2020 Survey: 1 in 3 US Adults Embrace Salvation through Jesus; More Believe It Can Be ‘Earned,’” Arizona Christian University, August 4, 2020, <https://www.arizonachristian.edu/2020/08/04/1-in-3-us-adults-embrace-salvation-through-jesus-more-believe-it-can-be-earned/>.

<sup>12</sup> Munsil, “AWVI 2020 Survey.”

<sup>13</sup> Munsil, “AWVI 2020 Survey.”

<sup>14</sup> Dean Brenton, “The Spiritual Health of Men: 5 Trends Every Leader Should Know,” Impactus, September 13, 2022, <https://www.impactus.org/mens-ministry/the-spiritual-health-of-men-5-trends-every-leader-should-know/>.

articulate biblical doctrines. Instead, they are learning about their beliefs from other religions, cultural traditions, conservative values, and online sources, including social media. This has led to people answering questions about their faith using sources other than the Bible and, in some cases, even questioning the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. As a result, Christians are finding it increasingly challenging to provide sound doctrine to those who question their beliefs. It is vital for a disciple of Christ to regularly read the Bible, learn how to explain the gospel, and be able to articulate biblical doctrines to answer questions with confidence.

A disciple of Jesus Christ is also one who establishes spiritual disciplines in day-to-day life. However, many men find it challenging to stay committed to these practices in their daily walk with God. The fast-paced nature of modern life and various distractions, such as social media, streaming services, and personal priorities, can make it challenging to stay focused. Men must ascertain practical guidance and proper training to carry out spiritual disciplines effectively.

Men in the church should be encouraged to engage in Bible reading, learn biblical doctrines, and participate in spiritual disciplines so that they do not become like a child, as Paul mentions, easily confused and influenced, “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph 4:14).<sup>15</sup> A disciple of Christ should no longer drink milk like a baby but take in solid food. J. T. English discusses how the church progresses people through their next steps in their relationship with Christ by moving people “from student to teacher, from infant to adult, from milk to meat.”<sup>16</sup> This program needed to serve as a refining process for men. The church needs to provide a space that refines men—improving men in their biblical doctrine and spiritual disciplines by pruning and polishing.

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<sup>15</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>16</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 143.

Second, the program at HGBC aimed to equip men to embrace discipleship that would empower them to develop the skills to lead within the church and in their households, thus enabling them to effectively make disciples. The training would help these men better understand what a healthy church should look like. In *What Is a Healthy Church?* Mark Dever writes, “A healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God’s character as his character has been revealed in his Word.”<sup>17</sup> Learning about God’s character begins with studying and understanding the Bible.

This training program also instructed men to better grasp what constitutes a healthy home and equipped them to be better husbands and fathers. The program did allow single men to participate. Of those who took and participated in the survey, there were four single men, twenty-three married, and one divorced man. Also, of those married or divorced who took and participated in the survey, ten men did not have children in the home and fifteen men had one or more living in their home under the age of 18.

Finally, this program needed to be a part of the next steps of leadership by developing a Leadership Pipeline. HGBC needed a pipeline of men who were ready to lead as Bible Study teachers and deacons. Since 2014, there have been 214 deacons at HGBC who are no longer serving as deacons—44 men have passed away and 170 are no longer members of the church.<sup>18</sup> The church needed to have in place a system to prepare men to fill these positions. In *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development*, Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck discuss this leadership pipeline by defining it as a construct that is helpful in systematically and intentionally developing leaders.<sup>19</sup> English compares this process to moving one’s congregation from “consumption to contribution.”<sup>20</sup> English

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 40.

<sup>18</sup> This information was taken from HGBC’s Church Management software and the history of men who served as deacons at the church.

<sup>19</sup> Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 186.

<sup>20</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 148.

also writes, “Your people should always know what next step, challenge, or opportunity is available to them.”<sup>21</sup> There needs to be an understanding that this program is part of the overall discipleship process of the church.

Many adults attend community groups (Sunday school classes) and have been in those groups for many years but have yet to be involved in any other programs to further their spiritual walk or prepare them for leadership. This project demonstrated the next step in growth to the people of HGBC. English discusses that a discipleship process should have different active learning spaces and that each functional learning space should show a sequence of growth for varying levels of maturity for the believers.<sup>22</sup> The church needed to provide a safe space for men to grow as disciples, which would help them understand their role and purpose within the church and at home.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a training program at Hickory Grove Baptist Church to equip men for leadership.

### **Goals**

This ministry project had three goals. The goals gave clear direction in developing a curriculum and a training program to equip men to be leaders within the church and strengthen their understanding of discipleship within the church and at home.

1. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge and practice of men in leadership within the church and in the home.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to establish a biblical framework for equipping men to lead.
3. The third goal was to implement the training program to increase the knowledge and practice of leadership among men of HGBC.

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<sup>21</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 140.

<sup>22</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 141.

A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these three goals. This methodology is described in the following section.<sup>23</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these three goals. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge and practice of men in leadership within the church and in the home. The goal was measured by administering a Spiritual Leadership Knowledge pre-survey to seventy-eight men before the start of the second semester of the training program. The goal was considered successfully met when at least 40 percent of the men starting the program completed the survey.<sup>24</sup>

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum that establishes a biblical framework for equipping men to lead. The curriculum consisted of eight sessions over two semesters. The first-semester curriculum (September–December) focused on the Bible, doctrine, and spiritual disciplines. The second-semester curriculum (January–April) focused on leadership in the church and home. The goal was measured by using a Curriculum Evaluation Tool.<sup>25</sup> The tool was used by HGBC pastoral team members, including of the Associate Pastor of Ministries, Head of School, Adult Discipleship Pastor, and Discipleship Pastor. The Curriculum Evaluation Tool utilized a rubric to evaluate the curriculum’s biblical accuracy, teaching methodology, scope, pedagogy, and practicality. The goal was considered successfully met once the staff evaluated the curriculum and the average rating was at least 3.5.

The third goal was to implement the training program to increase the knowledge and practice of leadership among men of HGBC. The goal was measured by

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<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>25</sup> See appendix 2.

administering a post-survey to measure the change in leadership knowledge and practices in the church and home. The goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the goal was measured by a focus group of the men who completed the training program to answer questions regarding the overall effectiveness of the program.<sup>27</sup> The discussion time was audio recorded and the answers were analyzed, providing a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the training program.

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

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

*Community group.* Small groups meet on Sunday mornings for Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and member care at HGBC.

*Discipleship group.* A small group of 3-5 people of the same gender, meeting weekly or bi-weekly for accountability and discussion.

*Discipleship pathway.* A clear path to show HGBC members four main areas in which they should be involved.

*Discover HG.* A four-week class offered at HGBC for those interested in learning more about the church. At the end of the class the opportunity is given to join the church.

*Doctrine.* Gregg Allison defines doctrine as “Christian Belief based on Scripture.”<sup>28</sup>

*Church leadership.* Men at HGBC who teach, serve as deacons, and volunteer in other areas within the church.

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<sup>26</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>28</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), s.v. “doctrine.”

*Leadership pipeline.* Geiger and Peck explain leadership pipeline as “a helpful construct that aids in systematically and intentionally developing leaders.”<sup>29</sup>

One limitation applied to this project was that the pre-survey was completed after the first semester of the training program and before the start of the second semester. To mitigate this limitation, the survey focused only on what was taught during the second semester of the training program.

Three delimitations applied to this project. First, only men were invited to participate. The focus of this class was for men to be trained by pastors to provide leadership in other areas, such as teaching a community group, with both men and women as members, and to serve as deacons, which is limited to men. Second, the men in this study were eighteen and older. To serve in many areas of the church, men must be eighteen or older. Finally, the men had to be members of HGBC. To serve within the church, men must be members.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter clearly stated the problem and need for a training program for the men of HGBC. Men need to be equipped and trained to lead both in the church and at home. Chapter 2 will focus on the biblical argument of why the church should equip men to lead. Chapter 3 will assess the well-being of men today and identify the knowledge and skills necessary for them to become effective leaders within the church and home. Chapter 4 of this project will give the training program details, and chapter 5 will provide an evaluation of the research project.

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<sup>29</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 186.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR EQUIPPING MEN FOR LEADERSHIP

Men have been created and designed to lead, and gifted leaders are to equip and appoint these men to lead both within the church and at home. In Ephesians 4:11–12, Paul says, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” Today, God has gifted leaders in the church to equip and prepare believers to lead for the work of ministry and for the building up and edification of the church.

Leadership within the church begins with one being a disciple of Christ and continues by being a disciple who makes disciples. Men can play a vital role in this work of ministry by providing leadership within the church and the home. In the church, they can lead in various ways, such as providing leadership, teaching small groups, and serving as deacons. When men teach small groups, they lead by sharing biblical knowledge and their own experiences to help others grow in their faith. When men serve as deacons, they provide servant leadership by assisting with practical needs in the church community, including caring for the sick and elderly, organizing events, and supporting other ministries. These roles are crucial in building and edifying the church community. Men who lead within the church and participate in the discipleship process can make a significant impact on the lives of others.

For men to effectively lead in their roles within the church, they must also understand the importance of providing leadership within their homes. Leadership in the home means being a leader as a husband and father and in other communal roles. By effectively leading in these areas, men can set a positive example for their families and communities, helping to create a strong foundation for future generations.



HGBC desires pastors to prepare men to strengthen their understanding of what it looks like to be a disciple who makes disciples, providing leadership within the church and at home. Without the church having men who grasp the importance of the Bible, biblical doctrines, and spiritual disciplines, a church will not have men ready to teach and serve within the church. It will not also have men ready to lead at home. To equip men for leadership at HGBC, a training program was developed that is supported by several primary biblical texts. These texts include Genesis 1:26–28, 2:15, 3:8–12, 17–19, Acts 6:1–7, and Ephesians 4:11–16, providing a biblical foundation for why men must be equipped to lead.

### **Created and Designed to Lead (Gen 1–3)**

The church must equip men to take on leadership roles as they have been created and designed for this purpose. Genesis 1–3 provides a rationale for men’s leadership in the church and the home. By examining various passages and verses in the Genesis creation account, it is evident that men are called to provide leadership for four reasons: (1) mankind was created in the image of God to represent and rule; (2) man was created to work and keep the garden; (3) the husband was created to lead in marriage; and (4) man is still responsible for leading even after the fall.

### **Mankind Was Created in the Image of God to Represent and Rule (1:26–28)**

Genesis 1 describes God’s creation of the heavens and the earth. Following this, the text portrays the pinnacle of God’s creation as mankind is created into existence. As the narrative progresses, it emphasizes the significance of mankind’s creation, taking a moment to reflect upon its importance within the broader context of the story of creation. Biblical professor and scholar Kenneth A. Mathews writes, “The crown of God’s handiwork is human life,” and that this creative act of God “shows an ascending order of significance with human life as the final, thus pinnacle,” and that “human life alone is created in the ‘image’ of God and has the special assignment to rule over the created

order.”<sup>1</sup> God’s final creative act is marked by the author of Genesis writing that mankind was created in the image of God. Whether man or woman, all of mankind was created in his image and has a purpose, as described in Genesis 1.

In Genesis 1:26, the author writes, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” Scholars have various views of what it means that mankind was made in the image of God, after his likeness. Old Testament scholar and writer Gordon Wenham says there are seventeen occurrences of the word “image” in the Bible with various meanings. Some include various physical images, and others refer to man’s image or shadow.<sup>2</sup> While God created man and represents God, it is essential to note that man and God differ. To reiterate this, the phrase “after our likeness” is added after the word “image.” Wenham goes on to say that one suggestion of the Hebrew word “image” has a root meaning of “to cut” or “hew,” and the word “likeness” is related to the verb that means “to be like, resemble,” or the noun can represent a model or plan.<sup>3</sup>

Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner says,

The words “image” and “likeness” reinforce one another: there is no “and” between the phrases, and scripture does not use them as technically distinct expressions. . . . The “image” is man’s indelible constitution as a rationale and morally responsible being, and the ‘likeness’ is that spiritual accord with the will of God which was lost at the fall.<sup>4</sup>

Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew Bruce Waltke says that the addition of “likeness” highlights that humankind is only a replica of God and different from God, distinguishing God from humans.<sup>5</sup> Waltke goes on to describe the word “image” as a

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 29.

<sup>3</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 50–51.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 65, Kindle.

physical representation so God can communicate himself to and through the physical image of man.<sup>6</sup>

Understanding the image of God and the likeness of God helps establish humanity's role. This role begins with representing God. Men need to know that they were created by God, in the image of God, to represent God. Mankind, being a representative of God, gives meaning and purpose. Wenham says that the most robust case explaining being made in God's image is that man is God's representative on earth, and because of that, man's life is sacred.<sup>7</sup> Waltke says that accepting that mankind is created in the image of God is essential for humans' comprehension of their calling and relationship to God. Without this, humans become disordered and devalue themselves.<sup>8</sup> As men represent God, it shows they have worth and dignity as a representative of God.

Mankind is established as a representative of God, who is then commanded to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and have rule or dominion over creation. In verses 26 and 28, God commands man to have dominion over creation. Also, verse 28 adds the command to be fruitful and multiply. Mathews says the language of "image" mirrors the idea of a royal figure representing God as an appointed ruler over man and man ruling over the earth (i.e., animals).<sup>9</sup> Mankind is commanded to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over creation, laying a foundation for the leadership expected from God. Old Testament scholar Victor Hamilton explains that while man is created in the image of God and exercises dominion over creation, it is not a harsh or cruel ruling. Man is designed to lead compassionately, being a lord and a servant.<sup>10</sup> Men need to understand that they were

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<sup>6</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 65.

<sup>7</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 69.

<sup>9</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 64.

<sup>10</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1–17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 138.

created in the image of God and that they were created for a purpose: to provide leadership as they rule and to have compassionate dominion over God’s creation.

God created mankind in his image and likeness and gave mankind the role of representing God and the responsibility to rule over animals and other created things in his environment. That role is present today with the responsibility of representing God as a disciple of Christ, a faithful church member, and a man who was created to rule and have dominion over not only creation but also his primary environment, the home. Men need to understand that mankind was created in the image of God, and with that comes purpose and meaning. His role and representation are then played out in the environment where he was to work and keep it.

### **Man Was Created to Work and Keep the Garden (2:15)**

Genesis 2 presents a more detailed narrative of the creation story. According to this passage, God placed man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it. Genesis 2:15 states, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” This verse underscores the dual responsibility given to man—to diligently attend to the garden and ensure its well-being. This dual responsibility aligns with the overarching theme in Genesis 1, emphasizing that God intentionally created mankind for a distinct purpose. This purpose is further expounded upon as the verbs “work” and “keep” are explicitly defined.

The first verb in the English Standard Version’s translation is “to work.” Matthews explains that “work,” or the Hebrew word ‘*abad*, is a common translation for tilling the soil but is also translated as labor, service to another, or even worship.<sup>11</sup> The work or labor in the garden is also about service and worship. Both Wenham and Hamilton also explain that the translation of “to work” is “to serve.” Wenham says the

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<sup>11</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 209.

Hebrew word “to serve, till” is often used for cultivating soil.<sup>12</sup> In the American Standard Version of the Bible, Hamilton says the first verb is to “dress,” which is the Hebrew word meaning “to serve.” That man was put in the garden to serve, not to be served.<sup>13</sup> Wenham says work or serve is used in a “religious sense of serving God” as the priest would serve in the tabernacle.<sup>14</sup>

The second verb in the English Standard Version’s translation of the Bible is “to keep.” Hamilton says “keep” or “tend” has the basic meaning of “to exercise great care over” or “to guard.” He points out that man was placed in the garden as a servant to guard and protect it.<sup>15</sup> While there are physical applications to verse 15, there are also spiritual applications. Wenham explains that “to guard, to keep” is also commonly used in “observing religious commands and duties,” comparable to the Levitical responsibilities in defending the Tabernacle from invaders.<sup>16</sup>

This work or labor of tilling the soil is what God designed man to do in the garden. According to Matthews, placing man in the garden provides a purposeful life that involves being the overseer or supervisor of his environment.<sup>17</sup> Matthews further states that man is commissioned to “work” and “take care” of his home.<sup>18</sup> It was the home of man. It was God’s purpose for man to work and even to serve his home.

Hamilton also says that for man to work in the garden is not a result of sin, as God’s idea of working was there before sin entered the world.<sup>19</sup> Working in and caring

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<sup>12</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

<sup>13</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1–17*, 171.

<sup>14</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

<sup>15</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1–17*, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> Matthews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 209.

<sup>18</sup> Matthews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 209.

<sup>19</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1–17*, 171.

for the garden is part of God’s original plan for man. Even if sin had not entered the world, man would still be tending to the garden. Wenham explains, “It should be noted that even before the fall man was expected to work; paradise was not a life of leisured unemployment...But the biblical narrative gives no hint that the creator is shuffling off his load onto man: work is intrinsic to human life.”<sup>20</sup> Work has always been meaningful for man, and man should be taught that they have been called to work and serve in workplaces, churches, and homes.

Today, men must understand their responsibility to “work” and “keep” both the church and home. Men need to be equipped to serve and take care of the church and to keep, guard, and protect the church. Men can serve the church by finding a place to lead. Some examples would be teaching or being a deacon. However, men must also be equipped to serve their families and tend, guard, and protect them. Men’s leadership in the home includes protecting and providing for those in their community.

### **The Husband Was Created to Lead in Marriage (2:18–24)**

In Genesis 2, the institution of marriage is used to exemplify the creation and leadership role of men. It is understood that some men in the HGBC training program are not married and may remain unmarried. Nevertheless, this passage underscores the significance of marriage for all believers. The passage in Genesis 2:18 states, “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”

Genesis establishes that man was created first. But then a helper was created fit for man. Waltke says that the woman being the “helper” does not mean that men are superior, but it does suggest that men have priority. Both men and women depend on each other, as women have a special significance in helping men accomplish their goals.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

<sup>21</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 88.

Waltke also says the helper is suitable, meaning equal and adequate, differing in sexuality, but both are created in God's image.<sup>22</sup> This relationship gives the beginning picture of a leader and a follower. Matthews offers several ideas on the role of the leader and the follower in Genesis. One is the hierarchy of creation: God, the man, and then the woman. Another is that there are differences between the man and the woman, with the woman being the helper.<sup>23</sup>

The story continues as the woman is created. Genesis 2:22–23 says, “And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of Man.’” Waltke writes, “The man’s twofold naming of his wife entails his authority in the home.”<sup>24</sup> The woman was created from man, thus the woman has her source in man. Adam’s exclamation “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” is expressing his new relationship, which he is excited about. It is a covenantal statement of a commitment being made. Adam then names the women and celebrates their bond.

The final leadership role of the man in these verses is when he is commanded to take the initiative of leaving his mother and father and holding fast to his wife. Verse 24 reads, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Waltke discusses the language in verse 24 as covenantal language: “Every marriage is divinely ordained” and “the husband’s obligations to his wife take precedence over other priorities.”<sup>25</sup>

This creation ordinance of marriage and the husband’s leadership, as defined in Genesis, is described in more detail in the New Testament. The apostle Paul further

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<sup>22</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 88.

<sup>23</sup> Matthews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 220.

<sup>24</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 89.

<sup>25</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 90.

clarifies men's leadership within marriage in Ephesians. A household code of instructions for the Christian family is being discussed. The leadership position is established, and men are encouraged to love their wives within this role. In Paul's instruction, it is evident that men must be equipped to provide leadership within the home.

In Ephesians 5, Paul clearly states the role of both the husband and the wife: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior" (vv. 22–23) The husband's leadership is reflected in verse 23, as Paul proclaims that the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Thus, the leader of the household is established. New Testament Scholar Frank Thielman says what Paul does after proclaiming that husbands are the head of the wife is Paul "immediately qualifies the husband's authority by describing his headship as patterned after Christ's headship over the church. . . . Christ's authority has been used not to control the church but to reconcile it to God at the cost of his own life and to equip the church with what it needs for accomplishing God's purposes."<sup>26</sup> Men have authority within the home but are called to lead by looking to the example of Christ. Thielman also writes, "Paul pictures the wife's submission as the recognition of the authority of a husband who imitates the self-sacrificial, nurturing, and supporting roles that Christ fills with respect to the church."<sup>27</sup>

New Testament scholar Andrew Lincoln says that readers in that day, after hearing that wives are to submit to their husbands, would assume the husband's job is to rule their wives, but instead, Paul begins with a bold statement for husbands to love their wives.<sup>28</sup> Paul now instructs husbands how to lead their wives:

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<sup>26</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 378, Kindle.

<sup>27</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 379.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 373.



Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (vv. 25–27)

Paul repeatedly commands husbands to love their wives. Christ was the ultimate example of leading by loving others, walking in humility, and laying down his life with a sacrificial death. Thielman notes that Paul’s similarity between the husband’s love for his wife and Christ’s love for the church should reveal that the husband’s love for his wife is so all-encompassing that he is willing to sacrifice his social reputation and happiness, even his life, for the sake of his wife.<sup>29</sup>

The role of men in marriage is one of leadership. Unfortunately, modern views of marriage and a lack of education from a biblical perspective have led to a disconnect. Men must understand the significance of loving their wives and demonstrating humility. Men should strive to embody qualities that make them godly leaders, such as love, sacrifice, and a commitment to serving their wives. Ascertaining true biblical marriage will inspire wives to follow their husbands’ lead willingly.

### **The Man Is Still Responsible for Leading Even after the Fall (3:8–12; 17–19)**

In Genesis 3, sin enters the world, compromising humankind’s ability to fulfill God’s purpose. Adam relinquishes his leadership role and bears responsibility for the act of rebellion. He embodies passivity by failing to intervene, instead participating in the transgression, concealing himself, and ultimately blaming his wife. Genesis 3:8–12 reads,

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The

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<sup>29</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 382.

man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

Even though men have retained their leadership roles after the fall, being a leader is still challenging due to sin. Genesis 3:17–19 says,

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Men will face temptations not to serve, not love, and to give up and quit. There will be challenges for men. Their wives will even challenge them. Waltke says the image is not taken away after the fall in Genesis 3 but it is now incomplete. Man can still fulfill the function of the image, but only through Christ.<sup>30</sup> Christ “makes the church his bride” and fills the earth with humans, filling them with the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup> Mathews notes that when sin-stained the first humans, they did not lose the “image” because the “grace of the Creator of the new humanity is now created in the ‘image of Christ’ and through his perfect obedience achieves life and glory for believers as his adopted children.”<sup>32</sup> Today, men must be equipped to lead in their marriage despite obstacles and temptations. As stated, the man’s leadership is shown in serving his wife, loving his wife, and not giving up or quitting on his wife.

The initial chapters of Genesis unmistakably demonstrate that men were created and intended to lead. Humanity was created in the image of God, providing them with the purpose of ruling and giving life meaning by representing God. Men have also been created to work and care for their environment, which in today’s context involves caring for their homes, providing protection, and showing love to their spouses. Additionally, working and being responsible for their environment means serving the church. The church should better prepare men to understand leadership principles through the creation account. Even

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<sup>30</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 70.

<sup>31</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 70.

<sup>32</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 164.

as flawed individuals, God created humanity for his glory. Humanity is called to “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). Men, being created by God, can glorify him by actively serving and providing leadership in both the church and the home.

### **Men Are Chosen to Serve and Strengthen the Church (Acts 6:1–7)**

In the New Testament book of Acts, which Luke wrote, there is a compelling example of the role of men being equipped to serve. Acts 6 emphasizes the importance of individuals, aside from the apostles, taking on service roles within the church. The selection of these individuals was crucial for strengthening the church, as the apostles could not effectively serve in all areas. As a result, it was essential for the apostles to carefully choose men who were equipped to serve in other areas, ensuring that the ministry of the Word was not neglected. This passage in Acts 6:1–7 remains relevant today as pastors actively train and prepare members to serve within the church.

### **The Growth of the Church Created the Need for More to Serve (v. 1)**

As the Christian community described in the New Testament expanded, it became increasingly evident that the church’s leadership in Jerusalem required more than just the apostles. The emerging church needed to develop and train additional leaders to support its growth. While the overall growth of the church was positive, it also brought challenges, including the risk of some members being overlooked or neglected in the process. This can be seen in Acts 6:1: “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.”

As the church grew, the widows of the Hellenists were being neglected in the daily distribution. New Testament scholar Ben Witherington says that the need for more

support for the widows was “created by a growth problem.”<sup>33</sup> This complaint threatened the unity of the church. It came about from a group of Jews introduced in the New Testament called the Hellenists.<sup>34</sup> The complaint was directed against the Hebrew Jews. This early church included both the Hellenists and the Hebrews, demonstrating that the church was diverse. The diversity centered around both language and socioeconomic status. Evangelical biblical scholar F. F. Bruce explains that these daily distributions came from a common source where the wealthier Hebrew members had given their properties as contributions. Because of this, the Hellenistic widows were said to be at a disadvantage in contrast to the Hebrew widows, because the Hebrews distributed charity.<sup>35</sup> New Testament scholar Darrell L. Bock explains that, with this complaint, something needed to change to ensure everyone was being taken care of, as both groups belonged to the church and confessed that the Messiah had come to give grace to all types of people.<sup>36</sup> There was a problem, and now the leadership within the church needed to come up with a solution.

### **Appointing Other Men to Serve (vv. 2–6)**

Though the problem was dividing the church, the solution came from the twelve apostles instructing disciples to choose from among them seven men. Acts 6:2–6 reads,

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers,

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<sup>33</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 428, Kindle.

<sup>34</sup> F. F. Bruce writes,

The Hellenists were Jews whose habitual language was Greek and who attended Greek-speaking synagogues; the Hebrews spoke Aramaic (or Mishnaic Hebrew) and attended synagogues where the service was conducted in Hebrew. Many of the Hellenists had affinities with the lands of the Jewish dispersion around the Mediterranean shores, whereas the Hebrews were Palestinian Jews; there were doubtless several minor social and cultural differences between the two groups. In the Jewish world as a whole there were tensions between them, and some of these tensions endured between members of the two groups who had joined the “disciples.” (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 120)

<sup>35</sup> Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 120.

<sup>36</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 404, Kindle.

pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

These men were chosen to serve the congregation, promote unity, and help provide growth within the church. Bock says the disciples knew this complaint was legitimate.<sup>37</sup> While this was a legitimate complaint, it was wrong for the apostles to neglect their responsibilities in order to serve tables, as their calling was to preach. Bock also says it was not pleasing to God for them to serve tables and that they cannot and should not do everything in the church, not overlooking the teaching.<sup>38</sup> The best solution was to delegate and involve more church members in the community’s work. Bock says this vital ministry should be done by someone else, and the apostles demonstrated exemplary leadership and stewardship by not taking on all the responsibilities of the church.<sup>39</sup> By delegating, the apostles would ensure the longevity and health of the church and its members. This passage is an early example of the church where people within the congregation are called to serve and lead. There is “no official office here of deacons,” says Bock; it is simply men dealing with an issue so it will not continue to be a problem.<sup>40</sup> In every church, regardless of its size, it is imperative for its members to actively engage in serving within the church community. When there are insufficient volunteers, there is a risk of some individuals feeling neglected.

While having others serve in the church is essential, it is equally important to have clear qualifications. Acts 6:3 mentions two primary qualifications: “men of good repute and men full of the Spirit and wisdom.” Witherington describes the first characteristic, men of good repute, as a person who is accepted by others and has a good report from the community. He also points out that this is seen in 1 Timothy 3, where the

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<sup>37</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 405.

<sup>38</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 405.

<sup>39</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 406.

<sup>40</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 406.

main issue is not unique talents or abilities but character.<sup>41</sup> Regarding the second characteristic, Bock says that within this context, the spirit-filled life is directed by God. This includes being sensitive to spiritual matters and having the ability to make sound judgments. These are signs of spiritual maturity and are essential qualities of a leader.<sup>42</sup> For men to have these qualities, they must be equipped and challenged to grow in their spiritual knowledge and understanding.

In verse 4, the apostles say they will continue to be devoted to prayer and ministry of the Word, both essential to the church. David C. Peterson says that the outcome of this decision by the apostles in the Jerusalem church now presents a model for other churches to be constantly focused on prayer and ministry of the Word.<sup>43</sup> While all the ministries mentioned in this passage are essential, Witherington reiterates that if the seven serve the tables, then the twelve can devote themselves to the Word and prayer.<sup>44</sup>

As men are equipped, they must be chosen and set apart. As the seven were selected, they were set before the apostles and prayed over with their hands on them. Bock notes that the apostles perform this act to recognize God's call for the task before them, and "the laying on of hands is strictly symbolic."<sup>45</sup> Witherington says that laying on hands is more of "an act of commissioning" and "conveying authority," not an ordination.<sup>46</sup> Men need to know they are being equipped, chosen, and set apart to serve as leaders in different roles within the church.

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<sup>41</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 429.

<sup>42</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 407.

<sup>43</sup> David C. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 233.

<sup>44</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 429.

<sup>45</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 410.

<sup>46</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 430.

### **As the Ministry of the Word Increased, the Disciples Multiplied (v. 7)**

Acts 6:7 demonstrates the importance of empowering and equipping the seven men, along with the continued focus of the apostles on prayer and the ministry of the Word: “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” The church was strengthened as these believers worked to solve problems as a unified body. Bock says that even though the church was growing and inherently encountered growing pains, God raised leaders to meet the new tasks as the church adapted.<sup>47</sup> Ministry needs extend beyond those called to preach.<sup>48</sup>

This passage serves as an excellent example of the pivotal role of pastors in equipping fellow church members to take on leadership responsibilities within the church’s ministries. It emphasizes the vital importance of pastors maintaining their focus on preaching and teaching the Word. To achieve this, this passage highlights the imperative of identifying and preparing individuals of godly character to effectively serve and engage in ministry work.

### **God Has Gifted Church Leaders to Equip Believers for Maturity and Unity (Eph 4:11–16)**

Ephesians 4 states that leaders in the church are tasked with the responsibility of preparing believers for maturity and unity. For men to be influential spiritual leaders in the church and at home, they must comprehend what it means to follow Christ. A true disciple of Christ is well-versed in the Bible, can explain biblical doctrines, and regularly engages in spiritual disciplines. The apostle Paul reinforces this idea in his letter to the Ephesians, emphasizing that God has equipped church leaders to prepare believers for ministry, resulting in the growth and strengthening of the body of Christ. This preparation

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<sup>47</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 411.

<sup>48</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 411.

is intended to foster spiritual maturity in individual believers and the church, leading to unity within the church.

The central aim of moving toward spiritual maturity and unity is to protect individual believers from being easily influenced and led astray by various teachings, and to empower them to develop in all areas of their lives through their faith in Christ. This passage highlights the necessity for HGBC to create a comprehensive training program to equip men for leadership roles. It emphasizes the importance of men understanding what it means to be spiritually mature in order to effectively lead within the church and their households.

### **Gifted Leaders (v. 11)**

Before preparing men to be leaders, an examination of the equippers is essential. Ephesians 4, starting in verse 11, states that gifted leaders are given gifts to equip believers for the work of ministry to unify the church. The verse lists the gifted persons as “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers.” Lincoln says that “He” in verse 11 refers to Christ. Christ gives people (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers) to the church to proclaim and lead.<sup>49</sup> New Testament scholar Clinton E. Arnold also says Christ has granted all believers his grace. Still, he has given specific individuals the ability to establish churches, preach the Word of God, and prepare others for ministry in the church.<sup>50</sup> New Testament scholar Lynn H. Cohick says that Christ gives the gift to the church, and the five components or functions are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 248.

<sup>50</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 428, Kindle.

<sup>51</sup> Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2020), 349, Kindle.



All these functions are essential in the church and necessary to understand. The first two groups Paul discusses are the apostles and the prophets. They served early in the church and were foundational. Lincoln suggests that “their leadership role was taken over by the more stable teaching and ruling ministries.”<sup>52</sup> The third group, the evangelists, refers to those who preach the gospel but also help equip believers in the church to evangelize and grow in Christ. The fourth group includes shepherds and teachers. They are mentioned together because they are closely related. Arnold writes, “Because the two nouns are united under the one article, they are not to be regarded as entirely distinct groups” and Paul wanted to convey that all pastors are teachers, but not all teachers are to be pastors.<sup>53</sup> Lincoln says that in this post-apostolic period, the pastors, or shepherds, now exercise leadership.<sup>54</sup>

The individuals mentioned in this passage may not hold positions as church officers, but they would be considered church leaders. They are the ones who shepherd the flock. It is the job and responsibility of the leaders who shepherd the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Theologian Harold Hoehner says that in this passage Paul directs the church to use gifted believers whom Christ grants to the church to do ministry by God’s power.<sup>55</sup> Arnold says that the church has gifted leaders to equip members for a life of service and explains, “The goal of ministry is to help all believers grow in a knowledge of Christ and of the core doctrines of the faith, to mature to a greater Christlikeness, and to manifest love for one another in the life of the community.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 249.

<sup>53</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 436.

<sup>54</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 252.

<sup>55</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 468, Kindle.

<sup>56</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 408.

The idea of having gifted individuals (or leaders) underscores the importance of a church having a training program. The training program in this project was a discipleship program aimed at developing men into followers of Christ and educating them about the Bible, biblical doctrines, and spiritual disciplines. This program was lead and taught by the ordained pastors of the church, ensuring a theological rich and immersive learning experience for all participants.

### **Leaders Are Gifted to Equip (vv. 11–12)**

Arnold says gifted leaders are to invest their time in “developing and preparing” other believers to serve and do ministry.<sup>57</sup> Ephesians 4:11–12 reads, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” Three phrases are included in verse 12: equip the Saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Theologians differ on how to translate this verse. Hoehner discusses four views on how theologians translate this verse. The differing views express who is responsible for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ.<sup>58</sup> The views differentiate the responsibilities of the pastors and teachers of the church from those of the laity.

The first view is that all three prepositional phrases are the responsibility of the gifted leaders of the church. This would give little responsibility to the lay members of the church. Another view is that gifted people have the purpose of the work of the ministry and building up the body of Christ, making the final purpose of the gifts to prepare the saints. A third view is that the gifts were given to both the gifted leaders and the church’s laity to prepare the saints for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ. The final view gives the gifted people the responsibility of equipping all the saints to prepare them for the work of ministry with the final goal of building up the body of Christ.

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<sup>57</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 439.

<sup>58</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 506.

Cohick presents two views in explaining the three phrases. The first view is that gifted leaders do all three. The second view is that the gifted leaders equip the saints to do the work of the ministry so the saints might build up the body of Christ.<sup>59</sup> Thielman also presents these two views and concludes that the second view is probably correctly stating that the three phrases build on each other, saying that gifted leaders “equip all believers to do the work of ministry for the edification of Christ’s body.”<sup>60</sup> The fourth view, presented by Hoehner, and the second view, presented by both Cohick and Thielman, is the belief that pastors are to equip believers in the church to do the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ. The belief that pastors are to equip believers within the church to do the work of ministry supports the idea of a training program to equip men to serve within the church.

The word “equip” used in verse 11 has many meanings. Lincoln explains that it takes on the notion of making complete by restoring or training.<sup>61</sup> Hoehner says it would refer to the preparation of the church not to be perfect but to become perfect, mature, or complete.<sup>62</sup> Hoehner also writes, “This preparation includes instructing and equipping believers so that they may minister effectively in the church.”<sup>63</sup>

In conclusion, in these first two verses, the church pastor would use this training program to equip men to do ministry and build up their church. The size of the church would not matter. This program can be duplicated by a pastor who takes a group of men through it to prepare them to serve in the church and learn to lead in their homes. This training program could continue each year to build a pipeline of leadership. In the

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<sup>59</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 354.

<sup>60</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 279.

<sup>61</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 254.

<sup>62</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 508.

<sup>63</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 508.

context of HGBC, the pastors would take different groups of men through the training program each year to provide enough leaders in the pipeline to serve a larger church.

### **The Result of Equipping Is the Edification of the Church (vv. 13–14)**

The pastors of HGBC focused on equipping men to build up and edify the body of Christ. Lincoln emphasizes that Paul’s primary focus is on the unity and maturity of the church through equipping the saints.<sup>64</sup> Hoehner says that the gift of shepherding “includes instruction but probably is mostly concerned with administration and various ministries to the flock,” and teaching “includes instruction in doctrine and its application to daily life.”<sup>65</sup> The pastors of HGBC taught and equipped the men, preparing them to edify the church and achieve spiritual maturity. This maturity included understanding what it means to be a disciple of Christ, gaining a deeper understanding of the Bible, expressing biblical doctrines, and practicing spiritual disciplines daily. The ultimate goal was to develop men who are well-informed about their beliefs and capable of effective leadership within the church and the home. Ephesians 4:13–14 says, “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” In these verses, the gifted believers equip the saints to bring about a mature church. Cohick says Ephesians 4 is on “individual believers working out the unity they share in Christ and thus becoming mature followers.”<sup>66</sup> Hoehner says that in this context Paul refers to “a child’s gullibility, lack of understanding, or lack of perception.”<sup>67</sup> Lincoln says Paul is drawing a picture of a “storm-tossed boat or of

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<sup>64</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255.

<sup>65</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 505.

<sup>66</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 336.

<sup>67</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 518.

swirling flotsam and jetsam entirely at the mercy of the waves and the wind.”<sup>68</sup> He goes on to say,

In the context of 4:7–16, this negative picture of v 14 is meant to underline the importance of Christ’s giving of ministers to the Church. Immaturity on the part of believers cannot be treated as a neutral state which will be outgrown in due course. It is a highly dangerous condition because it lays them open to manipulation by cunning people and the forces of error. But it is for precisely such a situation that pastors and teachers have been provided—to prevent believers in their immaturity from falling prey to false teaching and to lead them from the instability which ends in error to the stability of the truth.<sup>69</sup>

It is essential to equip leaders, and a training program was needed to do this. In this project, HGBC pastors lead the program, like in the early church, to equip the men to prepare them for the work of ministry. This training program sought to equip men to serve in the church and help them grow in their knowledge of the Lord. It also was to prepare them to think rightly about their Christian living so they will not be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, or by craftiness in deceitful schemes, but to help the body grow.

### **Conclusion**

Men have been created and designed to lead. Leadership begins with being a disciple of Christ. In Genesis, men were created for a purpose. They were created to work and keep the garden, and to lead by providing and protecting their families. Leadership continues with disciples making other disciples. In Acts, the apostles saw the necessity to appoint other men to take on the responsibilities within the church so they could continue to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. In Ephesians, leaders were gifted to equip believers to bring maturity and unity within the church.

HGBC desires pastors to prepare men to strengthen their understanding of what it looks like to be a disciple who provides leadership within the church and at home. If the church does not have men who understand the importance of the Bible, biblical

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<sup>68</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 257.

<sup>69</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 259.

doctrines, and spiritual disciplines, then it will not have men ready to teach and serve, nor will men ready to lead at home as godly men and fathers.

The next chapter will explore the intricate sociological, theoretical, and practical aspects of preparing men for leadership roles. The chapter will examine men's various obstacles and challenges as they strive for spiritual development and leadership, particularly as Christian leaders. Furthermore, the chapter will discover the knowledge and skills necessary for men to grow as Christian leaders and consider practical insights into how men can effectively lead within the church and in their households. Finally, the chapter will survey the essential tools and processes churches must implement to equip men for leadership roles.

## CHAPTER 3

### SOCIOLOGICAL, THEORETICAL, AND PRACTICAL ISSUES FOR EQUIPPING MEN FOR LEADERSHIP

The church is responsible for equipping and positioning men as leaders in the church and the home to disciple others to advance the gospel. However, specific sociological, theoretical, and practical issues exist and must be considered as the church prepares to equip men for this leadership. Sociologically, men encounter numerous obstacles that impede their growth and spiritual development as leaders and hinder their ability to lead as Christian men within the church. Theoretically, men need to know pertinent knowledge to develop as Christians and then practically learn how to lead effectively within the church and in their households. Also, practically, churches need to provide necessary tools and processes to prepare men for leadership roles.

This chapter assesses the spiritual well-being of men and identifies the knowledge and skills necessary to become influential spiritual leaders within the church and at home. By understanding the current challenges facing men and equipping them with the tools needed, the church can empower them to lead fulfilling and spiritually enriching lives while contributing to the growth and success of the church community. This chapter will first discover the current challenges facing men and assess the spiritual well-being of men in society. Second, it will identify the knowledge and skills men need to be spiritual leaders. Third, it will examine how equipping men for spiritual leadership can be applied within the church and the home. Finally, this chapter will explore how and why churches should develop a leadership pipeline.

## Current Leadership Challenges Facing Men

As men are equipped to lead, they face certain challenges. One challenge they are confronted with is dealing with their self-perception. In her opinion essay in the *Washington Post*, staff writer and author Christine Emba says that a few years ago she noticed that young men struggled to relate to women, did not have enough friends, lacked long-term goals, and were focused more on video games and pornography. She also said the increasing visibility of the LGBTQ+ movement has made the gender dynamic seem less stable and less defined. This causes men to lack success in corporations and government, resulting in feeling demoralized and adrift. She explores this phenomenon with data and the general moods of loneliness, depression, anxiousness, and the lack of direction of a man.<sup>1</sup> This self-perception of men is also seen in the research done in 2023 concerning men. Gary Barker et al. make the following conclusions:

Men in the US are in trouble. Many feel that their futures are uncertain and their identities are threatened. But while the current situation is especially acute, this anxiety has always been built into boyhood and manhood. Told to “man up” or “be a real man,” boys and men who inevitably cannot meet the impossible, overlapping standards of toughness, self-sufficiency, dominance, and stoicism have their very identity withheld from them. Masculine norms such as these govern every aspect of men’s and boys’ lives and are woven into family life, schools, sports, and other community spaces. Such norms deprive young men of more caring alternatives, ways to confidently own their identity as caring, emotionally connected, cooperative people. Many feel totally disconnected and retreat to private lives of underachievement, underemployment, and online addiction—and to the pretense that they can go it alone. Some may find solace in misogyny and white supremacy. Certainly, too many men ignore or oppose the necessary action we all need for women’s equality and racial justice. Some men’s anger and their clinging to harmful ideas about manhood are hurting all of us.<sup>2</sup>

As men continue to face the challenge of how they look and feel about themselves, they also face the challenge of finding purpose. Canadian psychologist and author Jordan Peterson reports that, traditionally, men must figure out what they must do professionally. They must decide if it is worth living in contrast to women who know early

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Emba, “Men Are Lost. Here’s a Map Out of the Wilderness,” *Washington Post*, July 10, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/07/10/christine-emba-masculinity-new-model>.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Barker et al., “State of American Men: From Crises to Confusion to Hope,” *Equimundo*, 2023, <https://www.equimundo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/STATE-OF-AMERICAN-MEN-2023.pdf>.



on that they have responsibilities for infants and caring for them, being both biological and psychological. Peterson believes that men must take responsibility and decide to do something with their lives and that they need to understand that taking responsibility and doing something with their lives gives them purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Researchers from McGill University and the University of British Columbia conducted a recent study investigating how meaning in life decreases psychological distress among men. The study's findings suggest that a lack of meaning in life may correlate with psychological distress in men. The study was done with 364 male participants and found that those who reported feeling a great source of meaning in their lives were less likely to experience things like depression and anxiety symptoms.<sup>4</sup>

The picture of what it means to be a man today is becoming increasingly unclear, with many different organizations and groups defining manhood and their purpose in life. This plays a part not only in how men see themselves but also in how they lead. The articles and research mentioned previously come from mostly secular points of view and point out that men face leadership challenges. However, spiritual development also affects the ability of men to provide leadership. It is vital to gauge men's spiritual well-being in society and assess the current condition of men's spiritual health.

A 2021 and 2022 survey was conducted exploring the spiritual health of men and comparing the findings from 2022 to 2021.<sup>5</sup> There were five top findings:

1. Spiritual Health has been Eroding. The overall health of men is down again this year affecting marriages, families, churches and workplaces.
2. There are Signs of Life and Hope. The areas of regular Bible reading, integrity in the workplace, and balance of work and family life emerged as areas of strength in the survey.

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<sup>3</sup> Jordan Peterson, "Jordan Peterson on the Meaning of Life for Men. MUST WATCH," Alex Swan, November 4, 2017, YouTube video, 7:37, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX2ep5fCJZ8&t=252s>.

<sup>4</sup> McGill University, "How Having a Purpose in Life Can Bolster Men's Mental," *Science Blog*, September 21, 2023, [healthhttps://www.mcgill.ca/newsroom/channels/news/how-having-purpose-life-can-bolster-mens-mental-health-351137](https://www.mcgill.ca/newsroom/channels/news/how-having-purpose-life-can-bolster-mens-mental-health-351137).

<sup>5</sup> There were 821 total respondents in 2021 out of 8,493 surveyed. In 2022, there were 811 out of 7,559. The completion rate for 2021 was 9.7 percent, with an increase in 2022 to 10.7 percent.

3. Missional Priority is Fading. Areas of mission, evangelism, and outreach are typically low performers when we survey men. The erosion, however, has continued. Areas that include helping the needy, inviting people to church, and evangelism are down significantly.

4. Frustration with the Church is Real. The survey indicated a significant amount of discontent with the local church. We can surmise with some accuracy that this has been related to pandemic factors, fatigue, and fallout. Many men have not only expressed exasperation and disappointment, but some have completely disconnected from a local body of believers, no longer seeing its value or importance.

5. Men Need Help. The survey gave much evidence that not only men have been struggling, but they need and are open to help. Many tangible examples emerged, including a lack of intimacy and struggles in marriage, fathering, addictions, doubts, disappointments, and loneliness. The level of transparency and vulnerability through many of the comments was insightful. There is a hunger and desperation that Christ and the gospel can fill. There is an open door for churches to minister to men at their point of need. These are more than challenges.<sup>6</sup>

If these negative trends continue, churches will have difficulty finding men who can lead at church and within the home.

A man growing in his Christian faith is a follower of Christ who actively makes other disciples of Christ. However, many men today who claim to be followers of Christ question and are uncertain about their own beliefs. This uncertainty may be because they have never been in a discipling relationship with others, taking time to learn biblical principles and doctrines. Many men are simply going through the motions of being a Christian without living the life of a Christian. According to recent Barna research, “only one-third of Christians (36%) believe 1-on-1 discipleship relationships are significant for spiritual growth. About half of Christians (56%) consider their spiritual life to be entirely private.”<sup>7</sup> The spiritual health of men is diminishing, creating a need for a better understanding of what a disciple looks like.

In equipping men to lead, there must be a greater awareness of what leadership and discipleship looks like in the church and at home. In *Designed to Lead: The Church*

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<sup>6</sup> Dean Brenton, “The Spiritual Health of Men: 5 Trends Every Leader Should Know,” *Impactus*, September 13, 2022, <https://www.impactus.org/mens-ministry/the-spiritual-health-of-men-5-trends-every-leader-should-know/>.

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Bevere and Carey Nieuwhof, “ChurchPulse Weekly Conversations: Lisa Bevere on Discipleship Patterns,” Barna, June 22, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-bevere/>.

*and Leadership Development*, pastors and authors Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck discuss how ministry leaders often ask what to do for discipleship and leadership development. They respond that these are not mutually exclusive, saying, “Jesus did not divorce leadership development from discipleship. As He invested in the Twelve, He continually ‘discipled’ them while simultaneously developing them to be leaders.”<sup>8</sup> Churches must not settle for consumption. Instead, they must insist on a consistent conviction for discipleship where church members are being discipled and leaders are being developed. Geiger and Peck note that discipleship is part of leadership development; it is not distinct or divorced from it.<sup>9</sup>

As men today lack spiritual understanding of discipleship and leadership, the church must be willing to take the necessary steps to equip them. Leadership is about equipping men to be disciples of Christ who go and make other disciples. It equips men with the knowledge and skills to be and do both. Equipping starts by examining where men are spiritually and then teaching them biblical principles, doctrines, and spiritual disciplines. The church does not need to be afraid of teaching deep spiritual truths. In *Deep Discipleship*, pastor and author J. T. English explains that the problem with the evangelical church is it is too superficial. Symptoms like decreasing attendance, lack of mature disciples, and people leaving the church indicate that “we are not too deep but that we are too trivial.”<sup>10</sup> The idea of being superficial can also be seen in an article published by Morris Thompson, who suggests that the world needs the leadership and influence of

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<sup>8</sup> Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 153.

<sup>9</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 159.

<sup>10</sup> J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B & H, 2020), 8.

spiritual leaders committed to helping others develop spiritually and reach their true God-given potential.<sup>11</sup>

Men face various challenges in today's world, such as dealing with self-image and conflicting definitions of masculinity, as well as finding purpose and direction in life. Research also indicates that men are facing a crisis in their spiritual development. These challenges can have a significant impact on their leadership abilities. The church must empower men to understand their purpose, beliefs, and how to lead both at home and in the church. The church must embrace the challenge of guiding and equipping men to lead.

### **Identifying the Knowledge and Skills to Be a Spiritual Leader**

The section will identify the knowledge and skills needed to be a spiritual leader. English writes, "Study after study shows that Christians do not know their Bible, the basics of the faith, or how to practice spiritual disciplines."<sup>12</sup> He goes on to say that Christians are commonly "illiterate" regarding their faith, lacking basic biblical and theological knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Spiritual leadership begins by evaluating a person's spiritual health. Author J. Oswald Sanders writes in *Spiritual Leadership* that "spiritual maturity is indispensable to good leadership."<sup>14</sup> Identifying the necessary spiritual leadership knowledge and skills can start by examining the spiritual health of men in the church today. In *10 Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, professor and author Don Whitney guides Christians to ask the right questions to assist them in self-diagnosing their spiritual health, including questions about being governed by God's Word and the

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<sup>11</sup> Morris Thompson, "The Need for Spiritual Leadership," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 82.

<sup>12</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 85.

<sup>13</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 85.

<sup>14</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 44.

importance of spiritual disciplines.<sup>15</sup> Although Christians can grow spiritually in many areas, three specific areas will be explored for men to attain spiritual health. These areas include understanding the Bible, fundamental biblical doctrines, and personal spiritual disciplines.

## **Understanding the Bible**

To prepare men for leadership roles, it is first vital to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the Bible. This entails not only familiarizing oneself with the Bible but also learning how to actively engage with it. Research indicates that over the last few years, people have been disengaged with the Bible. In the State of the Bible report, the American Bible Society asked the American people for their opinions and practices relating to the Bible over the last thirteen years. The report comes out each year comparing the previous year. In the 2023 report<sup>16</sup> the researchers noted some big takeaways. The evidence suggests three things:

1. When people engage deeply with the Bible, their lives and relationships are better. In other words, they flourish.
2. Fewer people in America are engaging with the Bible. Scripture engagement is not rising, yet; it continues on a downward trajectory.
3. There are signs of hope. The Movable Middle has rebounded, and Bible disengagement has fallen in the past year.<sup>17</sup>

A few highlights from this survey can encourage and challenge churches to equip men to be more engaged with the Bible. The 2023 State of the Bible reports that in

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<sup>15</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 1.

<sup>16</sup> In 2023, the State of the Bible research team at American Bible Society collaborated with the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago to design and field a nationally representative survey of American adults on topics related to the Bible, faith, and the church. The study was conducted in English and presented both online and via telephone to NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel, using an eighteen-minute questionnaire. The study produced 2,761 responses from a representative sample of adults eighteen and older within all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Data were collected January 5–30, 2023. The margin of error for a sample of this size is  $\pm 2.59$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Fulks, Randy Peterson, and John Farquhar Plake, *State of the Bible USA 2023* (Philadelphia: American Bible Society, December 2023), vii, e-book

corelating hope and scripture engagement “those who read the Bible regularly, who live and think according to its teaching, find resources that keep them going, even in tough times.”<sup>18</sup> When it comes to Bible use, both in 2022 and 2023, only “two in five Americans (39%) were Bible users,”<sup>19</sup> which was a ten-point drop from 2021.<sup>20</sup> The survey also revealed that women are more likely to read their Bible than men. This can be seen in the statistics of the study indicating that 41 percent of women are Bible users, in contrast to only 36 percent of men.<sup>21</sup>

The findings from the report on Scripture engagement<sup>22</sup> also saw changes over the last few years. In 2022, “only 49 million Americans were Scripture Engaged,” compared to the 64 million Americans in 2021, and the survey from 2023 showed that 47 million Americans were Scripture engaged, showing that “once again fewer than one in five Americans (18%) are Scripture Engaged.”<sup>23</sup> These findings should open the eyes of churches and challenge pastors to equip members to be more engaged with the Bible.

One question in Whitney’s book on spiritual health concerns governing God’s Word in one’s life. He says that many Christians go to church each Sunday, and as years pass by, there is no recollection of changes in beliefs or practices because of discoveries in their Bibles. They still hold the same beliefs they did years ago and cannot explain how their understanding of Scripture has developed and grown more profound. They bring their Bible to church but cannot recall when it last impacted their daily life.<sup>24</sup>

Pastors should be deeply troubled by the prospect of men reading the Bible without

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<sup>18</sup> Fulks, Peterson, and Plake, *State of the Bible USA 2023*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> The report defines “Bible users” as those who use the Bible three or more times per year.

<sup>20</sup> Fulks, Peterson, and Plake, *State of the Bible USA 2023*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Fulks, Peterson, and Plake, *State of the Bible USA 2023*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> The report defines “Scripture Engagement” as consistent interaction with the Bible that shapes people’s choices and transforms their relationships with God, self, and others.

<sup>23</sup> Fulks, Peterson, and Plake, *State of the Bible USA 2023*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, 25.

experiencing spiritual growth. In *How to Study the Bible*, theologian Richard Mayhue writes, “I’ve come to one basic conclusion about such believers: their statement of faith is not necessarily in error, nor have they necessarily abandoned the faith. Rather, feeding on the Word of God is not a personal reality for them. That is why we need to commit ourselves to feed on the Bible.”<sup>25</sup>

A 2022 Gallup poll surveyed Americans and their view of the Bible and concluded that only 20 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the exact and literal Word of God, which is a record low. According to recent data, this number has dropped from 24 percent in 2017 and is only half of what it was at its peak in 1980 and 1984. A new high of 29 percent now views the Bible as a collection of “fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man.”<sup>26</sup> The survey also showed that, of Americans who identified as Christians, only 58 percent believe the Bible is divinely inspired, but not all of the Bible is literal. Out of the Christians who identified as Protestants, only 30 percent say the Bible is true.<sup>27</sup>

This research clearly shows that Christians within the church have varying views on the Bible and thus need to be equipped to be engaged with the Bible and to have a deep and thorough understanding of the Bible. The engagement and even study of the Bible gives greater insight into the cultural and historical context in which it was written, which can help one better fathom its message and meaning. Accepting the message and meaning of the Bible allows one to comprehend the significance of the teachings and principles outlined and how they apply to lives today. According to Psalm 119, a faithful follower of Christ does not simply admire the Word of God but loves the Word of God.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Mayhue, *How to Study the Bible* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1997), 188.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Newport, “Fewer in U.S. Now See Bible as Literal Word of God,” Gallup, July 26, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/394262/fewer-bible-literal-word-god.aspx>.

<sup>27</sup> Newport, “Fewer in U.S. Now See Bible as Literal Word of God.”

<sup>28</sup> Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, 26.

A love for the Bible and a better understanding of the Bible leads to a more profound appreciation and knowledge of biblical doctrines.

### **Biblical Doctrine**

It is imperative for men not only to have a better understanding of the Bible but also to study it and learn biblical doctrines. Theologian J. I. Packer says in *Knowing God* that one can stumble through life blindfolded when one disregards the study of God.<sup>29</sup> He says true religion involves seeing and living life in the light of God's Word.<sup>30</sup> In studying the Bible, men need to be equipped to know the different doctrines of the Bible to help build a foundation for what they believe. Pastor Thabiti M. Anyabwile says a marker of a healthy church member is for that member to be a theologian, which helps churches prosper in terms of health.<sup>31</sup> He goes on to say that a healthy church member should seek to know God, know what God says about himself in the Bible, and know and understand the doctrines of the Bible as they reveal how God redeems his people.<sup>32</sup>

One issue today in examining the spiritual health of individuals and biblical doctrines is that many people are not clear about what is meant when someone mentions the word gospel. In *What Is the Gospel?*, author and pastor Greg Gilbert talks about an article that raised questions about the good news of Christianity. Through this article and the responses to this article, Gilbert learned that Christians cannot seem to agree on what is meant when the term gospel is used.<sup>33</sup> One such belief about the gospel is what is now called the prosperity gospel. Lifeway research found that those eighteen to thirty-four (63%) and thirty-five to forty-nine (66%)—are more likely than older churchgoers—

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<sup>29</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 19.

<sup>30</sup> Packer, *Knowing God*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 27.

<sup>32</sup> Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 17, Kindle.



those fifty to sixty-four (53%) and over sixty-five (31%) to believe that God will bless you if they give more money to charities and the church.<sup>34</sup>

A 2020 survey by Arizona Christian University found that United States adults today embrace a “salvation-can-be-earned” perspective, unlike generations past, with 48 percent believing that if a person is generally good during their life, they will “earn” a home in Heaven. It goes on to say that only one-third of American adults (35%) continue to believe that salvation comes through the sacrificial death of Jesus.<sup>35</sup> The President of Arizona Christian University, Len Munsil, says the problem is the deficiency of fundamental Christian theology with possible disturbing consequences for individuals as they believe this false notion that people can earn their way to heaven rather than accepting the truth that Christ alone is the basis for salvation.<sup>36</sup>

The findings within this research also reveal that views of sin and salvation have saturated the American culture so significantly that a majority of people who define themselves as Christian (52%) acknowledge a “works-oriented” means to God’s acceptance. Even more shocking, many people who attend churches where the official doctrine says salvation only comes from acceptance of Jesus Christ as savior still believe that a person can go to Heaven by doing good things or being good. This includes adults attending churches that are Pentecostal (46%), mainline Protestant (44%), and evangelical (41%). Those who claim to be Catholic (70%) also share that point of view.

Research shows that many professing Christians rely on their good works for salvation. And this is a false gospel. Christian author Jerry Bridges says that even those

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<sup>34</sup> Marissa Postell Sullivan, “Prosperity Gospel Beliefs on the Rise among Churchgoers,” Lifeway, August 22, 2023, <https://research.lifeway.com/2023/08/22/prosperity-gospel-beliefs-on-the-rise-among-churchgoers/>.

<sup>35</sup> Tracey Munsil, “AWVI 2020 Survey: 1 in 3 US Adults Embrace Salvation through Jesus; More Believe It Can Be ‘Earned,’” Arizona Christian University, August 4, 2020, <https://www.arizonachristian.edu/2020/08/04/1-in-3-us-adults-embrace-salvation-through-jesus-more-believe-it-can-be-earned/>.

<sup>36</sup> Munsil, “AWVI 2020 Survey.”

who follow Christ tend to relapse to a works-based relationship with God, thinking they earn God's approval and blessings through daily actions.<sup>37</sup> More of the research findings say that only half of United States adults (56%) try to avoid sinning because they believe it offends God. In examining these statistics, Barna says that people have an "anything goes" mindset with their lifestyle: "By abandoning our moral standards and traditions, and replacing them with inclusive and conditional preferences, we are losing the foundations that have enabled the 'American experiment' to succeed for more than two centuries."<sup>38</sup> The church that embraces and upholds authentic biblical doctrines, particularly the gospel, can significantly contribute to spiritual growth.<sup>39</sup>

Being an effective spiritual leader is to recognize biblical doctrines. President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Albert Mohler, says that leadership needs to be convictional, and this quality comes from core beliefs that shape each person and establish beliefs about everything else. These convictions are "bedrock beliefs" and show one how to lead.<sup>40</sup> He defines conviction as a belief that is not influenced but is the truth, critical, and life-changing, for which one is willing to die.<sup>41</sup> Geiger and Peck explain that church leaders must be consumed with a hunger for the Word of God and be surrendered and devoted to it. Equipping men for leadership means the church is teaching biblical doctrines, and that if the church does not produce leaders who know, protect, and teach sound doctrine, then leaders will incorrectly give others their own views and practices.<sup>42</sup> Pastors should be concerned by the lack of knowing biblical doctrines among churchgoers.

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<sup>37</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2012), 788, Kindle

<sup>38</sup> Munsil, "AWVI 2020 Survey."

<sup>39</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 218.

<sup>40</sup> Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matter* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2012), 21.

<sup>41</sup> Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 22.

<sup>42</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 94.

## Spiritual Disciplines

Men need to be equipped to understand the Bible, know biblical doctrines, and practice spiritual disciplines. Disciplines help build habits over time. The word (or concept) “discipline” often conjures associations with physical fitness, athletic activities, or structured institutions such as the armed forces. Men need help implementing discipline in various aspects of their lives. An article published by the Army & Navy Academy on the benefits of discipline for young men says it is crucial to have discipline in every area of life that focuses on self-control, inner strength, and the capacity to manage actions and reactions. The article also mentions that young men who lack discipline find it harder to accomplish goals and ambitions, but with discipline, young men can follow a path of accomplishment and overcome hurdles in life when they possess the right skills.<sup>43</sup> Leadership involves having good discipline. People will never be qualified to lead if they are disordered, slothful, or dissent against authority and ridicule self-discipline.<sup>44</sup>

Equipping men to be leaders in the church is more than having some essential discipline in their lives; it means having spiritual discipline. Pastor and author Kent Hughes discusses the idea of discipline, saying it is everything, and without it one will never go anywhere. He says that in some areas, such as athletics, arts, or academics, some may have an advantage biologically. Yet, with spiritual disciplines, no one can claim an advantage, going so far as to say everyone is equally disadvantaged.<sup>45</sup> Bible reading, prayer, and evangelism are some basic spiritual disciplines that will not come naturally to men. The church needs to equip men to put into practice spiritual disciplines for the purpose of spiritual growth. The growth is in holiness, which means forming habits that set up men to produce godliness. Spiritual disciplines are coming to God regularly, encountering him and the Word, and becoming more like Christ, which can be compared

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<sup>43</sup> “Why Discipline Is Beneficial for Young Men,” Army & Navy Academy, accessed January, 19, 2024, <https://www.armyandnavyacademy.org/blog/why-discipline-is-beneficial-for-young-men/>.

<sup>44</sup> Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 52.

<sup>45</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 15.

to coming to a river to drink, dive, swim, wash, and eat.<sup>46</sup> In his book *Habits of Grace*, pastor and author David Mathis says that Christians need to take consistent action to get more of God in the mind and heart, making one more godly.<sup>47</sup> He also says that the grace of God supplies the energy for spiritual disciplines, giving believers the power to work and expend spiritual effort.<sup>48</sup> English says that it is essential for Christians to go deeper into fellowship with God through the practice of distinctly Christian habits. Habits of the world shape and form people, and the church must offer counter rhythms and habits that form them into the people of God.<sup>49</sup>

In a summary of identifying the knowledge and skills needed to be spiritual leaders, men must better understand the Bible and biblical doctrines. As can be seen in the research mentioned in this section, Christians are not engaged with the Bible, and there is a lack of knowledge of what they believe. A greater comprehension of the Bible can lead to a formative life of spiritual growth. Practicing spiritual disciplines can also lead men to experience growth in personal holiness. A combination of knowledge of the Bible and biblical doctrines and the skill of practicing spiritual disciplines can strengthen men to be leaders in the church and within the home.

### **Spiritual Leadership Happens within the Church and the Home**

Equipping men for spiritual growth puts them in a position to be spiritual leaders both in the church and within the home. Equipping men for leadership entails a deep comprehension of being a follower of Christ, which includes a thorough understanding of the Bible, a firm grasp of biblical doctrine, and proficiency in spiritual disciplines. As men

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<sup>46</sup> Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, 93.

<sup>47</sup> David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus Through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 27.

<sup>48</sup> Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 28.

<sup>49</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 124–25.

are equipped for spiritual leadership in this way, they can serve as influential leaders and disciple others. Being a disciple of Christ and making disciples happens, as Colin Marshall and Tony Payne explain,

Wherever the word and Spirit of God are at work over time through people—because that is how “learning” Christ takes place. It happens at the very beginning of our Christian lives as we are delivered from darkness into light, and as we learn the foundations of the faith; and it continues to happen as we grow and are transformed towards maturity in Christ. This means that “discipling” can and should happen in any and every sphere of our lives.<sup>50</sup>

More specifically, pastor and author Voddie Baucham Jr., in his book *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes*, lays out what he calls the “three-legged stool” of discipleship, which includes both discipleship that happens in the church and within the home. The three supports are “(1) godly, mature men and women in the church; (2) godly, manly pastors and elders; and (3) biblically functioning homes.”<sup>51</sup> He goes on to say the stool is to help believers and their children grow in maturity as the three legs “support, constrain, shape, and protect” them.<sup>52</sup> Baucham provides a summary, explaining how pastors should teach sound doctrine and equip godly men and women in the church. The aim is to help mature believers pour their lives into younger Christians and demonstrate godliness and maturity. Ultimately, this will enable younger Christians to disciple their families as well.<sup>53</sup> Men can provide leadership and be disciple-makers in two key areas: the church and the home.

### **Leadership in the Church**

The first key area where men who have been equipped can provide leadership is within the church community. Leadership in the church starts with making disciples.

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<sup>50</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Vine Project: Shaping Your Ministry Culture around Disciple Making*, 2nd ed. (Sydney, Australia: Matthias, 2021), 122.

<sup>51</sup> Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 28.

<sup>52</sup> Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 28.

<sup>53</sup> Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 30.

Pastor and church theologian Mark Dever says that Christians should look to disciple others within the fellowship of the local church.<sup>54</sup> Dever emphasizes that being a disciple involves discipling others. Helping others grow in maturity is a way of growing in maturity in oneself. It is not merely about meeting needs and being equipped, but also caring for others.<sup>55</sup>

A pastor's role involves equipping men to become spiritual leaders. This includes guiding them on how to make disciples in various areas of the church. One of the first places men can use their spiritual leadership skills is in roles such as Bible study teachers or deacons. In these roles, they can impart knowledge and wisdom to others, guide them in their spiritual journey, and help them grow in their faith. English says in looking at Ephesians 4:12 that primary discipleship means building more disciples in the local church. He also notes that "every believer is called to ministry and service in the local church."<sup>56</sup> The whole church does ministry, not just the staff.<sup>57</sup> In describing healthy church members, pastor Thabiti M. Anyabwile writes that a dedicated church member lives out what the Bible says by giving "resources, time, and talent to the furtherance of the gospel" and works "to support the ministry of the local church and excels in giving what he has already received from God to gospel work."<sup>58</sup> Geiger and Peck explain that as church members give their time and resources to serve, church pastors must equip and encourage these leaders by developing models of character, guardians of doctrine, shepherds of care, and champions for the mission.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 19, Kindle.

<sup>55</sup> Dever, *Discipling*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 164.

<sup>57</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 164.

<sup>58</sup> Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, 70.

<sup>59</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 104.

## Leadership in the Home

The second key area where men who have been equipped can provide leadership is within the home. The home is a vulnerable institution that external factors can significantly impact. It is a place where communal life, marriages, and child-rearing can be challenged. However, it also presents an opportunity to apply the teachings of the Bible and be a follower of Christ in family life. The home is a crucial context for leadership, where discipleship can happen and can have a transformative effect on relationships. Ministry in the home is a pathway for family members to engage, share the gospel, and encourage each other toward maturity in Christ.<sup>60</sup>

One area of leadership in the home is within the context of marriage. Pastor, author, and theologian John Piper states, “Headship is the divine calling of a husband to take primary responsibility for Christlike, servant leadership, protection, and provision in the home.”<sup>61</sup> Leadership is about taking responsibility, while protection and provision are two central aspects of it. A husband’s leadership ensures that his family is safeguarded and cared for. Thus, protection and provision are not separate from leadership; they are two fundamental areas where the husband is primarily responsible.<sup>62</sup> Men are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Baucham explains that in understanding and living marriage through the lens of Christ, the cross, and the kingdom, men should understand the crucial nature of leading in the role of husband and father.<sup>63</sup> He says that one purpose for men in marriage is to actively seek their wives’ sanctification by loving them.<sup>64</sup> Piper notes that the husband is uniquely responsible for his wife’s moral and spiritual growth.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Vine Project*, 112.

<sup>61</sup> John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 84.

<sup>62</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 84.

<sup>63</sup> Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 83.

<sup>64</sup> Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 84.

<sup>65</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 66.

He goes on to say that this sanctification can happen over time as the husband acts like Christ yet knows he is not Christ, as the wife seeks conformity to Christ and not her husband, and as the husband lives in humility and dies to himself daily for her.<sup>66</sup>

Leadership within the home also happens as men lead in the discipleship of their children. Many churches teach that parents are primarily responsible for discipling their children within the home. The church's role is to equip and empower the parents to carry out this responsibility effectively. This approach ensures that discipleship is not limited to the church but extends to the home, where parents can take on the great commission. By training and supporting parents, the church enables them to create an environment where spiritual growth and development can occur within the home. This approach creates a holistic approach to discipleship, where parents can disciple their children in all areas of life.<sup>67</sup>

While parents are the primary disciple-makers of their children, parents often do not feel equipped to disciple their children. An article in *Outreach Magazine* says that according to research from George Barna, most parents do not feel equipped to disciple their children, and few parents think about the spiritual development of their children.<sup>68</sup> According to Barna, "Only 1 percent of preteen children have a biblical worldview, and less than 10 percent of born-again Christians have any kind of spiritual development plan in place, and less than six out of ten (58 percent) even claim that their children's spiritual development is their responsibility."<sup>69</sup> Barna also notes that the result is "that the vast majority of children today are not being discipled effectively during the critical childhood years. Thus, they are increasingly lacking in fundamental elements of spiritual

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<sup>66</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 67.

<sup>67</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 174.

<sup>68</sup> George Barna, "Research: Parents Feel Ill-Equipped to Disciple Kids," *Outreach Magazine*, October 2, 2023, <https://outreachmagazine.com/resources/77641-research-parents-feel-ill-equipped-to-disciple-kids.html>.

<sup>69</sup> Barna, "Research: Parents Feel Ill-Equipped to Disciple Kids."



understanding and commitment that allow them to know and follow Jesus as adults.”<sup>70</sup> While parents need to be reminded that this discipleship begins early in the family, the church must find ways to equip parents to disciple their children. In *Family Discipleship*, Pastor Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin state the purpose of the home is to make “eternal deposits in your children” and that the family is the primary instrument in creating an environment for discipleship in a child’s life.<sup>71</sup> Baucham says that discipleship in the home begins with parents constantly and consistently proclaiming the good news, reminding themselves and their families about Jesus, the cross, and grace.<sup>72</sup> He notes that parents need to be reminded to proclaim the good news at home repeatedly, reminding their children of this “Christ-centered, cross-centered, grace-centered message.”<sup>73</sup>

Preparing men for spiritual growth is a crucial aspect as it equips them to serve as spiritual leaders both within their families and the church community. While all believers are called to serve the church, men can be specifically trained for roles such as deacons and teachers and may even be called upon to serve as elders or pastors in the future. At home, it is essential for men to provide leadership as they hold the responsibility of providing for and protecting their families. Furthermore, if they have children, they must disciple them, proclaim the gospel, and teach them about the Bible. It is imperative for the church to continue to equip men for spiritual leadership to assist them in leading within the church and providing the required leadership in their homes.

### **A Leadership Pipeline Is Needed to Develop Men**

In equipping men for leadership, the final goal is to research the practical issue of why and how churches should have a process in place for developing leaders. The

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<sup>70</sup> Barna, “Research: Parents Feel Ill-Equipped to Disciple Kids.”

<sup>71</sup> Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, & Milestones* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 29.

<sup>72</sup> Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 62.

<sup>73</sup> Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 62.

process in many organizations is called a leadership pipeline, which is needed both in the secular workplace and in the church. Geiger and Peck write, “A leadership pipeline is a helpful construct that aids in systematically and intentionally developing leaders.”<sup>74</sup> Neil Khaund, writing for Forbes magazine on how to create a leadership pipeline within a business, says that a strategy for a leadership pipeline can nurture talent at every level of a company, making it so that employees are instantly available when the need for new leaders arises taking a systematic approach that every time a promotion is available, there are already many interested candidates, but also trained with leadership skills.<sup>75</sup> A leadership pipeline can also be described as a church process that gives ministry leaders clear steps on what is next in their development.<sup>76</sup> The church must provide a leadership pipeline that prepares and equips church members and gives clear directions on next steps. Two questions will be examined next concerning a leadership pipeline: why and how?

### **Why a Leadership Pipeline**

The first question is, “Why does there need to be a leadership pipeline?” Geiger and Peck say there must be steps for members “to mature and develop as leaders” and not just have broad, visionary language to define leadership development and discipleship.<sup>77</sup> They compare it to giving people a menu or a map. The menu lists every training program the church has, and then people can choose what they want versus a map that reveals a strategy to move people in their faith to greater maturity.<sup>78</sup> Churches need a map to provide for men being equipped.

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<sup>74</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 186.

<sup>75</sup> Neil Khaund, “How to Create an In-House Leadership Pipeline,” *Forbes*, March 27, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/03/27/how-to-create-an-in-house-leadership-pipeline/?sh=76f457a25e08>.

<sup>76</sup> Todd Adkins, “How a Leadership Pipeline Creates a Recruiting Culture,” *Ministry Grid*, May 16, 2018, <https://ministrygrid.com/how-a-leadership-pipeline-creates-a-recruiting-culture/>.

<sup>77</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 181.

<sup>78</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 200.

According to Geiger, there are multiple benefits when a church has a leadership pipeline. A pipeline develops clarity, gives a visible picture of how leaders are being developed, helps with succession planning, ensures leaders are equipped to move into a role, helps pastors know the skills and character of the leaders being trained, and helps influence within the ministry to expand.<sup>79</sup> In many ways, a leadership pipeline is purely an addition to the church’s discipleship ministry, leading members toward a richer commitment to Christ and a greater desire to serve.<sup>80</sup>

English says a system of spaces for training men to be spiritual leaders allows the Holy Spirit to grow mature disciples. If this space is not provided within the church, the chances of losing people will increase. The men being equipped should always know what opportunity is available for them and what the next step in this leadership pipeline is.<sup>81</sup> English states that the church should have steps to move people “from student to teacher, from infant to adult, from milk to meat.”<sup>82</sup>

### **How to Produce a Leadership Pipeline**

The next question is, “How does the church produce a leadership pipeline?” Geiger and Peck explain that a leadership pipeline within a church is where the leader is in a group, leads others by leading a group, leads leaders by shepherding a group of leaders, and leads ministries by directing a ministry area.<sup>83</sup> They go on to say that developing and implementing a pipeline takes intentionality in how the church will develop leaders and “intensity expressed in persistence and not just being loud.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Eric Geiger, “Four Reasons You Need a Leadership Pipeline,” October 22, 2015, <https://ericgeiger.com/2015/10/22/four-reasons-you-need-a-leadership-pipeline/>.

<sup>80</sup> Arvind Balaram, “Building a Leadership Pipeline in Your Church,” The Gospel Coalition, November 7, 2023, <https://in.thegospelcoalition.org/article/building-a-leadership-pipeline-in-your-church/>.

<sup>81</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 138–39.

<sup>82</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 143.

<sup>83</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 187.

<sup>84</sup> Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 190.

Tony Morgan encourages an action plan to develop one's Theology of Leadership in developing leaders. He outlines,

1. Identify growing leaders. Don't broadcast this opportunity. Invite people through one-on-one conversations. Find people who are already influencing others.
2. Gather the group. Don't meet with growing leaders individually—do it in a group. Learning is always better when it's interactive and in community with others.
3. Establish an end date. Meet once a month for a pre-established time period (six months, eight months, or a full year), identifying when mentoring ends and putting knowledge into action begins.
4. Start with the Bible. Use this as an opportunity to talk about healthy spiritual disciplines.
5. Read through one leadership book each month. Stay focused. This mentoring group is about leadership development.
6. Talk about current leadership challenges. Use "pressure points" at the workplace, at home, and in ministry to shape the conversation each month.
7. Multiply the group. Challenge every person to repeat the previous six steps with another group of growing leaders. Over time you'll find this investment in other leaders will actually help you grow as a leader as well. Also, to put this bluntly, if you are not intentionally mentoring other leaders, you are not leading like Jesus.<sup>85</sup>

Morgan also says leaders who empower the people around them believe it is not necessarily about the leader but more about those being led and more about the synergy of the body.<sup>86</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne discuss how when the development of leaders starts, it will almost certainly mean initially investing in a small number of current or potential leaders who can help in equipping others. This kind of learning is personal and transformational. In practical terms, this may mean investing a year or more in the individual or a small group of people, where leaders can emerge with the heart and skills to help you equip others.<sup>87</sup> Sanders says leadership training cannot be done on a mass scale. It requires patience, careful instruction, and prayerful personal guidance over

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<sup>85</sup> Tony Morgan, *Developing a Theology of Leadership* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011), 9, Kindle.

<sup>86</sup> Morgan, *Developing a Theology of Leadership*, 6.

<sup>87</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Vine Project*, 278.

time.<sup>88</sup> In an article published by Robert E. Logan, the path of leadership development is where pastors can serve as a guide for men who want to develop their leadership. Logan goes on to say that these men want to go somewhere to achieve something and are willing to pay the price to see and learn how pastors navigate leadership. Pastors need to show these men a progression, offer support, aim, and help them deal with problems.<sup>89</sup>

After looking at why and how a church should develop a leadership pipeline, it should be noted that even as men are equipped to serve in the church and within the home, the pipeline also equips leaders to have the potential and desire to be sent out from the church to other parts of the world. A leadership pipeline assists in finding people with the gifts, character, and training to be sent out as full-time workers. The pipeline can help export men from the church to go into the ministry elsewhere.<sup>90</sup> God calls each believer to have a vocation to be a disciple of Christ and commissioned by God to offer up their lives to serve the Lord. When disciples are trained to be disciple-makers, there can be a discovery of godly gifted people who could conceivably be ministry leaders with the opportunity, obligation, and stewardship to proclaim the gospel and lead a church.<sup>91</sup> A leadership pipeline can practically assist the church in taking men equipped for leadership and putting them within a process that provides a clear next step to serve within the church and their home and potentially become full-time pastors and missionaries.

### **Conclusion**

Several sociological issues pose challenges in preparing men for leadership roles. Men's self-perception and self-worth can lead to uncertainty about their life purpose.

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<sup>88</sup> Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 153.

<sup>89</sup> Robert E. Logan, "The Path of Leadership," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 11, no. 1 (2019): 72.

<sup>90</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Vine Project*, 285.

<sup>91</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Sydney, Australia: Matthias, 2009), 130.

This can also cause Christian men to struggle with their spiritual leadership due to a lack of growth in their spiritual health. Therefore, churches must equip men with the fundamental knowledge of the Bible, biblical doctrine, and spiritual disciplines. Providing men with the proper knowledge and tools can enable them to lead in the church and their homes. The church can also offer the appropriate process to prepare men and guide them in their leadership development by providing clear next steps.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to develop a training program to equip men for leadership at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. This chapter outlines the methodology for implementing this training program. The first goal of this project was to assess the current knowledge and practice of men in leadership within the church and at home. The goal was measured by administering a Spiritual Leadership Knowledge pre-survey before the start of the second semester of the training program. The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to establish a biblical framework for equipping men to lead. The goal was measured using the Curriculum Evaluation Tool by HGBC pastoral team members. The third goal was to implement the training program to increase the knowledge and practice of leadership among men of HGBC. The goal was measured by administering a post-survey to measure the change in leadership knowledge and practices in the church and home. Additionally, the goal was measured by a focus group of the men who completed the training program to answer questions regarding the program's overall effectiveness.

This project entailed preparing and implementing a training program to equip men for leadership. The project preparation began by identifying a need for this program after evaluating the men of HGBC and their overall spiritual well-being and leadership in the church and at home. It also involved the development of the program by writing, evaluating, and printing the curriculum and inviting a group of men to be involved. The implementation of this program involved small group teaching sessions, along with a celebration, survey, and focus group, to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

## Preparation

Preparation of this project began with an overall conviction of the spiritual condition of men and their leadership within my church. Growing up at HGBC as a child and teenager, and then joining the staff as a pastor has always given me a love and passion for this church. I have always desired to see the church grow as people were saved and discipleship occurred. Over the years of ministry, as I have spent time with church members and had many counseling sessions with individuals and couples, I learned that many people who have grown up in church lack spiritual knowledge and discipline. I witnessed how this affected men's leadership in the church and home. I began to ask men if they knew what it meant to be a disciple of Christ and a disciple-maker. As I watched faithful church leaders either pass away or relocate to other cities and churches and observed the profound impact of COVID-19 on the church community, I felt increasingly compelled to see men rightly equipped to grow spiritually and take on leadership roles within the church and their homes. Questions arose for me about who would guide the church in the next decade or two and what comprehensive leadership development strategies were in place for men. Additionally, I became increasingly concerned about the need for men to lead well within their homes.

Over the past two years, two influential books on leadership have been *Deep Discipleship* by J. T. English and *Designed to Lead* by Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck.<sup>1</sup> These books highlight the significance of preparing Christians to deepen their discipleship and take on leadership roles. I have committed to addressing the growing lack of leadership and determined to work alongside HGBC pastors to equip others for ministry. Creating a training program to equip men for spiritual growth and leadership would help prepare men to do the work of ministry. English writes, “Ministers and pastors and leaders aren’t called

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<sup>1</sup> J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B & H, 2020); Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016).



to do all the ministry for the congregation but to serve and prepare the congregation so the so-called amateurs can carry out the work of the ministry.”<sup>2</sup>

After conducting extensive research into the current spiritual landscape of Americans, specifically focusing on men’s spiritual state, I identified three fundamental areas in which men need to be equipped. These include fostering a deeper understanding of the Bible, a comprehensive knowledge of biblical doctrines, and a firm grasp of spiritual disciplines. These three core teachings substantively impact how men lead at church and at home. Through in-depth study, thorough research, and extensive reading, I produced a specialized program to guide men within the church community to become influential leaders both in their church and within their households.

This innovative training program comprised multiple small groups of men, each personally led by dedicated pastors from HGBC. These small groups met monthly over an eight-month period. Upon completing the program, a gathering of all the groups titled “The Refinery Celebration” took place to commemorate this significant milestone and provide a final challenge to the men as they conclude their transformative journey. The name of the training program itself, “The Refinery,” is intended to signify the process through which men will experience spiritual refining and strengthening throughout the eight-month immersive training program.

The participant curriculum took the groups through eight sessions over two semesters, leading men through eight different books and eight different Bible studies focused on areas of spiritual development along with biblical and practical ways to lead in the church and at home. The first-semester curriculum (September–December) focused on the Bible, doctrine, and spiritual disciplines. The second-semester curriculum (January–April) focused on leadership in the church and home. Session titles included the following: (1) Leaders Examine; (2) Leaders Love the Gospel; (3) Leaders Learn the Bible;

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<sup>2</sup> English, *Deep Discipleship*, 69.

(4) Leaders Practice Disciplines; (5) Leaders Develop Sound Doctrine; (6) Leaders Desire a Healthy Home; (7) Leaders Serve a Healthy Church; and (8) Leaders Make Disciples.

I chose books based on the topics that best represented each session. The books chosen included (1) *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* by Don Whitney; (2) *What Is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert; (3) *How to Study Your Bible* by Richard Mayhue; (4) *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* by David Mathis; (5) *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* by Wayne Grudem; (6) *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* by Voddie Baucham Jr.; (7) *What Is a Healthy Church?* by Mark Dever; and (8) *Discipling* by Mark Dever.<sup>3</sup> *Don't Waste Your Life* by John Piper was given to all men at the Refinery Celebration.<sup>4</sup> I developed a leader guide to help pastors teach and guide their groups. It contained additional notes, commentary, and an overview of the learning outcomes for each session. I also developed a learner guide for each participant, including a session outline and extra space to take notes.

After I wrote the curriculum, I gave it to four HGBC pastors, each having a doctorate degree, to evaluate and offer feedback, including the Associate Pastor of Ministries, Head of School, Adult Discipleship Pastor, and Discipleship Pastor. They utilized the Curriculum Evaluation Tool as a rubric to assess the curriculum's biblical accuracy, teaching methodology, scope, pedagogy, and practicality, and to provide feedback.<sup>5</sup> Once final edits were made for both the leader and learner books, I gave them

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<sup>3</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Richard Mayhue, *How to Study the Bible* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1997); David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016); Wayne Grudem *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022); Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007); Mark Dever, *Discipling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 2.

to the HGBC graphic design department to develop booklets for each. I asked the graphic designer to create a logo to brand the program by looking up the definition of “refinery” or “refine” to give some ideas for the design and look of the logo.

The Refinery program was not advertised to the church publicly. Instead, in August of 2023, each pastor was tasked to find and recruit four to six men to participate in the program with the first session beginning in September 2023. The men were to be active HGBC members but not necessarily active in serving. I sent an initial email to all the pastors leading a group to ask who they were going to invite, giving them an overview of the program and instructions on how the groups would be formed.<sup>6</sup> After receiving the names of potential men whom the pastors would be inviting, I sent another email with updates to the pastors.<sup>7</sup> I attached a document that included a list of the books we would be going through and a sample invitation document that they could use.<sup>8</sup> I sent a final email to the pastors at the end of August before their first meeting.<sup>9</sup> Men were invited by the pastors and told that this group would meet from September to May, the group would consist of four to six men, and the following was expected of participants: (1) attendance (eight sessions); (2) book reading (one each month); (3) Scripture memorization; and (4) Bible reading and daily posts. Once all the men confirmed their commitment to being a part of a group, a list was compiled of all participants. Before the first session began in September, each group member was given a copy of the first book and was challenged to have it read and be ready for the discussion for the first meeting.

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix 4.

<sup>7</sup> See appendix 5.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix 6.

<sup>9</sup> See appendix 7.

## Implementation

Sixteen groups began meeting in September of 2023 and continued over the next eight months, starting with seventy-eight men. There were between three and six participants in each group. Groups met once a month for one to two hours, with each group deciding when and where they would meet. Groups met at the church, someone's home, a restaurant, or a coffee house. Some pastors provided food each time the group met. I would email the pastors (group leaders) each month to give an overview of the upcoming session, along with a few other pertinent reminders.<sup>10</sup> There was flexibility in the monthly meetings. If a group was unable to meet in a certain month, they could schedule a new date as close as possible to that month, while making sure there was enough time between meetings for everyone to read the book.

In the first meeting for each group, the men were given the learner guide. The structure consisted of the following: an introduction of the program along with an introduction time of themselves, a book discussion of the first book, a Bible study, and a list of group expectations, and concluded with a list of assignments. The introduction time served to not only have each participant convey who they were and where they were from but also to articulate their personal gospel testimony. The first assignment given to the men was to post each day what they read in their Bible reading in a group text created for communication and daily postings. This was to show the men the importance of daily Bible reading and that there would be some accountability.

For the remaining group meetings, each session was structured with an introduction, Bible Study, book discussion, accountability time, current Scripture memory, and challenge. At the end of each session, the men were given their assignments, which included the book reading, posting their Bible reading, memorizing the next verses, and the next challenge. At each session, men were given the next book and instructed to read and be ready to discuss the next time. Many men were not used to reading much, so in

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<sup>10</sup> See appendix 8.

assigning the books to read, the curriculum includes a suggested calendar for reading. For example, week 1 read chapters 1–3, week 2 read chapters 4–6, and so on.

The program was divided into two semesters. The first semester was September to December, with the men reading books and discussing their spiritual growth. The second semester was January to April, with men reading books and discussing leadership in the home and the church. In early January, I sent a survey to the men focused on their current understanding of home and church leadership.<sup>11</sup> Also in January, an email invitation to the Refinery Celebration was sent out from the Senior Associate Pastor, inviting each man to participate in this celebration in May.<sup>12</sup> The original plan was to have the email sent from the Senior Pastor and for him to speak at the celebration, but he had something come up and was out of town.

The eight months ended with the Refinery celebration for all participants who had completed the training. This celebration was held on the church property in an outdoor pavilion and included outdoor games, dinner, and a challenge from the Senior Associate Pastor. I opened the evening up with a welcome and prayer before we ate BBQ for dinner. The Senior Associate Pastor then stood before the men, reminding them of the purpose of The Refinery and why they were asked to be a part of this program. Then, two men, who were asked to share weeks before, stood up and quoted Ephesians 2:1–10 from memory. They both did exceptionally well. Finally, the Senior Associate Pastor finished the evening with a final challenge, and each man was given a hat with The Refinery logo and the church logo as a gift and a final book to read on their own time (*Don't Waste Your Life* by Piper). The celebration lasted a little over one hour. Immediately following the celebration, the post-survey was sent out to the men.

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<sup>11</sup> A survey was sent out in August before the groups began to meet but the questions had not been approved. After talking to Dr. Haste, it was decided that a new survey that did have questions approved could be sent out for the second semester. The questions and topics were not the same. The questions did not deal with the material covered in the first semester, only the second semester.

<sup>12</sup> See appendix 9.

Finally, a group of seven men (eight were invited and one canceled at the last minute) from a few different groups, varying in age,<sup>13</sup> came together for a focus group. I asked predetermined questions regarding The Refinery. The feedback was good overall, but I did sense some hesitation in answers, maybe because these men came from different groups and some did not know each other. The discussion time was audio recorded, and the answers were analyzed to provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the training program.

### **Content Overview**

The content of the curriculum includes eight sessions. Each session consists of a lesson plan with an introduction, book discussion, Bible study, accountability section, list of assignments at the end of each session, and conclusion. The book discussion is based on the book given out in the previous session. Each Bible study section in the leader book included a content and application guide incorporating the following: (1) Observation: What does it say? (2) Interpretation: What does it mean? (3) Generalization: What is the big idea? (4) Application: What difference does it make? One of the assignments is to memorize Ephesians 2:1–10 over the eight months. Only a few verses at a time are asked to be memorized each session, with a culmination of all ten verses by the end of the program. A challenge is given to the group at the end of each session to help the men grow and stretch their knowledge of what they have studied and learned. The curriculum ends with a copy of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

### **Session 1**

Session 1 was titled “Leaders Examine.” The first session was an introduction and overview of what would take place over the next eight months. The learning outcome for this session was for participants to familiarize themselves with each other and assess their current spiritual well-being by reflecting on questions from Donald Whitney’s *Ten*

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<sup>13</sup> Ages of men: 24, 24, 35, 45, 51, 58, 70.

*Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, which they received before the first session. During the session, each participant was asked to share who they were and share their testimony. Each pastor led a book discussion over the questions from Whitney's book. The pastor asked questions from the book that would help each man best describe the condition of their spiritual health. The Bible study was from 2 Peter 3:17–18, and the pastors challenged the participants to commit to growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. The pastors shared a list of group expectations, including a discussion on attendance, accountability, and assignments at the end of each session. The assignments given at the end of this session included posting their Bible reading, reading *What Is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert, being challenged to learn Ephesians 2:1–2, and finding one person who does not know Christ and praying daily for that person. The session concluded by asking if the participants were ready to be challenged and grow.

## **Session 2**

Session 2 was titled “Leaders Love the Gospel.” The session discussed the biblical meaning of the gospel and walked through a simple presentation of the gospel. The learning outcome for this session was for participants to articulate the gospel presentation using the four terms—God, man, Christ, and response. During the session, time was spent walking through the order of salvation, explaining the different events that happen in the life of a believer. The Bible study was from Ephesians 2:1–10, and the participants used other words to examine the doctrine of man, Sin, Christ, and redemption. In the book discussion on Gilbert's book, participants were asked about their key takeaways from the book. For accountability, participants shared Ephesians 2:1–2 by memory and the one person they were praying for who does not know Christ. At the end of the second session, the pastors assigned to the participants the following: post Bible reading, read *How to Study Your Bible* by Richard Mayhue, memorize Ephesians 2:1–3, and walk through with their spouse or family member their understanding of the gospel by using the four questions from Gilbert's *What Is the Gospel?*. The four questions

included: (1) Who made us, and to whom are we accountable? (2) What is our problem? In other words, are we in trouble, and why? (3) What is God’s solution to that problem? How has he acted to save us from it? (4) How do I—myself, right here, right now—how do I come to be included in that salvation? The session concluded with a quote from John Piper from *Doctrine Matters*.<sup>14</sup>

### Session 3

Session 3 was titled “Leaders Learn the Bible.” The session focused on commitments one should make in knowing and defending the Bible, emphasizing the doctrine of the Word of God and the importance of interpreting the Word of God. The learning outcome for this session was for participants to better understand why knowing and defending the Bible is essential with a greater comprehension of the doctrine of the Word of God. During the session, through the study of 2 Timothy 2:14–18 and a discussion of Mayhue’s *How to Study Your Bible*, participants identified ways to study the Bible and several things to consider when interpreting the Bible. For accountability, participants shared in pairs Ephesians 2:1–3 by memory and shared prayer requests. At the end of the third session, the participants were assigned the following: post Bible reading, read *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* by David Mathis, memorize Ephesians 2:4–5, use the Bible Study Worksheet from Mayhue’s book, and study one of the passages read in their daily Bible reading. The session concluded with a quote from J. I. Packer from his book *Knowing God*.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John Piper explains,

For five hundred years, protestant Christians have summed up the gospel in terms of the five “solas,” which is Latin for “only” or “alone.” And all I do in giving you this summary is add one that is implicit in the others. So in these historical forms I would define the gospel like this: As revealed with final authority in Scripture alone the Gospel is the good news that by faith alone through grace alone on the basis of Christ alone for the glory of God alone sinners have full and final joy in God alone. (John Piper, *Doctrine Matters* [Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2013], 79, Kindle.)

<sup>15</sup> J. I. Packer writes, “True Christians are people who acknowledge and live under the Word of God. They submit without reserve to the word of God written in ‘The Book of Truth’ (Dan 10:21), believing the teaching, trusting the promises, following the commands. Their eyes are upon the God of the



## Session 4

Session 4 was titled “Leaders Practice Discipline.” This session taught the necessity and importance of spiritual disciplines. The learning outcome for this session was for participants to become familiar with the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and church fellowship. During the session, attention was given to how these disciplines play a part in the Christian’s pursuit of spiritual growth. Pastors asked the participants three questions during the introduction: (1) How often do you read your Bible? (2) How often do you spend time praying? (3) What is the biggest reason people do not practice spiritual disciplines? In the Philippians 2:12–13 study, pastors encouraged the participants to recognize how critical spiritual disciplines are in their spiritual growth. The discussion on Mathis’s book included asking from which part of the book they gained the most knowledge and on which discipline each participant needed to work. For accountability, participants paired up and shared Ephesians 2:4–5 by memory, shared prayer requests, and then prayed with each other. At the end of the fourth session, the participants were assigned the following: post Bible reading, read *Christian Beliefs* by Wayne Grudem, memorize Ephesians 2:4–7, and purchase or create a journal to take notes from their personal Bible study and to write down their prayers. The session concluded with a quote from Don Whitney from his book *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*.<sup>16</sup>

## Session 5

Session 5 was titled “Leaders Develop Sound Doctrine.” The session covered the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith that every believer should know. The learning outcome for this session is for participants to discover what the word “doctrine” means

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Bible as their Father and the Christ of the Bible as their Savior.” J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 116.

<sup>16</sup> Don Whitney states, “Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and interpersonal activities given by God in the Bible as the sufficient means believers in Jesus Christ are to use in the Spirit-filled, gospel-driven pursuit of godliness, that is, closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.” Don Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life* (Colorado Spring: NavPress, 2014), 9.

and the importance of knowing doctrines. During the session there was a discussion on the definition of doctrine and why it is essential to have a firm grasp of doctrines. Participants were asked if they had ever been in a situation where a question came up about a topic and the Bible, and they were not quite sure how to answer it. Through the Bible study of Ephesians 4:11–14, Pastors encouraged participants to become students of God’s Word so they could stand strong in the face of opposition and questions. The book discussion led to a study of the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the Trinity. For accountability, participants paired up and shared Ephesians 2:4–7 by memory, asked each other how their Bible intake and reading were doing and if it had been more consistent, and shared one prayer journal entry. At the end of the fifth session, the participants were assigned the following: post Bible reading, read *Family Shepherd* by Voddie Baucham Jr., memorize Ephesians 2:8–9, and listen to an episode of Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology Podcast. The session concluded with a reading or singing of the hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty.”

## **Session 6**

Session 6 was titled “Leaders Desire a Healthy Home.” This session explored how a man can be a leader in the home, both with their children and within their marriage. The learning outcome of this session is for participants to better grasp how to lead in their homes. During the session, participants walked through some of the critical points of each chapter in the assigned book by discussing Baucham’s book and answering two key questions: (1) What is the three-pronged approach to Biblical discipleship? and (2) What are the four roles and responsibilities for a family shepherd? The Ephesians 5:22–33 Bible study encouraged them to let their marriage reflect the gospel in the ways they love, lead, serve, and provide for their wives. For accountability, participants were encouraged to write Ephesians 2:1–9 by memory on paper and share how they did with the person next to them. At the end of session 6, participants were assigned the following: post Bible reading, read *What Is a Healthy Church?* by Mark Dever, memorize Ephesians 2:10, plan

a time of family worship, and find a practical way to serve their wife or take their wife out on a date. The session concluded with a reading of a quote by John Piper.<sup>17</sup>

### **Session 7**

Session 7 was titled “Leaders Serve a Healthy Church.” The session gave an overview of a local church and descriptions of what makes a church healthy, including what makes a healthy church member. The learning outcome for this session is for participants to identify who makes up the church, discover what makes it healthy, and evaluate where they are in being healthy church members. During the session, during the book discussion of Dever’s *What Is a Healthy Church*, pastors asked participants the following questions: (1) What is and isn’t a church according to Dever? (2) Why is expositional preaching essential within a church? (3) Why is biblical theology essential in a church? And (4) What is a biblical understanding of the excellent news essential? Through the Bible study of Ephesians 2:11–22, participants were encouraged to be committed to the gospel-believing church and Bible teaching. For accountability, participants recited by memory Ephesians 2:1–10. At the end of session 7, participants were assigned the following: post Bible reading, read *Discipling* by Mark Dever, be ready to recite Ephesians 2:1–10 in front of the group, and find a place to volunteer in the church if they were not currently serving. The session concluded with a short discussion on creeds and confessions, including the Baptist Faith and Message.

### **Session 8**

Session 8 was titled “Leaders Make Disciples.” This session explored the idea of the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations and how one grows as a disciple and, in turn, becomes a disciple maker. The learning outcome for this session is for participants to be enthusiastic about being disciples of Christ, making disciples, and

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<sup>17</sup> Piper notes, “Headship is the divine calling of a husband to take primary responsibility for Christ-like, servant leadership, protection, and provision in the home.” John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 84.

teaching other disciples. During the session, pastors encouraged participants to internalize what discipleship should look like. In the discussion of Dever's *Discipline*, pastors asked participants what some of their highlights from the book were. Through a Matthew 28:18–20 Bible study, participants were asked what discipleship looked like in their lives and to find someone they could begin to disciple. For accountability, participants stood before the group and recited by memory Ephesians 2:1–10. At the end of session 8, participants were challenged by the pastors to participate in the Discipleship Pathway at Hickory Grove. The pastors asked the participants the following questions: (1) Are you and your family a weekly active participant on Sundays for worship? (2) Are you involved in a Sunday morning Community Group? (3) Are you involved in a D-Group? (4) Who are you, or who could you be discipling? The session concluded with a quote by Robert E. Coleman from his book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This project aimed to equip men for leadership by providing them with the necessary tools to emerge as effective leaders. A comprehensive teaching was offered on how to foster a deeper understanding of the Bible, biblical doctrines, and spiritual disciplines. The idea was to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to assume influential leadership roles within the church and in their homes. Furthermore, this program was envisioned as a vital leadership development pathway aimed at enabling the church to cultivate leaders across various ministry areas. As part of the program, it was planned that the pastors of HGBC would annually identify a new cohort of men to

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<sup>18</sup> Robert E. Coleman writes,

If we have learned even the most elemental truth of discipleship, we must know that we are called to be servants of our Lord and to obey his Word. It is not our duty to reason why he speaks as he does, but only to carry out his orders. Unless there is this dedication to all that we know he wants us to do now, however immature our understanding may be, it is doubtful if we will ever progress further in his life and mission. There is no place in the Kingdom for a slacker, for such an attitude not only precludes any growth in grace and knowledge but also destroys any usefulness on the world battlefield of evangelism. (Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* [Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993], 58)

guide through this transformative journey. It is anticipated that the majority of men at HGBC will have participated in The Refinery program within five years.

In the next chapter, I will evaluate the project's overall effectiveness by first evaluating its purpose and goals. I will consider the strengths and weaknesses to survey what went well and what needs improvement in the program. Additionally, I will provide some of the theological implications of the project and offer personal insights gained from the experience.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

In this final chapter of this ministry project, I will assess the purpose and goals set for the project. Additionally, I will delve into an in-depth analysis of the project's strengths and weaknesses, presenting thoughtful insights into what worked well and areas for potential improvement. Lastly, I will share what I learned about God and his Word through the theological implications of the project and offer personal insights as a minister gained from the experience.

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

The purpose of this project was to develop a training program at Hickory Grove Baptist Church to equip men for leadership. The training intended to help men understand and demonstrate the principles of being a disciple of Christ so they could provide effective leadership within the church and in their homes. To fully comprehend the purpose of this project, it was necessary to observe and understand the history of HGBC over the past forty years.

As the city of Charlotte experienced rapid growth and the establishment of more entertainment options, the church's structure and dynamics underwent significant changes. This transformation included the establishment of additional churches in the Charlotte Metro area, some providing more of an attractional church atmosphere. As a result, church members began to adopt a more passive role, transitioning from being active disciples and disciple-makers to consumers and mere spectators.

The cultural shifts and challenges led to members grappling with the practical application of their faith in various aspects of their lives, including within the church community, their workplaces, and their homes. The culmination of these factors,

compounded by the global pandemic of 2020, created a shortage of prospective leaders at HGBC, further amplifying the need for renewed engagement and leadership development within the church. Although there were and are strong leaders within the church, the need for more leaders with a solid biblical understanding of discipleship is still desirable.

Being on staff at HGBC for the last thirty years, I have also seen many changes within the church's leadership, both on the staff and within the church's lay leadership. Early in my ministry, I witnessed tremendous growth of the church, including the addition of many new believers and new church members, contributing to the fact that HGBC became one of the fastest-growing Southern Baptist churches in North Carolina and one of the largest. It was truly encouraging to witness the growth of the church. However, I slowly noticed changes that led to a gradual decline in the depth of spirituality among the church members. This decline hindered members' ability to live out their faith fully and effectively and take on leadership roles within the church and in their homes, particularly in the face of a rapidly decaying culture.

After exploring the changes in Charlotte, the history of HGBC, and my observation, one can see how the church experienced many changes in leadership and spiritual depth. This problem led to the realization that many church members lacked the knowledge of what it looked like to be a disciple of Christ. The need to make sure men are ready to lead created the purpose behind this project to develop a training program at Hickory Grove that would equip men with the proper understanding of the Bible, clear biblical doctrines, and spiritual disciplines to be leaders in the church and at home.

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

After establishing the project's purpose, three goals were developed to support its success. This section will outline each goal and assess how the goals were achieved.

## **Goal 1**

The first goal of this project was to assess the current knowledge and practice of men in leadership within the church and at home. The goal was measured by administering a Spiritual Leadership Knowledge pre-survey to seventy-eight men before the start of the second semester of the training program.<sup>1</sup> I sent an email explaining the purpose of the survey to each participant who was part of a group. A few men replied, congratulating me on pursuing my doctorate and understanding the importance of this training. I sent two reminder emails before the survey was closed to encourage them to take it if they had not already. Thirty-seven men completed this survey. Of the thirty-seven men who started the survey, twenty-five were from the Harris Campus, and twelve were from the Mallard Creek Campus. Although I had hoped for a more significant response, this goal was met, as more than 40 percent of the men starting the program completed the survey.

## **Goal 2**

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to establish a biblical framework for equipping men to lead. Each session of the curriculum consisted of a book discussion, Bible study, accountability time, and a time of challenge with assignments and homework. After discussing with the other pastors how their sessions were going and what their teaching time looked like, they seemed to focus their group time mainly on book discussions and scripture memory.

The first session within the curriculum was more of an introduction time for men to introduce themselves and understand the training program's purpose and goals. The other sessions followed more of a consistent teaching and discussion time. In the first semester, sessions 1–5 focused on the importance of the Bible, biblical doctrines, and

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<sup>1</sup> A survey was sent out at the beginning of the first semester but had not gone through the proper approval, so with Matthew Haste's approval, a survey was sent out at the beginning of the second semester with different questions that focused on second semester content.



spiritual disciplines. In the second semester, sessions 6–8 focused on home and church leadership.

The goal of developing an eight-session curriculum was measured by having the curriculum evaluated by HGBC pastoral team members, including the Associate Pastor of Ministries, Head of School, Adult Discipleship Pastor, and the Discipleship Pastor at our Mallard Creek Campus. They understood the purpose of this training program and gave good feedback and evaluation. They utilized a rubric to evaluate the curriculum’s biblical accuracy, teaching methodology, scope, pedagogy, and practicality.<sup>2</sup> The goal was successfully met once the staff evaluated the curriculum, and the average rating was at least 3.5.

The pastors who evaluated the curriculum suggested changing a few things, including the arrangement of the lessons, adding resources such as the *Baptist Faith and Message*, and examples of podcasts, and addressing typos and unclear statements. Overall, the comments mainly included “exemplary” marks, with one pastor giving some sufficient marks. One comment said, “Well done. Arguably ambitious for a one- to two-hour setting. But solid content.” After I taught a few sessions, I realized that covering everything in a one-hour session was quite challenging.

I developed the curriculum in two formats: one for the pastors as a leader guide and one for the men as a learner guide. I collaborated with our creative director and requested a logo for the program, which contributed to branding the program and curriculum. The graphic designer did an outstanding job on the layout of both guides. The leader guide contained teaching notes in red text, while the learner guides had blank pages for participants to take notes. Both the leader and learner guides were spiral-bound and in full color. The leader and learner guides were provided to the pastors before the first session so they could prepare for the class in advance and distribute the learner guides to their group during the first session.

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

As the leader and instructor of his group of men, our senior pastor shared the curriculum with other pastors from different churches he meets with regularly. Following expressions of interest from several pastors, he tasked me with providing them access to the curriculum. It was truly encouraging to see our senior pastor, who was actively teaching the curriculum himself, extend his endorsement to other pastors.

### **Goal 3**

The third goal was to implement the training program to increase the knowledge and practice of leadership among men of HGBC. After the program was launched and pastors invited men to join the groups, there was an overwhelming response. Almost everyone invited by the pastors agreed to participate in the training program. The positive response was likely due to the pastors' involvement in teaching the program. Members viewed it as an opportunity to learn from the pastors and recognized the importance of being part of the program. One participant commented in a survey, "It was also great to interact with the pastors on a more personal level."

The goal to increase the knowledge and practice of leadership was measured by administering a Spiritual Leadership Knowledge post-survey and comparing the response to the pre-survey to evaluate the change in leadership knowledge and practices in the church and home. Twenty-eight men completed both the pre-survey and the post-survey.<sup>3</sup> The goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores:  $t_{(22)} = -3.824, p < .0004$ .<sup>4</sup> This score indicates that participants in this training program increased their knowledge of leadership within the church and the home.

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<sup>3</sup> Harris Campus = 22; Mallard Creek Campus = 6; Age Range: Under 20=0; 20-29=4; 30-39=7; 40-49=6; 50-59=5; 60-69=3; 70+=3; Marital Status: Single=4; Married=23; Divorced=1; Widower=0; If married, how many years: 0-5=4; 6-10=4; 11-20=6; 21-30=4; 31-40=2; 41+ = 4; Children living at home: 0=0; 1=5; 2=8; 3=2; Years a Christian: 0-5=5; 6-10=0; 11-20=5; 21+ years=18.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 10.

The end of the post-survey also included an open-ended question: “What did you learn while being part of the Refinery this year?” Some responses included the following:

1. “Refinery was a great learning opportunity. It provided accountability to learn Scripture and share quiet time reading with other guys.”
2. “I learned to be more disciplined in reading the Bible.”
3. “I learned I need to take steps of faith regarding my ministry and keep preparing well for my future wife and kids.”
4. “I learned the importance of reading the Bible daily and sharing that with my Refinery brothers. Also, I learned the importance of being accountable to others regarding my faith and church activities.”
5. “I learned how much more I need to know the Bible and where I truly have growth opportunities.”
6. “I learned the importance of being intentional about discipling other men.”
7. “I learned accountability, discipline, intentionality.” “Refinery is a great discipleship and mentoring program HG uses to invest in men to be leaders of their families and church. Through almost every section, there was conviction and encouragement.”

These comments were promising as the men showed growth in their application of Bible reading, accountability, leadership at home, and the discipleship of others.

Additionally, the goal was assessed by conducting a focus group with the men who had completed the training program to answer questions about the program’s overall effectiveness. I invited eight men aged between 24 and 70 to the focus group, representing seven groups. One of the men texted me an hour before the meeting and said he could not come, which resulted in seven men being present in the focus group. We spent about one hour walking through the questions.<sup>5</sup> I recorded the session so I could go back and listen for the answers and feedback.

One question was, “Do you feel like you have been equipped to lead your wife and family? In what ways?” One participant said he realized how much he lacked in his spiritual walk regarding spiritually leading his family. Another participant talked about

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 3.

how he was newly married and his wife had grown up in the church, attended a Christian school, and was very knowledgeable about the Bible. He recognizes now, after being a part of this program, the practical things he can do as a husband to lead his household.

Another question was about discipleship and what it looks like in someone's life after completing this program. One participant said, "Coming in as a relatively young Christian and thinking about what that practically looks like in life, how I know now what it means to seek out one-on-one discipleship and how you go about discipling others."

An area that several men commented on was Scripture memorization, regarding how they improved in their ability. One man commented on how you must keep working at it daily and how he now wants to learn more verses. Another said he doubted he could get the first verse down to much fewer than ten verses. However, he said that having someone hold you accountable helped him accomplish the goal of memorizing the verses. Having other men holding you accountable was a theme that kept coming out during the focus group, as each group during the training program texted each other daily to share what they were reading. They would also quote to each other the verses they were trying to memorize. One man mentioned the importance of developing various disciplines, such as daily Bible reading and Scripture memorization.

Another question was asked about serving in the church. One man said he learned a lot about caring for the body as a church member and being more intentional and compassionate for people. Another mentioned the importance of serving and caring for the church body and how that shows the love of Christ to people who may not be Christians or may be new to the church.

I facilitated this focus group to gather diverse perspectives on men's thoughts about the training program and its impact on their learning. Initially, the men seemed reserved but became more open and forthcoming as the group progressed. They shared their thoughts and provided additional insights beyond my original inquiries, which significantly enriched my understanding of the program's effectiveness.

## **Strengths of the Project**

There were several strengths to the project. The first strength was the curriculum. The curriculum gave the pastors a tool to guide the men through each session. The learning outcome outline gave clear directions to the pastors, providing an overview, learning outcome, and list of resources they would need for that specific lesson. The leader guide also included lesson notes, such as a content and application guide for the Bible study, and other notes throughout each lesson to provide pastors with information they could use to lead the group sessions effectively. The curriculum also provided a learner guide for each participant, something in hand to take notes and take home for future reference. I developed the leader and learner guide to help navigate the provided curriculum, which gave clarity and consistency for both the pastor and participant throughout each session.

The second strength of this project was the selection of books for the men. First, the books included solid and practical information for the men that went along with each lesson taught. The books chosen coincided with the title and objective of the lesson. Second, giving these books to the men helped them begin to build a library of Christian books. Most of these men only have a small collection of solid books, if any at all. The books were well-rounded, covering different topics that helped accomplish the project's goals. Many of the men were not accustomed to reading theological books. Giving out a book a month to each participant not only challenged the men to put into practice the habit of reading but also helped them build a library of good books. Pastors encouraged their groups to use the books as resources in the future. They were encouraged to go back to them down the road.

A third strength of this project was the nine-month investment by the HGBC pastors in the men. With each pastor having four to six men, each group had the opportunity to get to know their pastor. Not knowing pastors well often occurs in a large church where the pastors can sometimes seem untouchable. The men could see the pastors outside the church without a suit and tie and hear the pastor's heart leading them.

These men would see what the pastors were reading daily in the Bible and see their consistency of spending time in the Bible. The men also had the opportunity to ask pastors questions in a small setting. The questions could be theological, getting the pastors' opinion or knowledge on a particular topic. The men could also ask questions about how to live out their faith practically. This investment from the pastors was also beneficial for the pastors themselves. The pastors had an excellent opportunity to encourage, challenge, and teach a small group of men, genuinely discipling the men and impacting their spiritual growth. Pastors sometimes get so busy doing the church administration that they forget that it is about discipling people.

A fourth strength of the project was the accountability it created within the groups. For many men, it was the first time they participated in a text thread or GroupMe, with other men checking on them daily to see if they were reading the Bible. Communication with each other also gave opportunities for men to share prayer requests and encourage each other through different temptations. It could be sharing a struggle or celebrating something in their life. Men are often afraid to open up and be honest about their struggles, even the simple struggle of reading the Bible. Being in a group over nine months created trusting and lasting relationships.

The fifth strength of this project was hearing about men who wanted to keep the groups going. They were encouraged to join a discipleship group if they were not part of one. However, because of the relationship built-in groups, men have reported that they will continue to meet each other occasionally. For some, this would become their discipleship group. Some groups planned to maintain their text conversation and support each other in staying accountable. These plans were encouraging to hear and reinforced the needed accountability laid out as a goal for men to learn.

One final strength of this program is that, following evaluation and adjustments, it has been approved by my supervisor at HGBC for the fall of 2024 to be used again with a new group of men. This news was encouraging, as it means that the program can continue

to equip more men from the church to become strong leaders. As more men from HGBC go through this program, the church will have more spiritually strong individuals who will help build stronger leaders for the church and in their homes.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

There are a few areas where I could have improved the project. The most significant area for improvement was how I conducted the survey. The main issue was not using the initial survey, which included many questions about Bible knowledge, biblical doctrine, and spiritual disciplines. I wish I had gathered more information from the survey, particularly understanding how individuals grew in these areas.

Another area for improvement is related to the survey I sent out at the beginning of the second semester of the training. I achieved the survey goal with 40 percent of the respondents. However, I had hoped for a higher response rate. It would have been better to have received more responses for the final survey. I received good feedback, but having a more significant sampling from the large group of men in the program would have been better. I could not include some of the second surveys because the personal IDs did not match. I assume the respondents forgot their original ID, as four months had passed since they took the first survey.

A third weakness of the project was that I could not fully control the teaching in each group because multiple pastors were involved in teaching. I designed the curriculum so the pastors could follow a guide in each session. However, I could not verify if each pastor was using the curriculum. I believe the pastors discussed the books in the curriculum and reviewed the Scripture memory challenge at each session. Nonetheless, I am uncertain about the extent of the Bible study taught by the pastors and the challenges presented at the end of each session. I could only rely on the directions provided within the curriculum. I was able to personally mentor six men in my group and witness their growth.

A final weakness of this project was the failure to research leadership training

programs of other churches. Men finding a place to serve after they complete the leadership program is something I want to see at HGBC. Examining how other churches prepare and train their leaders would provide valuable insight into guiding the men who have participated in and completed the training program at HGBC to their next steps. It would have been beneficial to see if the men from other churches were part of a leadership pipeline.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

While the training program had its strengths, and men expressed their liking of the program, I would change a few things if I were to do this project again. First, I would send out the pre-survey before the program began. I would include questions about their biblical knowledge, spiritual disciplines, and understanding of leadership in the church and at home. These kinds of questions would provide me with a better understanding of the men's knowledge gaps and what they have learned throughout the year. Additionally, obtaining names, birthdates, or other forms of identification would have been beneficial. The participants would not have minded providing something more personal than a four-digit identification number. This change in identification could have led to more accurate responses in the final survey.

I would also focus on increasing participation in the survey. Out of the 78 men who registered for the program and received the survey, only 37 responded. The response rate was better among the men at the Harris Campus, where I am known as a pastor. I regularly engage in conversations and activities with them during Sunday services and other church-related events. Some men at the Mallard Creek Campus may have overlooked the email since they are less familiar with me. Some may have missed the email if it went to their junk folder. I informed the pastors leading the groups about the email outreach and requested their assistance in spreading the word to their groups

Something else I would do differently is to focus on five instead of eight books. Some men seemed to struggle to find or take the time to read one book each month. I



would pick out five books that best teach men the things HGBC wanted them to learn. It may be a list of eight books, but the pastors could choose five out of the eight depending on the makeup of the men in the group. If the men in the group were older without children, they could choose a different book instead of one focused on raising children. The goal of getting men to read more and gain knowledge could still happen by having only five books, and I could still give the men all eight books to grow their libraries and encourage them to read them at some point.

In addition, I would ask for feedback from the pastors leading the groups. During the last group session, the pastors could use focused time to collect assessments on the assigned books, the curriculum provided, and the program's overall objectives. The pastors could use the provided focus group questions to receive evaluation and perception on what they learned from this program. It would have been valuable to receive input from the pastors, as their perspectives could have provided even more insightful feedback on the program's success.

Finally, I would like the project to focus on the next steps men would take after the program. During the sessions, I would ask specific questions about where the men would like to serve and how to get them involved in serving at the church. Having clear next steps would help establish a leadership pipeline and build a pool of equipped leaders to draw from when selecting leaders for ministries.

The program was directed toward men, but after going through the program, there is the understanding that most of the sessions would be applicable to women except for the specific session on men leading in the home. The reason for the focus of men in this program was because of the strong biblical conviction that men who are called to be leaders must be equipped to know God in a greater way, know the Bible, and have spiritual disciplines that will lead them to love their families and serve the church.

## **Theological Reflections**

The most essential theological insight I gained was the importance of equipping church members to do the work of ministry. Equipping church members was one of the reasons this project was created and developed. The pastors or leaders of any size church need to make sure a program is implemented that equips men with the basics of biblical knowledge to grow and lead in the church and the home. If a church has one or two pastors or leaders, they could easily take men through this type of program. Gifted leaders within the church need to equip the saints for the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ, the church (Eph 4:11–16). Equipping people will help them become spiritually mature so they can stand firm in the world they live in. Whether it is a gift or office, the job is to invest and equip the saints for the work of ministry.

Another theological insight was examining the passages in Genesis to look at the creation account and God's design in leading men. As the church grapples with contemporary issues of gender and leadership, it is important to draw from foundational truths found in Genesis. God created humankind as the pinnacle of his creation. He created male and female, and every person has human dignity. That is significant as the church discusses things like abortion and sexuality. But when it comes to men taking a leadership role, God has given them the responsibility to represent God and rule. And that even in the garden, man was given the role of serving. In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul points back to Genesis as he discusses man's role in marriage, to love and serve his wife.

A final theological reflection comes after a study of a passage in Acts 6. In this passage, faithful men were chosen to do some of the work within the church so that the apostles could stay focused on the ministry of the Word and prayer. Pastors today need to stay focused on what God has called them to do and for other church members to serve and meet the needs of church members.

## **Personal Reflections**

Developing this project and implementing a training program for men has made me reflect on several things. These personal reflections span over a period as I was thinking about what I wanted to do for a project, as I prepared for the project, and as I spent nine months being a part of this project by leading a small group of men.

The first personal reflection on this project taught me the importance of understanding the Bible, certain biblical doctrines, and individual spiritual disciplines. During my early years of ministry, I realized the significance of spiritual disciplines and having some understanding of the Bible. However, I later recognized the need to improve my knowledge of biblical doctrines.

After leaving my hometown of Charlotte, I attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. My focus there was to learn how to become a youth pastor. I was eager to quickly complete my studies and find a church where I could serve as a youth pastor. In seminary, I took more classes focusing on religious education rather than theology, opting for what I believed to be the easier path. This decision led to me spend the first years of my ministry lacking solid theology and a strong understanding of biblical doctrines.

It was not until fifteen years into my ministry that I felt challenged to enhance my knowledge of biblical doctrines. I realized how deficient I was in defending different Bible doctrines and lacked a clear understanding of certain doctrines. This realization prompted me to reevaluate my thoughts on the Bible and formulate new conclusions, which gave me a greater appreciation of the importance of knowing what and why I believed. I now see the lack of spiritual depth with many Christians today. This growth in my own life has given me a great desire to develop and train other believers to have a greater depth of their spiritual knowledge.

The lack of biblical knowledge and doctrine was brought more to the surface during the COVID-19 pandemic. Christians were not attending church in person and were allowed to stay at home and become observers and not participants. It became the easy

way to do church. Many Christians made church optional, leading to a deficit of Bible study and growth. This lack of Bible study and growth has left many Christians wavering in their faith and not knowing how to defend their faith as the culture around them continues to deteriorate. On a personal note, my wife and I have had to go back and rethink some biblical doctrines through personal challenges. But through our knowledge and faith, God used these challenges to allow us to talk to and equip others to know what they believe about biblical doctrines and how to handle them with biblical conviction and authority.

Over the many years in ministry and marriage, I have dedicated time to counseling men, recognizing the importance of imparting biblical knowledge in various aspects of their lives. My wife, a counselor, and I also have had the opportunity to counsel couples. Some of this counseling involved pre-marital sessions, while in other cases, we have worked with couples who have been married for several years. Through our work with these Christian couples, we witnessed the lack of Bible understanding, biblical doctrines, and spiritual disciplines that have affected how couples lead within the church and in their home.

Another personal reflection is thinking about my time preparing for this project. My theological research has deepened my understanding of equipping men for leadership roles. As a discipleship pastor who does not preach regularly, my usual study routine does not involve an in-depth examination of specific passages or utilizing comprehensive commentaries. However, during this project I had the opportunity to delve into three key passages and explore a variety of commentaries to gain a more profound understanding of the biblical text. This study has enhanced my preparation for future teaching and preaching engagements.

Furthermore, examining current statistics has provided valuable insights into the spiritual state of individuals. Recent surveys have offered a comprehensive perspective on people's spiritual well-being. I also explored literature addressing the spiritual and

psychological condition of men. Additionally, inquiring into Christian leadership literature has allowed me to apply relevant principles to my ministry.

One final reflection comes from the group's impact on me once I implemented the program and began to lead my group. Over the last nine months, I invested in a group of six men, getting to know them personally and vice versa. We shared, prayed for each other, and provided encouragement. Each group session resulted in building greater relationships. There were times when I felt like avoiding our meetings due to long workdays or other distractions, and they probably felt the same way. Nonetheless, we still met, and after each meeting, I was encouraged by the experience.

Pouring into the lives of others, helping them understand what it means to be a disciple, and witnessing their desire to make disciples brought me joy and peace. I am grateful for how God used me to lead, encourage, and train these men and how they challenged and supported me in my spiritual journey. Even now, as I see the men in my group, we know the bond we have created with each other as brothers in Christ, growing as disciples of Christ and having a desire to make disciples.

### **Conclusion**

This project was an overall success. It was designed to prepare men for leadership at HGBC, and I am pleased to say it fulfilled its purpose. Despite encountering some weaknesses and areas for improvement, I successfully developed a curriculum, facilitated a survey, led a focus group, and engaged with a group of men from HGBC. As a result, I have witnessed these men grow in understanding what it truly means to be a disciple. They have developed a more profound knowledge of the Bible, biblical doctrines, and spiritual disciplines, equipping them to provide effective leadership within the church and their homes.

## APPENDIX 1

### SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP KNOWLEDGE SURVEY

The following instrument is the Spiritual Leadership Knowledge Survey. Some general questions are followed by twenty statements measured on a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each member's level of theological understanding and confidence in disciple-making.

Agreement to Participate

**The research in which you are about to participate is designed to find out your Spiritual Leadership knowledge both before and after you participate in the second semester of *The Refinery* at Hickory Grove Baptist Church.**

**This research is being conducted by Matt Phipps for purposes of a Ministry Research Project under the direction of the Professional Doctoral Studies office at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.**

**In this research, you will be asked to give your honest answers on statements about leadership in the home and the church.**

**Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.**

**By your completion of this Likert Scale Survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.**

\* 1. Personal Identification #: Please choose a 4-digit # and then remember this # to use again for the survey after the completion of *The Refinery*.

Demographics

\* 1. Which Hickory Grove campus do you attend?

- Harris Campus
- Mallard Creek Campus

\* 2. Age Range

- Under 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

3. Marital Status

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widower

4. If married, how many years have you been married?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 31-40 years
- 41 or more years

5. How many children do you have living at home under the age of 18?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8 or more



6. How many years have you been a Christian?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21+ years

**Directions: Give your answer on the following statements using the scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree Somewhat, Agree Somewhat, Agree, Strongly Agree, or Non-Applicable.**

\* 1. I take the initiative to lead my wife and family spiritually.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 2. I have a regular time praying with my wife.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 3. I have a regular time praying with my children.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 4. I have a regular time reading the Bible to my children.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 5. I have a regular time of family worship.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 6. I understand what the Bible teaches on how to lead my wife spiritually.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 7. I seek intentional ways to love my wife as Christ loves the church.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 8. I understand what the Bible teaches regarding how to raise my children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 9. I can instruct another man on how to be the spiritual leader of his home.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 10. I understand what it looks like to be a healthy church member.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 11. I can explain the purpose of the local church to another person.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree

- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 12. I am familiar with creeds and confessions of the church.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 13. I serve as a volunteer within my church regularly.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 14. I can describe what church discipline looks like.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 15. I regularly attend a Sunday morning Community Group.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat

- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 16. I can articulate the Discipleship Pathway at Hickory Grove.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

\* 17. I am enthusiastic about evangelism.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

18. I meet in a small group of men for discipleship

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

19. I can explain what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

20. I am investing into someone else for the purpose of discipleship.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Non-Applicable

The following question was added to the post survey.

What did you learn while being part of the Refinery this year?

## APPENDIX 2

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

The following instrument is the Curriculum Evaluation Tool. This tool was given to four pastors from Hickory Grove Baptist Church as a rubric to assess the curriculum's biblical accuracy, teaching methodology, scope, pedagogy, and practicality, and to provide feedback.

## Curriculum Evaluation Tool

Name of Evaluator:

Date:

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum follows a systematic plan in presenting the material for instruction.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson contains a clear learning objective.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for men to interact with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum equips men with biblical hermeneutics, biblical doctrine, and spiritual disciplines.					
The curriculum equips men to be leaders in their home and their church.					

Other Comments:



## APPENDIX 3

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

This appendix includes questions that were asked to a focus group of seven men to give feedback on the effectiveness of the training program.

1. Before this training program, how well-equipped did you feel to be a spiritual leader?
2. In which areas of your life did you feel like you grew the most spiritually?
3. Which session did you feel was the most practical?
4. Which books in *The Refinery* best equipped you to lead?
5. What are some of your biggest struggles at home in leading your wife and family?
6. Do you feel like you have been equipped to lead your wife and family? In what ways?
7. What are some of the essential markers that make a healthy church?
8. How do you serve in the church now, and where would you like to serve in the future?
9. What does discipleship look like in your life? Has it changed after being a part of *The Refinery*? If so, how?
10. What are some new goals in your life that you will now set after participating in *The Refinery*?

## APPENDIX 4

### FIRST EMAIL TO PASTORS (GROUP LEADERS)

This appendix includes the initial email that was sent to all the pastors leading a group to give them an overview of the program and instructions on how the groups would be formed.

Attached is the list of past participants. A few reminders:

- (1) 'Reply to all' in this email to let us know the guys you are considering inviting so you are not inviting the same guys.
- (2) Let me know if you see anybody on this list who did NOT complete The Refinery.
- (3) Your first group meeting should be in September.
- (4) Below is a list of a few expectations if you would like to use them as you invite guys to be a part of the Refinery. (a) Attendance (8 Sessions) (b) Book reading (1 each month) (c) Scripture memorization. (d) Bible reading & daily posts.”

## APPENDIX 5

### SECOND EMAIL TO PASTORS (GROUP LEADERS)

This appendix includes an email that was sent to the pastors with updates. Attached was a document that included a list of the books being used along with an attached sample invitation document.

A few Updates:

1. The first book will be available on Sunday morning in the office resource room, MCC (*Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, by Donald Whitney)
2. **Attached** is a sample invitation letter. Use however you would like.
3. **Attached** is the list of books we will be using this year. A few adjustments were made.
4. The Refinery guides for you and your group will be available by the end of August.
5. The Refinery Celebration will be Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup>.

## APPENDIX 6

### SAMPLE INVITE LETTER

This appendix includes a sample invitation letter that was attached to the second email sent to the pastors. This email could be used to send out inviting potential participants of the training program.

[Name],

I am inviting you to join me and a small group of men for *The Refinery*, a season of intense discipleship that will strengthen your faith and our church. Members of *The Refinery* must commit to the following:

**1. Daily Time in the Word and Prayer**

You are committing both to daily time in the Word and prayer and to posting your daily reading on GroupMe for the purpose of accountability.

**2. Monthly Book Reading, Scripture Memory, and Spiritual Discipline Challenge**

You are committing to reading one pre-selected book a month, memorizing a short, pre-selected text of Scripture, and accepting a monthly challenge to strengthen your spiritual disciplines.

**3. Monthly Small Group Gathering**

You are committing to meet once a month as a small group for the purpose of accountability, discussion, and prayer. We will be expected to prioritize this gathering and come prepared to discuss the reading and recite the Scripture memory.

Discipleship demands commitment and accountability. Let's pursue this together to the glory of God.

In Christ,



## APPENDIX 7

### FINAL EMAIL TO PASTORS

This appendix includes the final email sent to the pastors before the first group meetings.

A few updates for *The Refinery*:

1. The next book, “What is the Gospel?” is available at each campus to give to your guys at your first meeting.
2. **The Workbooks will be available at both campuses on Sunday** for you as the leader and the learners. The workbooks are attached If you need to look at the first session before Sunday.

## APPENDIX 8

### MONTHLY OVERVIEW EMAIL TO PASTORS

This appendix includes an example of an email sent to the pastors monthly that including any updates and reminders.

**Subject:** The Refinery Update for October

A few things to note for *The Refinery* this month:

1. The discussion for Session 2 centers on understanding THE GOSPEL.
  - The men in your group should have a better understanding after reading the book “*What is the Gospel?*”
  - Lead the men to articulate the gospel presentation using the four terms – God, Man, Christ, Response.
  - Use Ephesians 2:1–10 to lead the men to have a better understanding of the Doctrine of Salvation.
2. Next book: *How to Study the Bible* by Richard Mayhue.
3. I have sent this book up for those at the Mallard Creek Campus, and it should be in the Resource Room.

We want our men of Hickory Grove to know the Gospel and have the ability to share the Gospel. Thanks for your leadership and investment!

## APPENDIX 9

### EMAIL ABOUT REFINERY CELEBRATION

This appendix includes the email from the Senior Associate Pastor that was sent to all the participants inviting them to the Refinery Celebration.

{First},

I thank God that nearly 80 men from Hickory Grove have met monthly over this past year for *Refinery*. I trust these groups have helped you grow in grace as you've read together, prayed together, and held one another accountable.

As we near the end of this year's *Refinery*, **I invite you to join us at our Mallard Creek Campus Pavilion on Thursday, May 9th, at 6:00PM for our *Refinery* Celebration.** We'll come together as men from each pastor's *Refinery* group for dinner, fellowship, and a time of celebration. You won't want to miss it.

Mark your calendars and let us know you're coming by registering **HERE**.

Hope to see you there,

APPENDIX 10

T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS

	<i>Pre-Training Total</i>	<i>Post-Training Total</i>
Mean	87.95652174	95.65217391
Variance	275.9525692	256.9644269
Observations	23	23
Pearson Correlation	0.825768353	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	22	
t Stat	-3.824401969	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0004623	
t Critical one-tail	1.717144374	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00092466	
t Critical two-tail	2.073873068	

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING A TRAINING PROGRAM TO EQUIP MEN FOR LEADERSHIP AT HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Matthew Joseph Phipps, DEdMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. William Beau Hughes

The purpose of this project was to develop a training program at Hickory Grove Baptist Church to equip men for leadership. The focus of the training was to help men understand and demonstrate the principles of being a disciple of Christ who can make disciples so they can provide effective leadership within the church and in their homes. Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context in which the program was developed, along with its rationale, goals, and research methodology. Chapter 2 provides a biblical and theological foundation for equipping men for leadership by examining several biblical passages. Chapter 3 assesses the spiritual well-being of men, identifies the knowledge and skills necessary to become influential spiritual leaders, and discusses how to apply this within the church and the home. It also explores the development of a leadership pipeline within churches. Chapter 4 details the preparation and implementation of the project and provides an overview of the content taught. Chapter 5 assesses the overall purpose and specific goals of the project, its strengths and weaknesses, reflections on the theological implications, and offers personal insights. Overall, the project developed a program to equip men on how to be a disciple that makes disciples.

## VITA

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