

Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

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MENTORING AND COACHING EMERGING MILLENNIAL LEADERS AT
NEW LIFE FOURSQUARE CHURCH

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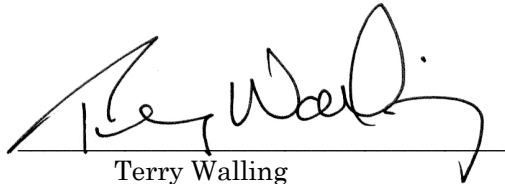
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MENTORING AND COACHING EMERGING MILLENNIAL LEADERS AT
NEW LIFE FOURSQUARE CHURCH

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SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring and Coaching as a Strategy for Empowering Millennials

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The purpose of this project is to engage young Christian leaders in a process of leadership development through mentoring and coaching in order to cultivate leaders for future generations at New Life. New Life has preserved and raised three generations of disciples that have faithfully served in the church. Yet the church has struggled to adequately address the leadership crisis that looms. This is particularly evident with the millennial generation represented at New Life, those born approximately between 1981 and 1996. This age group is an integral part of the church, but it is slowly diminishing in number and influence.

This project seeks to address the matter through the intentional mentoring and coaching of emerging leaders from its millennial constituency. The strategic initiative that was implemented invited four millennial emerging leaders into a coaching relationship for eight to twelve weeks. The initiative took a more relational approach and was designed to be an integration of both mentoring and coaching functions. It drew heavily on Dr. Terry Walling's Leader Breakthru resources, *Focused Living* and *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, to provide the necessary structure.

The general goals of the initiative itself were to help participants get divine perspective on their lives in order to help clarify their calling from God, and then to empower them to begin living it out. Toward these ends, the initiative was a success. By and large, it verified that mentoring and coaching is in fact a viable means of empowering future millennial leaders. Indeed, there are some gaps to fill in the overall strategy. With confidence, this project is offered to New Life as a catalytic tool for intentionally developing leaders from the next generation and for future generations.

Content Reader: Terry Walling, PhD

Words: 287

This project is dedicated to my parents, Thel and Sonia Bringas, who coached, mentored, and supported me through critical seasons of my life, modeled for me a life of faithfulness to God, and instilled in me a love for lifelong learning.

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In a real sense, this project is the result of relationships with people who are wise, kind, and could always see the best in me. I would first like to thank Pastor Luida Johnson, whom God used to provide the unusual guidance that led me to start my doctoral studies. Thank you to Dr. Terry Walling, who approved my work, and whose coaching ministry has provided practical tools and pathways for me to live out my calling. Thank you to the wonderful people and ministry leaders I serve at New Life Foursquare for graciously allowing me to test my God-inspired ideas and stir my sanctified imagination for what is possible to advance His Kingdom. Finally, thank you to my wife Charilyn and our three children for the timely exhortations, loving encouragement, patient understanding, and unseen sacrifices that have allowed me to finish this work.

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PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

This project was conceived during a time when the author was working in a leadership role for the national office of the Foursquare Church, a Los Angeles-based Pentecostal denomination that was founded in 1923. At one particular gathering of younger pastors thirty-five years and below, the keynote speaker (a pastor in his early thirties) presented compelling evidence for the need to accelerate the development of the next generation of leaders for the local church. His general argument was that, for various reasons, the current generation of pastors (fifty-years of age and older) had waited too long to develop younger leaders and entrust them with key leadership positions. He concluded that the small but significant population of younger pastors in the Foursquare Church did not have the same convenience and must not make the same mistake. Instead, they must treat the task of leadership development of the next generation with urgency and plan on taking immediate action. The heart-felt and logical appeal of his presentation was inspiring. Ever since, the author of this project has taken the challenge of developing younger people for leadership seriously. Now, many years later, the author is the pastor of a multi-site Foursquare church called New Life that is in a season of opportunity with regard to empowering its next generation of emerging leaders, a generation respectively labeled “millennial.”¹

The decline of the North American church provides a compelling backdrop to the leadership challenge with regard to millennials. According to Pew Research, every major

¹ Millennials, today’s emerging adults, were born roughly between 1981 and 1996, which would make thirty-seven the age of the oldest Millennials by year 2018. Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Post-Millennials Begin,” Pew Research Center, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/millennials/>.

Christian tradition in America is diminishing in size.² Also, according to the 2015 U.S. Census results, Christian congregations across America are growing old.³ Alongside this trend is the unprecedented size of the millennial population in America. Because of their sheer size, they are one of the “most talked-about, written-about, agonized-about generations of all time,” and will make up over fifty percent of the U.S. labor force by 2020.⁴ As New Life enters its thirty-seventh year of existence, it is starting to mirror the statistics of congregational aging; and it is facing one of the most pressing challenge to its future: identifying, mentoring, and empowering millennials into vital leadership roles.

A 2017 study by the Barna Group indicated that the average age of pastors in America had risen from forty-four to fifty-four in a twenty-five year period.⁵ This “graying” of America’s clergy is a phenomenon with complex causes, one of which may be the lack of strategic leadership development at the local church level. One might argue that for most churches, the internal leadership development process is difficult and time-consuming, and it is easier to hire the leadership needed from the outside. Indeed over the years, New Life has been able to successfully fill certain leadership gaps through outside hiring. Yet, there is something to be said about the organic process of raising leaders from within its ranks. It might be argued that such leaders intuitively understand the

² “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” Pew Research Center, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

³ Brad Griffin, Jake Mulder, and Kara Powell, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 15-17.

⁴ Danita Bye, *Millennials Matter: Proven Strategies for Building Your Next-Gen Leader* (Racine, WI: BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), 12. Kindle.

⁵ “The Aging of America’s Pastors,” Barna Group, accessed October 17, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/aging-americas-pastors/>.

congregational culture and can grow more naturally to a place of being trusted with greater influence. This approach has also been evident in New Life's history, as several key leaders were raised into such positions through a more organic process. This process was not necessarily intentional, though it was highly relational.

New Life grew over the years through a faith-driven series of partnerships, church planting, and mergers into the multi-site church it is today. It currently exists as one church in two Southern California locations, Harbor City and Norwalk. It serves approximately five-hundred members, with services in three languages (English, Spanish, Tagalog), and traditional ministries that serve the needs of children, youth (high school through college), and adults. Over the years, it has experienced its share of congregational problems and organizational changes.

The arena of greatest challenge has been its ministry to young adults (eighteen to twenty-nine year-olds). In years past, emerging leaders were empowered and entrusted to influence youth in the congregation from middle school through college. When the church was smaller, the youth ministry did its best to integrate all of these ages and stages of development. As it grew, so did the need to separate youth by stage of development in order to meet their needs more effectively. This meant creating separate ministries for college youth and young adults in their mid to late twenties. The result was that the middle school and high school youth ministries thrived and grew, while the ministry to later-college and early career young adults struggled. Some of the reasons for this struggle will be explored in this project.

In general, over the past five to seven years, there has been a slow decline in attendance and ministry involvement among millennials who had grown up at New Life.

These millennials, for the most part, were from immigrant Filipino-American families who had grown up in the Catholic faith. In their earlier years, they had learned the value of service in the local church through the committed involvement of their parents. New Life was the place where the family could learn and serve to keep the family together. As they came of age, these millennials needed to find for themselves a more authentic expression of the faith in which they were raised. They continued to attend church and stay connected with peer-friendship groups within the church. They even served in places where they were asked to do so. There was also a small but significant circle of millennials who did not grow up in the church who had come from the outside having been invited by a friend, or they were fairly new to the Christian faith. There were not enough of these that attended New Life. If they did, it was certainly not with any regular consistency.

Over time, it became clear that millennials at New Life were showing little or no interest in traditional outreach efforts and discipleship classes. There were a handful of small groups and larger gatherings that had promising impact, but sustainability became elusive as handfulls of young adults began to leave the church for various reasons. For them, leaving did not look like an outright rejection of the church or of their Christian faith. It was more like a quiet resignation to the margins of disinterest and dissatisfaction. Thus, a growing concern for the future of New Life leadership has emerged. With an aging Boomer and GenX population on one end, and a vibrant greenhouse of Generation Z children on the other end, the excluded middle had become painfully obvious. Millennials were disengaging at New Life and something needed to be done.

Thus, the purpose of this project is to explore a theology for leadership formation, and awaken young Christian leaders to the process of leadership development through the tools of coaching and mentoring in order to begin creating an growth environment more conducive to cultivating leaders for future generations at New Life. The process includes the implementation of an experimental coaching initiative designed with millennials in mind. The overall goal is to add intentionality, versatility, and depth to the current practice of discipleship at New Life that will help to address the leadership crisis over the long haul.

Toward this end, Part One of this project will present New Life's history, ministry context, and congregational culture in more detail. It will identify some of the distinct qualities of the millennial generation in light of its growing disengagement with the institutional church. Then it will consider how these features might inform New Life's approach to discipleship and leadership formation among millennials.

Part Two will begin by examining the need for an intentional, integrated, and theologically grounded approach to discipleship and leadership development among millennials. Then a theological foundation will be laid for the practical integration of spiritual formation, leadership development, coaching and mentoring. The primary area of theological inquiry will be mentoring and coaching.

The final section will present a strategic initiative and initial field test for mentoring and coaching millennials at New Life. The details of the plan will be described from preparation, to implementation, to assessment. A field test will be conducted with willing participants to evaluate the impact, reproducibility, and sustainability of the plan.

In light of this, potential next steps may be determined for the ongoing development of New Life's emerging millennials.

Every church faces an ongoing leadership challenge. The nature of this challenge is reflected in Jesus' words to his disciples in Matthew 9:37-38. "The harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few." Jesus spoke these words out of compassion for the multitudes of people to whom he ministered during his early evangelistic campaigns. He noted that the number of available workers was disproportionate to magnitude of the need. Similarly, the problem churches must address involves the lack of leaders. This problem can evolve into a significant leadership crisis. The presenting challenge is how Christian leaders might intentionally create a culture of leadership development so that the inevitable leadership crisis will not lead to decline, but rather generate new momentum toward empowering emerging leaders.

CHAPTER 1:

NEW LIFE'S IMMIGRANT HISTORY AND CONGREGATIONAL CULTURE

New Life's history as a church cannot be separated from the history of Filipino immigration into Southern California in the 1970s and 80s. Between 1966 and 1975, there were approximately 115,000 Filipinos who immigrated to the United States. After 1975, over 40,000 Filipinos per year were granted immigrant visas. This trend continued through the 80s and 90s and resulted in Filipinos comprising the largest number of Asians in the United States by the mid-1990s.¹ The notable spike in Filipino relocation took place between the 80s and 90s. Nationally, the Filipino population increased by 82 percent between 1980 and 1990. In Los Angeles County, the increase in that same period went from approximately 99,000 Filipinos to 220,000, a 120 percent increase.²

In addition to the general Filipino population increase, the occupations of these new immigrants is important to note. Most of the Filipino immigrants before 1965 were farm workers and military recruits. But in 1965, a new immigration act was implemented which was supposed to accommodate the presumed growing numbers of European

¹ Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity & the Cultural Politics of Space* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 44-45.

² *Ibid.*, 48-49.

refugees. The irony was that as soon as the act was set in motion, European immigration declined and immigration from Asia and Latin America increased. For Filipinos in particular, the Immigration Act of 1965 was a turning point. The lifting of immigration restrictions along with the intimate political, economic, and cultural ties sustained between the Philippines and the United States set the tone for the surprising increase in Filipino immigration at the time.³ After 1965, more professional and white-collar Filipino workers arrived on American soil, eager to fill job positions in the financial and service industries. Along with the workers themselves, U.S. immigration policies made room for their families as well. Thus, by the 1980s, family reunification was taking place through two types of sponsoring groups. There were the immigrants who were sponsored by relatives already living in the United States before 1965, and then there were the immigrants who were sponsored by their children who had immigrated as professional workers after 1965.⁴

The effect of these dynamics resulted in a demographic amalgam that has characterized Filipino-American settlements in Los Angeles County. The sheer variety of Filipino immigration to the United States has given rise to a remarkable Filipino-American community. This variety has been described as one that “must include men and women who came to the United States at different times; who were born in the United States and who were born in the Philippines; who are unskilled, semiskilled, and professional; who are and are not educated; who came from and live in urban and rural

³ Jon Cruz, “Filipinos,” in *Nation of Peoples: A Sourcebook on America’s Multicultural Heritage*, ed. Elliott Robert Barkan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 211-215.

⁴ Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans*, 45.

areas; who came in as parents and as children; and who are offspring of both early and recent arrivals.”⁵ This morphing amalgam of immigrants called the Filipino-American community is the cultural context out of which New Life was born. This community had all the common human needs for belonging, identity, security, and significance. But the transitional season of adjustment to a new language, society, and cultural setting would spawn a survival mentality in which the awareness of such common human needs would be heightened.

New Life would have never come into existence if it had not been for the needs of the growing influx of Filipinos into Los Angeles in the late 70s and early 80s. New Life began in the early 80s as a small group Bible study in the home of an immigrant Filipino family in Los Angeles. Since religious faith in particular became a stabilizing force for immigrant families seeking to adapt their identity to a new cultural surrounding, this regular gathering rather unintentionally met such needs.⁶ Furthermore, new Filipino immigrants seeking to carve out a life in the United States, were marked by a willingness to sacrifice and work hard to succeed. But the stress of upheaval and surviving while in pursuit of a better life required an anchor. For most Filipinos, like many immigrant groups, that anchor was three-fold: family, faith, and connection with the homeland.

⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁶ Charles Hirschman, “The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States,” *International Migration Review* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 1211, accessed August 14, 2019, <https://faculty.washington.edu/charles/new%20PUBS/A100.pdf>.

The Bible study that eventually became New Life was a place where family, faith, and relationships could thrive and where the needs for belonging, identity and survival could be partially but powerfully met.

New Life's Evolving Congregational Culture

The congregational culture of any church can be a bit elusive to identify because of the complex nature of culture. Nancy Ammerman, professor of Sociology at Boston University, presents a compelling definition of congregational culture from her extensive work in studying congregations in America. Her definition is multi-layered. The culture of a congregation is:

...the predictable patterns of who does what and habitual strategies for telling the world about the things held most dear...A culture includes the congregation's history and stories of its heroes. It includes its symbols, rituals, and worldview. It is shaped by the cultures in which its members live (represented by their demographic characteristics), but it takes on its own unique identity and character when those members come together.⁷

Furthermore congregations, whether or not they are affiliated with a larger denomination, still identify with some specific spiritual heritage and religious tradition that has influenced their culture and corporate identity. "What each congregation cooks up, then, is always a mix of local creativity and larger tradition...that group's selective retrieval of their own theological heritage, along with the local inventions that have been necessary to make sense of life in that place."⁸

⁷ Nancy T. Ammerman, "Culture and Identity in the Congregation," in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, edited by Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

Over the years, the kind of culture New Life created was influenced by a history of significant transitions. It has relocated into different communities, merged with smaller churches, planted churches, and launched ministries that served first-generation immigrant families. The latest and perhaps most significant transition took place in 2012 when Pastor Thel Bringas retired from pastoral ministry. His retirement occasioned a change in organization and structure of the church as well as an interesting cultural shift. New Life decided to merge with a sister congregation which was pastored by Ken Bringas, Thel's son. Together, they became a multisite church, one church in two locations, Norwalk and Harbor City.

The transition to becoming a multi-site church presented the leadership of New Life with some critical challenges. For the first three years, the main challenge was to help the congregations think, act, and feel more like one church. At the five-year mark, the goal was to develop a clear and accessible spiritual formation pathway, process, and program. Around this time, the challenge of discipling and developing its millennials for future leadership became painfully clear. As millennials slowly disengaged, it was as if the congregation began to feel its age. It was apparent that New Life was losing its youthful vigor.

While a diverse and growing Filipino-American community in Los Angeles was the immediate cultural context out of which New Life emerged, its historical context reaches back a bit farther to the influence of Foursquare missionaries in the Southern Philippines. In the 1970s, the Southern island of Mindanao was the scene of much political and social unrest. Davao City, one of the most populated cities in Mindanao, suffered the violence of civil war stemming from a growing Muslim liberation

movement. It was in the heat of all this turmoil that a move of God began through American Foursquare missionaries Arthur and Evelyn Thompson. Revival broke out in Davao City which grew into a movement of churches being planted all over the island of Mindanao. The Thompsons had the wisdom to train workers and leaders and their families by founding both an elementary school and a Bible college. When the revival began to subside, the fruit of that season was preserved because a solid structure and program for discipleship and leadership training was successfully implemented.

Soon after the Thompsons established the Davao City church, they adopted a young man named Thel Bringas. Thel was born and raised in Mindanao and was saved and discipled under the Thompson's ministry. A few years later when the Thompsons relocated back to Los Angeles, Thel came with them and established himself with a bivocational career in broadcasting and evangelistic ministry with the Foursquare church.

However, amid the immigration boom of immigrant Filipinos into Los Angeles at that time, Thel was presented with the opportunity to start a church among this fast-growing community. Around 1982, he started a small Bible study in the home of one recently emigrated Filipino family. Through a series of unforeseen events, that Bible study grew and was catalyzed by a move of God. This wave of revival brought in many Filipino young people who were stuck in the violent cycles of the Los Angeles street gang culture of that time. They came by the dozens to this Friday night Bible study to hear the gospel and put their faith in Jesus. Soon after, the church called New Life was born.

This immigrant history of New Life has shaped its congregational ethos in a profound way. As mentioned previously, immigrants are focused on surviving in the new

land in which they live. They band together as much as they can as a family, then they take significant risks in developing relational connections that will help them get the support and resources they need to survive. Immigrants know that when they arrive in a new land, they must do all they can to survive and eventually figure out how to succeed. However, the breakdown in social and cultural solidarity that happens when any family uproots itself from the homeland is often the source of much anxiety and stress. Immigrant families deal with isolation and must find places where they can belong.⁹

Elements of New Life's Congregational Culture

The unique role of the church in an immigrant context like this can be to provide a safe place to belong and to preserve some of the cultural values that distinguish the Filipino cultural identity. In the case of New Life, it became a safe place for Filipino-American families to belong and grow together in a community (extended family). Thus, written in the DNA of New Life's ethos is a tendency to treat people as family and provide a place of belonging.

This disposition naturally generated a high level of relationality. In Filipino culture, this is called *pakikipagkapwa* (the principle of Filipino relationality). In English, this term might be described as "shared identity, equality, the dignity and being of others," or "being with others."¹⁰ At New Life, there is a noticeable atmosphere of warm

⁹ Pat Spracklin, "Top 10 Problems Faced by Immigrants," *ImmiGroup*, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.immigroup.com/news/top-10-problems-immigrants>.

¹⁰ Jaime Guevara, "Pakikipagkapwa," accessed July 29, 2018, https://books.google.com/books?id=hXJe6vKMjroC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI#v=onepage&q&f=false, 10-11.

cordiality and sociability. Its congregational culture generates a strong perception of family welcome and hospitality. It manifests in a relational style that colors nearly everything that is done, from making decisions in a council meeting to organizing volunteers. In such an environment, personal invitations done through various means of communication technology are more effective in mobilizing people than large public announcements or mass email. This ethos of relationality is a significant reason that New Life considers itself a safe place for people to belong.

Another value that shapes congregational culture is education. This seems somewhat stereotypical of Asian groups. Similarly, New Life families value their children's education. The underlying assumption here is that education is the doorway to opportunity and success as defined by a better quality of life. Many congregants work hard to give their kids the opportunity to go to school and finish a higher education degree. New Life was born out of the need to bring the gospel to first and second generation Filipino-immigrants who had a such strong values.

New Life's immigrant families were also significantly influenced by the Catholic faith. For many Filipino families, Catholicism was an identity marker that helped keep the family together. However for some, the traditions of Catholic Christianity lost their relevance. They failed to provide new meaning and solutions to the issues with which they were dealing. In that context, New Life became a safe place where a sense of family could be restored, Filipino values could be preserved and celebrated, practical solutions from God's Word could be learned and processed, and people could experience the healing presence of God's love and grace. The first families of New Life essentially left behind the practices of Catholic tradition (mass, confession to a priest, penance, liturgical

worship, prayers to Mary and the saints) and began to replace them with the distinct and emerging evangelical traditions of gospel-centered preaching and teaching, Bible study, worship through music and song, personal and corporate prayer, and witness. Added to this was the theological tradition of the Foursquare Church, which was influenced by the Pentecostal movement of the 1900s. The features of Foursquare doctrine include belief in the present and active ministry of the Holy Spirit through gifts of power and the belief that the Holy Spirit is ordaining women into pastoral ministry.

Just as important as the values and theological heritage that New Life embraced were the convictions that were shaped by the kind of spiritual leadership it received over the years. From the influence of Pastor Thel's leadership, the church had learned to value the relevant and helpful communication of God's Word. Pastor Thel's style was that of a preacher-evangelist. He illustrated the teaching of Scriptures well and helped people understand how it applied to their lives and circumstances. Because of his background in radio broadcasting, Pastor Thel's voice was quite captivating and compelling. The church learned to value the excellent exposition and communication of the Bible.

In addition, Pastor Thel also believed that music was a powerful tool for spreading the gospel and expressing praise to God. He himself was a musician and singer, and valued using the fine arts in worship services. Music in particular has always played an important role at New Life. It was a means of testifying to God's works and character. It is was also a means of welcoming God's manifest presence. Perhaps the deeper underlying value was transformation through the experience of God's manifest presence. Music and the fine arts were all expressions and means of worshipping God at New Life. But what motivated the use of such beautiful expressions was a hunger for a

transformational encounter with God. So the experience of God's presence became essential to congregational life. When people became aware of God's presence and responded, life-change happened. This has been New Life's experience.

In addition, the revival history of New Life has played a major role in instilling this value. New Life experienced three major moves of God in its history. Those spiritual awakenings were marked by an unusual display of God's manifest presence and power. People became aware of their need of God. They were convicted of sin, and they responded with repentance, devotion, and a consecration of their lives to God. Those seasons were also distinguished by the practice of prayer and worship. Seeking God through extended times of worship and intercessory prayer became a priority. While the showers of revival came and went, they had the effect of driving these spiritual practices deep into the soil of congregational culture.

In summary, the congregational culture of New Life might be described by the following statements: New Life is a place of belonging. New Life is relational. New Life loves learning the Word of God. New Life desires a real encounter with God. New Life loves expressing worship to God through music and the arts. New Life loves family. New Life loves being together. These values have served as identity markers for New Life over the years.

Yet, a pivotal challenge remains. As an immigrant church started in a mostly Filipino context, it will need to come to terms with the reality of a rapidly changing society, a society that is shaping and discipling the lives of its children in a way that would question and even threaten the cultural values it has tried so hard to preserve. There is an air of growing concern that the younger generations may not embrace

Christian faith and values with the same devotion as their forebears. The third generation of young people at New Life (the millennials) represent America's largest generation, and yet many of them are leaving church. For the ones that have chosen to stay, some have felt unintentionally marginalized in the church's larger mission and vision.

Important questions remain for how New Life can increase its value of and intentionality toward the millennials in the midst, and address the real causes behind their disengagement and detachment. Furthermore, New Life leadership can see this as an invitation to re-examine what it means to be faithful to the gospel and the Great Commission in light of the needs and opportunities presented by the next generation of millennials. This is the generation it must intentionally begin preparing for future leadership.

CHAPTER 2:

THE EMERGING MILLENNIAL GENERATION

From a larger perspective, the leadership challenge at New Life Foursquare Church is only one local expression of a much larger challenge facing the Protestant Church in North America. As evidenced in the recent history of its institutional life, something significant is declining. Out of this decline, a new reality is emerging. The sweeping changes that have arisen with the transition from modernity to post-modernity have sculpted the religious landscape in unprecedented ways. Such cultural revolutions themselves are nothing new. In fact, they are necessary. Phyllis Tickle, who wrote *The Great Emergence*, explores the fascinating historical pattern that about every five-hundred years, there is an upheaval of massive proportions in human history that begins with or directly impacts the Christian Church.¹ Such exceptional changes throw the Church into transitional seasons that open the door for necessary and creative redefinitions of what it means to be the faithful people of God. Tickle argues

¹ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 17.

convincingly that the North American Church is currently living in such a transition.²

Perhaps no clearer is this seen than in the lives of its millennials. While the Church is not the only institution in society that must reckon with the task of engaging this population, the spiritual lives of millennials present a unique challenge to the Church that will require courage and intentionality.

In general, the relationship between millennials and the institutional Church is one of decline, disengagement, and transition. As the influence of the institutional church in North America has been declining, so has its influence with millennials. The decline is most obviously seen alongside the general decline in church attendance across the nation. Regular worship attendance in all the mainline Protestant Churches as well as the Catholic Churches in North America has fallen by the millions.³ Most Protestant denominations in North America are shrinking in terms of numbers of viable churches. While America's Evangelical churches have experienced a general increase in adult participation, the number of Americans that identify as Evangelicals has diminished notably.⁴ Interestingly, some researchers have associated the general decline in church attendance to the widespread lack of church attendance and participation by eighteen to twenty-nine year olds.⁵ It is clear that the church is both declining and aging at the same time. Perhaps a more startling statistic comes from the Barna Group, who found that

² Ibid.

³ Griffin, 15-16.

⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵ The 2015 US Census shows that 18-29 year old adults comprised twenty-two percent of the adult US population. But the same age group represents less than ten percent of church attendees nationwide. Ibid., 16-17.

nearly sixty percent of millennials (born between 1984-2002) have walked away from the Christian faith or from the institutional church during the first ten years of their adult life. Furthermore, the percentage of unchurched millennials has increased since 1994 from forty-four percent to fifty-two percent.⁶

In general, millennials have a negative perception toward church and organized religion. They do not believe the church is necessary for spiritual life and that it might actually be detrimental to one's faith. For millennials who do not attend church, they perceive Christian church-goers as judgmental, hypocritical, insensitive, and anti-gay.⁷ Thus, the case for millennial disengagement is bolstered.

However, such statistics do not paint an uncontested picture of decline and disengagement. Jonathan Hill, a professor of Sociology at Calvin College, questioned the way most authors were interpreting the tons of raw data accumulated around the subject of millennials and religion. His argument is that the various forms of exodus narratives that get weaved around such data are actually a flawed distortion.⁸ Hill cites past research that reveals that the basic fluctuations in millennial religious involvement (church attendance, prayer, and religious affiliation) are due to changes on the margins of such involvement, not changes at the center. For example, in the case of church attendance, the percentage of eighteen to twenty-nine year-olds that attend religious services has

⁶ Marian Liautaud, "5 Things Millennials Wish the Church Would Be," *Exponential*, accessed January 26, 2018, <https://exponential.org/5-things-millennials-wish-the-church-would-be/>.

⁷ The Barna Group and The Cornerstone Knowledge Network, "Making Space for Millennials: A Blueprint for Your Culture, Ministry, Leadership and Facilities" (Ventura, CA: The Barna Group, 2014), 15, PDF.

⁸ Jonathan Hill, *Emerging Adulthood and Faith* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College Press, 2015), Loc. 138. Kindle.

remained roughly the same for forty years. The change (or decline) is associated with those who only attend church once or twice a year. Simultaneously, the numbers of millennials who never attend church grew from fifteen to thirty percent.⁹ In other words, if millennials are leaving the church, it is not the ones at the center who “practice their faith publicly and privately,” but rather it is the ones who are nominal and on the fringes of their Christian faith.¹⁰

In spite of this curious contradiction of data-interpretation, it is apparent that the North American Protestant church is diminishing in numbers and feeling its age. If there can be any agreement in light of conflicting statistical analysis with regard to millennial religious participation, it might be that of generational responsibility. It is the responsibility of leadership in every generation to work with the next generation toward an understanding of what intergenerational faithfulness to God might look like in light of the rapidly changing culture.

Reasons for Disengagement

It is necessary to explore the reasons for millennial disengagement from and dissatisfaction with the institutional church. For the church leaders and committed parishioners on the front lines of local ministry, the pattern of disengagement is very real. In fact, it wears several masks. As many of the standard exodus narratives cite, disengagement looks like non-attendance or low attendance. For some churches,

⁹ Ibid., loc. 186-7.

¹⁰ Ibid., loc. 194-6.

disengagement looks like solid millennial attendance at large worship gatherings, but little to no participation in discipleship programs or decision-making processes. Yet for others disengagement can look like simply walking away from the faith of their childhood. Regardless, this pattern of detachment is linked to several contributing factors.

First of all, millennials grew up in a hyper-consumer culture that bombarded its customers with an often overwhelming number of choices. Having near-limitless choices can breed paralysis. Because of this, millennials, when faced with too many choices, may often choose to put off making a decision, sometimes indefinitely. Furthermore, “millennials sometimes appear indecisive, noncommittal, and irresponsible because of the reality of many possibilities pulling at them. The sense that they may miss a better opportunity later by making an immediate or specific choice now often defers commitment to any choice.”¹¹

Another facet to this paralysis of choice is that millennials deeply respect the options, desires and needs of the individual. As a result, so much of conventional church processes and programs can feel rigid and inflexible to millennials, who would rather keep their options open, even with regard to things like doctrinal statements and church membership. They want to retain the option of picking and choosing which doctrines, standards, and faith practices resonate with their own personal views.¹² This mindset applied to the institutional requirements of the church can trigger disengagement.

¹¹ Jolene Erlacher. *Millennials in Ministry* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2014), Loc. 166-7, Kindle.

¹² *Ibid.*, loc. 172.

Secondly, the prevailing millennial attitude toward religion and church is one of indifference. They simply do not see the relevance of religion or church to the shaping of their lives. Religion and church are fixtures in the background of their busy lives, and as long as it is not hurting others, or acting fanatical, then it can be left that way.¹³ There is an underlying belief structure that supports this indifference. Millennials believe that the goal of religion and the church is moral formation. Because they do not want to be immoral, they agree that the church is necessary for a time to teach them good morals. However, for those who see themselves as typically good, moral people, religion becomes irrelevant.¹⁴ The perception of irrelevance can breed an attitude of indifference.

Furthermore, millennials have embraced a de facto religion that sociologist Christian Smith calls *moralistic therapeutic deism* (MTD).¹⁵ Smith explains that MTD means that one should, be good, pursue happiness, and go to God when you have problems because he's watching over us from a distance.¹⁶ MTD has replaced the function of church and religion in the lives of millennials and seems to be fueling an attitude of indifference that reinforces millennial disengagement with the church.

Millennials seem to make a clear distinction between religion and spirituality. Just because they are indifferent toward institutional religion and church does not mean they

¹³ Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009), 145.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 144-7.

¹⁵ The main tenets of moralistic therapeutic deism are, respectively: 1) God exists and created the world, but he watches over it and all human life on earth, 2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other as taught by the Bible and most other religions, 3) The main goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself, 4) God is not needed except as a resolution to a problem. 5) Good people will go to heaven when they die. (Smith, *Souls in Transition*, 154).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

are void of faith. Many identify themselves as spiritual as opposed to religious. The difference again is in the perception that religion and church are inflexible, judgmental and intolerant; in contrast, spirituality is accommodating, open, and inclusive.¹⁷ In the mind of a millennial, this means that one can pursue a spiritual way of life without being religious. In practicality, this means they do not have to commit to any one church, denomination, or set of doctrinal beliefs. They are free to “honor cultural values, foster diverse relationships, and maintain a system of personal beliefs” without having to become active members of the local church.¹⁸

Thirdly, there is a pronounced difference between the perspectives, experiences and values of millennials and the older adults in their lives. Because of this, there is a tendency for the older generation to exercise an unconscious superiority in which they see their values and perspectives as more valid than their younger inexperienced counterparts. The result is that the older generations consciously or unconsciously disengage from the world of millennials instead of seeking first to understand them.

As a whole, one might argue that the institutional church has to a significant degree disconnected itself from the culture at large, not to mention the valuable aspects of millennial culture. Such disengagement is being mirrored back from millennials toward the church. They have disengaged with the church because the church first disengaged with them. It is a form of cross-cultural tension which will require cooperative effort toward mutual understanding.

¹⁷ Erlacher, *Millennials in Ministry*, loc. 190.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Fourthly, millennials can be perceived as a threat when they question what to them are confusing practices and perspectives upheld by the institutional church. Instead, their questioning should be perceived as an invitation to bring clarification or to engage in the kind of conversation that can bring change. Millennials value open-mindedness and tolerance and tend to seek to understand the diverse perspectives around them. If church leadership perceives them as a threat, then any potentially constructive dialogue resulting in clarity will be shut down. Disengagement will follow. Older leadership must assume that their questioning is simply a way of gaining clarity for themselves about the nature, vision, and mission of the church amid a society that has marketed religion to them most of their lives. Their questioning need not be perceived as a threat, but rather as a means of keeping existing leadership accountable over the matter of relevance and cultural engagement.¹⁹

Last of all, the disengagement and dissatisfaction of millennials with the church can be linked to their value for genuinely meeting the real needs of people. As churches often need to balance the organizational sophistication involved in running programs with the simplicity of responding to the real needs of people, it is common for a tension to occur between the two. Millennials in ministry settings might be quickly turned off when church leadership seems to prioritize programs and facilities over people. Without an “understanding of the biblical or historical basis for current ministry practices, disenchantment with formal presentations and programs, and seeming inconsistencies in

¹⁹ Ibid., loc. 215.

effectively meeting the needs of people and communities all contribute to the disengagement epidemic we are experiencing.”²⁰

Cultural Transition

Another way to look at the millennial challenge is through the lens of cultural transition. In the midst of the fluctuating changes that have taken place in the transition from modernity to post-modernity, there are notable realities that have emerged for millennials that also reflect a discontinuous difference in the way they see the world. David Kinnaman describes this new reality in three parts: access, alienation, and authority.²¹

Access has to do with the “unprecedented diversity and availability of information, social relationships, visual imagery, and products” through digital media.²² Millennials are the first generation to be born in a digital world where technology allows them access to all sorts of information, from the light and trivial to the depraved and detestable. The challenges to discipleship of this generation are becoming obvious as they grow to exhibit more distracted, addicted, and narcissistic lives. Digital technology is no longer just a tool as it was for previous generations. It competes as a powerful grid through which they experience and interpret life, explore truth, and build a sense of connection with others.²³

²⁰ Ibid., loc. 264-5.

²¹ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Re-thinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 38.

²² The Barna Group, “Making Space for Millennials,” 9.

²³ Kinnaman, 42.

In connection with such access, another erratic cultural shift for millennials has to do with alienation. Alienation is Kinnaman's word for what Christian Smith calls indifference. This concept has to do with a deeply-held apprehension millennials hold toward the institutions and authorities of society. Such apprehension is rooted in the sense of isolation millennials feel from family, community and institutions.²⁴ Kinnaman suggests that this alienation has its roots in the 1960s cultural upheavals in North America, and impacts millennial's experience of family, institutions of society, and transitions to adulthood. Thus, enough millennials are growing up fatherless, putting off marriage and childbearing to a later time, and are skeptical (if not cynical) of society's key institutions including the church.²⁵

The combined result of both unparalleled access with institutional alienation is that the positive influence of authority begins to fail. Millennials are uncertain which of all the competing voices of authority can really be trusted, from marketers to politicians, from politicians to pastors. They have seen their share of scandal. As a result, institutional loyalty does not come easy with them.²⁶ They are skeptical not just of institutions, but the authorities that represent them. This presents a momentous challenge to the church and leaders who are key Christian influencers because such skepticism could mean that the champions of Evangelical Christianity will face diminishing

²⁴ Ibid., 44.

²⁵ Ibid., 48-50.

²⁶ The Barna Group, "Making Space for Millennials," 9.

influence with the millennial generation.²⁷ It follows that there would be a growing concern for the availability, quality and credibility of Christian leadership from subsequent generations.

The issues of access, alienation, and authority are rooted in the profound cultural transitions that have unfolded in North American society over recent decades. These issues are another way of understanding the factors that have contributed to millennial decline and disengagement. The remaining challenge facing the church will involve not only how to re-engage millennials, but also how to create an environment for effective discipleship and leadership formation for them. The desired result would be not only that millennials come back to church, but also stake a claim in its future. The solutions to the problem are multi-layered and reflect the struggle of an aging, disengaged, and program-driven institution called the church. However, the church is more than an institution. While its institutional nature may have become more of a hindrance to millennial engagement, hope lies in revisiting and reclaiming its truest essence and central mission, that of being a people sent by Christ to make disciples of all people groups (Mt 28:19).

The Challenge of Engaging Millennials at New Life

The above reasons for millennial disengagement may resonate with the millennials that still call New Life home. But from another perspective, there are other factors that keep New Life from effectively engaging the millennials in their midst. In their timely book, *Growing Young*, authors Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin

²⁷ Kinnaman, 53.

documented the unexpected responses of leaders whose churches were committed to reaching young people. When asked to name the most significant challenges they faced in this effort, they listed “their own congregation” as the biggest obstacle.²⁸ They identified seven hindrances present within the life of the congregation. In order of importance, these were: the generation gap, a lack of committed volunteers, the lack of an effective church strategy, the lack of material resources, a lack of willingness to change, the worship style, and the older generation’s suspicion and mistrust toward the young.²⁹ Similarly, it can be argued that the greatest obstacles to engaging millennials at New Life come from within.

To be clear, an individual’s desire, motivation, and values play a key role in the effectiveness of any discipleship or mentoring effort. A millennial who grew up in New Life may settle in their young adult years for relating to the church as a consumer rather than a contributor. Indeed, they may have valid reasons for doing so, or they may not be aware that they have disengaged in such a way. They most likely will miss the opportunity for experiencing authentic Christian community, the kind that is necessary for life transformation to happen. Unless their values change, their commitment level cannot be expected to increase.

However, the environment or culture also has a critical part to play. Of the seven internal hindrances mentioned previously, perhaps the most significant for New Life’s congregational context is the older generation’s attitude toward the young. This attitude can be labeled as mistrust or suspicion. It is rooted in a feature of Filipino culture known

²⁸ Griffin, Mulder, Powell, *Growing Young*, 290.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 291.

as filial piety. Filial piety is the need to avoid shame and instead sustain the collective honor of the family.³⁰ This is also known as saving face. In this social construct, younger family members are expected to uphold the dignity of the family by showing proper respect to their elders at all times. In addition, the opinions of the young are treated as secondary to the opinions of older members.³¹ This cultural feature, while serving a healthy function, can also have the negative side-effect of silencing the voice of the younger generation.

Creating an Optimal Environment for Communication and Understanding

At New Life, there have been numerous times when the opinions and perspectives of younger people were withheld for fear of disrespecting those older than them. In many cases, those fears were founded as older leaders in fact perceived such opinions and perspectives as disrespect and dishonor. In such an environment, it is easy to understand why millennials might silently disengage. Thus, on top of the outside factors that prompt millennial detachment, there are certain internal cultural factors that work against a more effective mentoring of millennials into leadership. The challenge remains to create an optimal environment for intergenerational understanding and communication. Such an ethos can conceivably improve New Life's chances at implementing an effective, sustainable, reproducible leadership development process.

³⁰ Chara Scroope, "Filipino Culture," *Cultural Atlas*, 2017, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/filipino-culture/filipino-culture-family>.

³¹ Ibid.

Toward this end, the three following strategic ideas may prove promising. The first idea is to mobilize people in the congregation that have demonstrated empowering leadership. They need not hold a title or official leadership role in the church, but their enabling influence is unmistakable. The *Growing Young* authors call these people keychain leaders.³² They hold the power to grant or limit access to ministry opportunities, critical decisions, strategic meetings, or significant leadership roles within the congregation. They are aware of their influence and intentional about “entrusting and empowering all generations...with their own set of keys.”³³ This kind of leader is found naturally training and enabling others, and even doing just-in-time mentoring with younger people in the congregation. “Everyone seems to get better when this leader is involved, and a long list of people can point to this leader as the reason they serve in the church today.”³⁴ New Life has several of these keychain leaders that can be brought together, encouraged, envisioned, and unleashed to connect with millennials in the congregation who show signs of leadership potential.

The second idea is to “create holding environments” within congregational life that slow down the process of change and instead “nurture and encourage major shifts.”³⁵ “A holding environment is a space that keeps attention focused on a problem in a way that is uncomfortable enough to promote change but safe enough that the church’s

³² Griffin, Mulder, and Powell, 53.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 58.

³⁵ Ibid., 292.

anxiety about change is not too acute. The role of the leader is to carefully raise the heat so that the problem is taken seriously but then lower the heat when tensions rise too high and threaten to boil over.”³⁶ An example of this might be for the pastor or teaching team at New Life to address the importance of empowering the young people of the congregation as a part of a sermon series on serving in ministry. Another example is for key leaders and staff to regularly place the empowering and discipling of younger leaders on the staff meeting agenda. Another possible step would be to feature and celebrate the testimony of a younger person during a Sunday worship service. Creating a holding environment requires a certain leadership intuition that can discern when to stretch toward the uncomfortable, and then when to stop and relax the reins on change for a while. With this in mind, holding environments can allow the congregation to warm up to the possible shift, instead of trying to force it to happen.

Lastly, instead of seeking to do something big and wide-sweeping, there is wisdom in experimenting with new possibilities on the sidelines of the congregation’s ministry life instead of in highly visible venues. Sideline experiments would include efforts less visible to the congregation such as trying a new approach with a Bible Study group, a leadership committee, a small group of students, or one-on-one coaching with selected emerging leaders.³⁷ Some of the smaller ministries might be more open to the preferred future of empowering millennials than the whole congregation. The idea is to search out ways to involve younger people in ministry opportunities that are on the

³⁶ Ibid., 292.

³⁷ Ibid., 293.

margins, so as to mitigate the threat of change, and maximize an opportunity for mentoring. Preferably, such lower-key ministries would also provide an opportunity for cross-generational interaction. Regardless, experimenting on the margins can be a hopeful way to introduce a shift toward a more empowering environment for millennials. Having considered the unique challenge and a few auspicious possibilities for shifting the congregational culture of New Life toward empowering millennials, it is time to explore theological foundations.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will examine literature that helps to frame three strategic issues facing New Life. The first topic is spiritual formation. The literature reviewed will underscore the importance of bringing spiritual formation to the forefront as a top priority of the congregation. The next issue involves the intentional development of leaders for the future. The literature will analyze the need, nature, and purpose of Christian leadership development. Within this framework, mentoring and coaching will be considered as key approaches and methods for intentionally developing leaders in the local church. Lastly, the issue of mentoring millennials will be covered. The selected literature will explore the ethos and structures that would be more conducive to successfully coaching and mentoring millennials. Together, these texts introduce a philosophical and theological foundation for creating a pathway for mentoring emerging millennial leaders in the local church.

Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation, Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken

Renovation of the Church is the fascinating and thought-provoking account of Oak Hill Church in Folsom, California. Over a ten-year period, the church transitioned from a seeker-sensitive model to a way of doing church that focused on spiritual formation, discipleship, and life transformation. Authors Kent Carlson and Mike Leuken, who pastored Oak Hill, adopted the seeker-driven model of church made popular by Willow Creek in the 1980s. In a short time, Oak Hill grew rapidly to around 1,700 members as they did everything they could to reach lost people with the gospel. However, after experiencing a marked growth in overall attendance, they realized that the seeker-driven model had spawned a system that could continue to achieve such results without God. After ten years or so, the church leadership began to feel the unhealthy ramifications of this way of doing church. They had created an organizational beast that began to take on a life of its own.¹

The deeper problem had been exposed. It had to do with the church's response to the pervasive consumerism engrained in North American culture. Rather than question, critique, and dispute the effects of consumerism, attractional church-growth methods essentially embraced it as the cultural norm and harnessed it into strategies and ministry models that attract people to the church. The problem is that attractional models of church require constant feeding. Church had been structured around drawing people to the "cutting-edge, entertaining, inspirational, and always-growing services and

¹ Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), loc. 300-332, Kindle.

ministries.”² When marketed to the community as a place that they will always be surprised, inspired, touched, and entertained, the church has to deliver on its promise week in and week out. This led to a certain level of emotional and spiritual depletion and hunger for greater spiritual depth, which is what Oak Hill leaders and staff began to experience after ten years.³

The disequilibrium in Oak Hill’s leadership proliferated around the need to keep reaching lost people through an attraction-based way of doing church and the need to slow down and experience profound spiritual transformation. They saw that the model around which they had built the church was keeping people happy and engaged enough to keep coming. However, it was also working against any interest in spiritual transformation by learning to live the way Jesus taught. Oak Hill leadership had to come to a watershed decision to either continue the seemingly never-ending cycles of an attractational, consumer-oriented ministry or to transition into a transformation-based model of church. Making the change would require prophetically challenging consumerism, confronting personal ambition, and rearranging their personal and congregational life around Jesus’ life and teachings. The cost was substantial and painful as congregational satisfaction diminished and resulted in criticism, hurt feelings, and members leaving. Oak Hill leadership made mistakes in their committed attempts to reshape their worship gatherings, sermons, outreaches, and ministries around the goal of spiritual formation and discipleship.

² Ibid., loc. 308.

³ Ibid., loc. 338-359.

The authors' deep reflections on the mistakes and missteps made in their ten-year journey of transition was strangely refreshing and profoundly helpful. There is no fool-proof way to make such transformational changes. Perhaps one of the most helpful insights presented by the authors' reflection was their challenge to re-examine the paradigm of ministry success. They state, "our paradigm of success, needs an overhaul. Our instincts need to be retrained. We need to learn to think counterintuitively. Declining attendance may actually be a sign of God's blessing. Decreased offerings may be the result of an exceptional leadership decision. The loss of momentum may be God's way of exposing our hidden attachments and deepening our dependency on him."⁴ In order to move toward a model of ministry that leads toward spiritual transformation, a leader needs to challenge conventional ideas of success with the counter-intuitive principles of God's kingdom as taught by Jesus, where loss is the pathway to gain, and death to oneself is a prerequisite for discipleship.

This work raises a couple of concerns. First, in the authors' attempts to address the consumerism and individualism that are embedded in North American culture, they downplay the role of the congregation in the work of transformation. With their being "laser focused on the individual's journey toward Christlikeness," it is easy to marginalize the power of participation in the corporate body.⁵ One might be left to think that spiritual formation is all about practicing basic spiritual disciplines as an individual matter before God, while the role of the faith community, albeit significant, comes

⁴ Ibid., loc. 2304-230.

⁵ Ibid., loc. 2378.

secondary and somewhat separate. In truth, discipleship happens through both individual and community effort as individuals learn to be interdependent, retaining their own individuality, but drawing strength and sustenance from the presence of God experienced both personally and corporately with the worshipping community. In such a context, the growth of congregation and individual impact each other reciprocally. The authors seem to have recognized their over-individualistic approach to spiritual formation and should hope to apply a more thorough ecclesiology into their formation program.

A second point of concern has to do with the lack of a more Trinitarian understanding in their approach to formation. Emphasis is given to the life and teaching of Jesus, and rightly so. The pursuit of Christlikeness is the goal of Christian formation. Emphasis is also given to the role of individual intention in responding to the call to be transformed. One chapter focuses in on spiritual formation and presents the importance of the individual will in cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit to transform specific areas of the soul.⁶ Overall however, the role of the Father and the Spirit in the transformation process were not given adequate attention. Perhaps it was not necessary given the focus of the book.

Nonetheless, the value of this work to the challenge that New Life faces is its re-establishing of spiritual formation and discipleship as the central organizing principle of the local church and the goal of the Christian life. Oak Hill's transition from attraction-based to transformation-based is insightful and instructive for any local congregation seeking to be faithful to the calling to be church and not simply go to church.

⁶ Ibid., loc. 1532-1614.

Furthermore, such a shift fosters an ethos of authenticity, care, and commitment to Christ that can both challenge and invite millennial engagement. Creating a mentoring pathway for millennials will require the courage to confront the entrenched values of the surrounding culture in which they live in order to reorder their lives around Christ's call.

The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God, Dallas Willard

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard presents a compelling vision of Christian discipleship. He prophetically critiques and challenges consumer Christianity, which has come to replace a vision of true discipleship. He distinguishes Christian discipleship from both the nominalism of Sunday-only Christians and the mixed religious-social-political interests of right or left-wing moralizers. These viewpoints represent some of the various gospels of sin management. In these constructs of the gospel, eternal life is seen and most valued as a future reward. In contrast, Willard argues that Jesus teachings suggest that the target should not be a future salvation in eternity, but a salvation now, which “includes discipleship, forgiveness, and heaven to come.”⁷

Willard addresses a matter that modern-day Christians find difficult to face. It is the issue of a profound lack of discipleship and the growing gap between believing in Christ and becoming more like Him. Stated another way, the North American church is full of believers who have made a confession of faith but are not experiencing the transformation such faith was intended to effect. Willard points out the inadequacy of any theological view that assumes the kingdom to be an exclusively future reality and reward

⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 47.

for the faithful. In contrast, he contends that God's kingdom has invaded the present human condition and God Himself has invited humanity to experience the present life under His rule.⁸ Yet for Willard, the kingdom of God also has a future expression in eternity, but it is seamlessly connected to its present reality in the world because in his words, it is "the range of His effective will, where what He wants done is done."⁹ That range spans time and eternity, past, present, and future. The divine conspiracy then is the rule and reign of God in full operation within present human history offering an eternal kind of life to be experienced here and now to all who would desire it.

Willard goes on to highlight the unique way in which God has invited humanity to participate with Him in this divine conspiracy. Such a life can be found through apprenticeship to Jesus, the unique Son of God who perfectly expresses the life of the kingdom and teaches all who would learn from Him how to live it. It is in this context of eternity now that Willard posits a more holistic discipleship that transforms every aspect and arena of one's life and relationships. He creatively elaborates on the Sermon on the Mount, re-presenting the Beatitudes as pronouncements that God's rule and its blessings are available to everyone, even those whom society has disqualified for such blessings. This is contrary to the way the Beatitudes have traditionally been understood: as a new set of commands from Jesus or a list of requirements up to which one must live.¹⁰ Thus, Willard's convincing elaboration of authentic Christian discipleship involves understanding the true nature of the kingdom of God, embracing the centrality of Jesus as

⁸ Ibid., 26-8.

⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰ Ibid., 119-121.

the greatest teacher and wisest person who ever lived, and engaging the role of human intention and decision in reorienting one's life around Christ's teachings.

In the concluding chapters, Willard sets forth a discussion on the "curriculum for Christlikeness" and how to train others in it.¹¹ The key to growing in Christlikeness for Willard is not simply trying to obey Christ's commands or teachings. It is fundamentally a matter of the heart and a shift in one's inner self is where authentic transformation begins. The heart of the matter is not how one finds the willpower to obey the difficult teachings of Jesus. Rather, it is about becoming the kind of person that can most naturally and joyfully obey Christ's teaching. Willard expounds on how this can happen. "The mind and heart must be filled up by the relationship and presence of God, nurtured in an ongoing conversation and partnership. When the mind is filled with this great and beautiful God, the 'natural' response, once all 'inward' hindrances are removed, will be to do 'everything I have told you to do.'"¹² On the matter of training others to be disciples of Jesus, Willard cautions against making correct doctrine and outward conformity to good behavior the primary objectives. Instead, the two primary objectives in training others should be to cultivate a real affection and delight in the Heavenly Father revealed in Jesus and to transform old habits and patterns of thought that enslave.¹³

The value of Willard's work for New Life is that it lays out a more weighty vision and pathway for Christian spiritual formation. The design and implementation of any mentoring pathway for millennials must be anchored within this larger framework of

¹¹ Ibid., 311.

¹² Ibid., 321.

¹³ Ibid., 321-322.

authentic Christian discipleship. Millennials are already being effectively influenced by the fast-paced, media-driven society with which the Church feels the pressure to compete. Instead of competing or conforming, the Church can choose to offer an alternative way of being in the world that reflects God's active rule and presence within the world. This more captivating vision of Christianity can and must help its millennials move beyond the idolatry of the surrounding culture and the shallows of institutional religion and into a genuine transformational life with God.

The Making of a Leader, J. Robert Clinton

Clinton's *The Making of a Leader* is a groundbreaking work on the subject of Christian leadership development. He presents a seminal theory of leadership emergence, namely, how God shapes a leader over a lifetime in order to maximize that leader's potential for a Christ-like life and for making a unique contribution to God's kingdom. In his research and study of the lives of hundreds of contemporary and historical Christian leaders, Clinton has identified patterns, processes, and principles in God's shaping of a leader.

The patterns of God's shaping are largely reflected in six basic phases of development.¹⁴ These phases make up a general timeline that gives insight and perspective into God's work in a leader's life.¹⁵ Consequently, within each phase of development, God uses processes that involve people, events, and circumstances to mold

¹⁴ See Appendix A.

¹⁵ J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 36-37.

a leader's life. Clinton calls these "process items" and identifies six categories of processing he deems critical for leadership emergence (foundational factors, inner-life growth factors, ministry factors, maturity factors, convergence factors, and guidance factors).¹⁶ In addition, Clinton highlights the importance of boundary events, otherwise known as transitional seasons that mark a leader's movement from one phase of development to another. These transitional periods vary in nature, length of time, and intensity from person to person, but their purpose is clear. They mark the ending of one chapter of life and the beginning of a new one. Clinton elaborates in detail on many of these process items throughout the book and includes one chapter to expound on the importance of boundary events in the life of a leader.

Within each phase of development, there are principles that emerge from a leader's response to God's shaping. These are the life lessons that God is teaching the leader through the various process items they experience. Further integration of these principles can lead to the development of an effective ministry philosophy that reflects a leader's core convictions that will direct influence and guide decision-making and in life and ministry.¹⁷ This ministry philosophy is the leader's best understanding and articulation of their God-given calling, purpose, and vision. Clinton provides helpful descriptions and guidelines for how to develop this personal calling statement.

Clinton closes the final chapter of the book with a three-fold challenge to leaders: the challenge to take responsibility for their own development, the challenge to prepare

¹⁶ Ibid., 40.

¹⁷ Ibid., 157.

intentionally by recognizing and responding to God's unique work in them, and the challenge to develop a ministry philosophy that is a clear articulation of their personal understanding of God's calling.¹⁸ Clinton's leadership emergence theory is an effective tool to help leaders meet these challenges, and meeting these challenges will help a leader finish well.

The appendices of this book are full of helpful insights from Clinton. In particular, his key observations about leadership and the six qualities of finishing well are noteworthy. Clinton's in-depth study on the lives of leaders has led him to conclude that few Christian leaders finish well. He observes that leadership in the kingdom of God can be wearisome and therefore, God's empowering presence is critical for a spiritual leader's success. Yet, he affirms that spiritual leadership does make a real difference in the world.¹⁹

Clinton's answer to the question of what it looks like for a Christian leader to finish well is convincing. He states six characteristics that define what finishing well means. First, those who finish well are just as passionate about their relationship with Christ as they were when they first believed. Secondly, they have a growth mindset, always learning from all that life has to teach them. Next, they demonstrate increasing Christ-like character as defined by the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:13) until the end of their life. Fourth, they live from a set of inner convictions that are rooted in God's truth. Next, they leave a legacy of faithful service and contribution to God's kingdom. Lastly,

¹⁸ Ibid., 180-182.

¹⁹ Ibid., 203-204.

they live with a growing “sense of destiny” and they steward their lives well enough to see some or all of it fulfilled.²⁰

Clinton’s work on leadership development provides solid evidence for the absolute necessity of intentional leadership development. While it may be true that some people are born leaders, Clinton offers a cogent argument that whether born or made, leaders who are not aware of and committed to their ongoing development will have little chance of finishing well. For New Life millennials, Clinton’s work can help them understand more clearly what God might be doing in their lives and how He is preparing them for kingdom influence. Toward this end, Clinton’s work offers a language for articulating specifically how God is at work in one’s life, as well as tools for getting perspective and becoming intentional about personal development. These elements will prove indispensable to any mentoring opportunity with millennials who are hungry to learn how God is shaping them for influence.

The COACH Model for Christian Leaders, Keith Webb

Any pathway that empowers millennials into increasing levels of committed service at New Life is going to require coaching. Keith Webb has practiced a simple and powerful method of coaching Christian leaders that will prove useful in discipling millennials. Webb defines coaching as “an ongoing intentional conversation that

²⁰ Ibid., 204-207.

empowers a person or group to fully live out God's calling."²¹ Each of the five parts of this definition are vital to his coaching model.

First of all, coaching is ongoing and not simply a one-time session. Then, coaching is intentional in that both coach and coachee are to expect the Holy Spirit to lead and guide the insights, discoveries, and action plan. Next, coaching is an empowering act in that it prohibits the coach from manipulating or directing the process, thus allowing the coachee to set the agenda, make the discoveries, and come up with steps for implementation. Fourth, coaching is aimed at releasing a person or group's full potential. Lastly, coaching is designed to listen not only to the coachee's perspective, desires, and needs, but also to discern the larger purpose and activity of God in the coachee's life. This particular feature of Webb's coaching model distinguishes it from all the helpful models in the secular coaching world.

Thus, his coaching model is purely focused on the process of discovery, not on providing content for the coachee. The coach provides the framework for the coachee to engage in a process of reflection and action, but the coachee provides the content. It is the coach's job to draw out that content from the coachee. Thus the basic coaching skill involved is that of learning to ask thoughtful questions.²² Webb espouses a dynamic five-step coaching process which is also the framework of his inquiry-based model. His work presents a compelling argument for the necessity of coaching to ensure the ongoing development of Christian leaders in general. It may also be an effective relational way to

²¹ Keith Webb, *The COACH Model for Christian Leaders: Powerful Leadership Skills to Solve Problems, Reach Goals, and Develop Others* (Bellevue, WA: Active Results, 2012), 28. Kindle.

²² *Ibid.*, 35-40.

engage millennials in the discovery of their calling as well as help them identify obstacles that keep them from living out that calling.

IDEA Coaching Pathway: Coaching the Person Instead of Just the Problem,
Terry Walling

In this book, Terry Walling outlines his journey as a leadership coach of many years and presents his latest understanding of the coaching relationship and process. He references Keith Webb's coaching training and resources and affirms the role of a coach as a facilitator of discovery who influences primarily through asking good questions.²³ Without diminishing the value of other coaching models, he argues for coaching pathway that integrates coaching and mentoring under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ For Walling, coaching is about drawing out of the coachee new discoveries and insights through the use of penetrating questions. He distinguishes this role from mentoring, which he defines as the process of depositing advice, wisdom, and knowledge into the one being coached.²⁵ This distinction is critical for his practice and his model.

His IDEA model is made up of four easy-to-remember steps.²⁶ It also resonates with the motifs of other coaching models like Webb's in that it is highly relational and is focused mainly on assisting the coachee in the process of discovery, allowing the one

²³ Terry Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway: Coaching the Person Not Just the Problem* (San Bernardino, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁶ See Appendix B.

being coached to set the focus of the sessions.²⁷ Walling's model however departs from Webb's in that it allows for input from the coach at strategic points in the conversation. His model allows for the coach to give input while maintaining a coaching posture (of listening and asking questions), but also to switch to the role of mentor, advisor, or spiritual director when the situation requires and the Spirit leads.²⁸ This ability to weave in and out of the coaching and mentoring roles all the while maintaining a coaching posture is what makes IDEA coaching pathway unique. It reflects Walling's conviction that a coach's efforts must focus on the whole person and not just the presenting problem.²⁹

Furthermore, Walling sets forth four coaching postures that underlie his model and allow for the coach to address the overall development of the life of the leader being coached, rather than simply address the problems that surface. The first posture is that of a sovereign mindset, in which the coach opens to the possibility that God may be using the presenting issues the coachee brings up to surface the real issues and obstacles in that person's life.³⁰ The second posture is the integration of coaching and mentoring as elaborated above. The third posture is the power of alignment, which is the assumption that God is already at work in the life of the leader and both coach and coachee must decide to align with it.³¹ The final posture is that of discovery, where the coach seeks to

²⁷ Ibid., 25, 34.

²⁸ Ibid., 34-5.

²⁹ Ibid., 32.

³⁰ Ibid., 33-4.

³¹ Ibid., 34-5.

draw out the answers that already reside within the coachee. With deeper discovery comes deeper ownership, and the level of responsibility for behavior and ongoing formation increases.³²

While Walling's model can be just as effective as other coaching models in leading others in the process of discovery and empowered implementation, it seems to be more adapted to the reality that in a coaching relationship, the coach may need to take on other roles in order to align with what God is doing in the life of the coachee. The IDEA pathway allows for this variance and offers a more wholistic approach to the coaching practice. This model may very well be the best fit for coaching and mentoring and discipling millennials that are emerging leaders.

***Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competence,*
Carson Pue**

Author and speaker Carson Pue was the CEO of a prominent Christian leadership development organization for fourteen years called Arrow Leadership. His book *Mentoring* highlights the unique approach adopted at Arrow Leadership for preparing emerging leaders for kingdom influence. While it is hard to determine Pue's concise definition of mentoring, his conviction is that mentoring is to be a highly personalized process that addresses a leader's character, calling, and competency.³³ The process Pue introduces is one that works best with individuals whose leadership gifting and potential

³² Ibid., 33-37.

³³ Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2005), 14-15, Kindle.

have already been identified. Thus, Arrow's program over the years has been streamlined to taking gifted emerging leaders and maximizing their potential for high-level Christian leadership.

Pue's mentoring paradigm follows a circular pattern similar to Webb's COACH Model. Pue does not clearly state his understanding of the difference between coaching and mentoring. Perhaps he sees the terms as synonymous. Nevertheless, he presents his model as a mentoring matrix with five specific phases. The first phase is awareness, where mentorees are guided in the development of a deeper self-awareness of their true identity in Christ.³⁴ Phase two addresses the obstacles to ongoing development and trains mentorees to depend on God's kingdom resources to meet their deepest needs.³⁵ The next phase is called visioning, where mentorees prepare to explore and discover God's unique call and purpose for their lives.³⁶ Phase four is a skill-building phase, where strategies for implementation are put into place and action is taken toward vision-fulfillment. The last phase is called "sustaining".³⁷ The mentoree is given the strategy and tools for long-term focus on God's call especially when facing difficulties in life and leadership.³⁸

Pue's mentoring matrix is both insightful and instructive. It emphasizes the first two phases as critical to the success of the overall process. Leaders are not safe if they do

³⁴ Ibid., 20.

³⁵ Ibid., 21.

³⁶ Ibid., 21-2.

³⁷ Ibid., 22.

³⁸ Ibid., 261-2.

not know the difference between their false and true self, and if they have not been intentional about putting off the old nature in order to live out of their truest identity in Christ (Eph 4:22). This is a notable feature of Pue's matrix, and the reason why he and his organization are willing to spend disproportionate amounts of time working mentorees through the first two phases before they move on to purpose and calling. This model can help any mentor assess where his or her mentoree may be in the process of leadership development.

Pue's work does have some glaring weaknesses. First of all, his process seems to only be designed for individuals whose leadership gifts have already been recognized. That could present some issues when trying to apply the model in a local church context that is highly relational and where everyone is seen to have some leadership potential. Secondly, Pue does not clearly define what he understands mentoring to be. Such a definition would have been helpful, especially since the concept is used so widely in both Christian and secular arenas of leadership development. Without a clear definition, the reader must surmise it from his model, and from the kind of organization through which he has been testing it for years. In this light, it seems clear that Pue's definition of mentoring involves an intensive one-on-one relationship, mentor to mentoree, over a set period of time with specific goals in mind (goals related to the phases of the mentoring matrix). In spite of this, Pue's work does provide yet another way of structuring a mentoring pathway for emerging leaders. His matrix may prove useful in considering the shape of mentoring relationships for millennials at New Life.

Mentoring Millennials: Shaping the Next Generation, Daniel Egeler

Egeler's writing contains a slightly different angle on the challenge of raising up millennial leaders. This book is packed with stories from the frontlines of the author's primary ministry context, which is a missions community in East Africa and a Christian Missionary Alliance academy in Ecuador. Its value to this project, however, is in the way Egeler specifically utilizes Stanley and Clinton's in-depth exploration of mentoring relationships in their book, *Connecting*.³⁹ Egeler references Stanley and Clinton's definition of mentoring, contextualizes it for millennials and organizes the rest of the book around it.

For Egeler, mentoring is "a relational process in which a mentor, who knows or has experienced something transfers that something (resources of wisdom, information, experience, confidence, insight, status) to a mentoree, at an appropriate time and manner so that it facilitates development or empowerment."⁴⁰ Each part of this definition carries significance. In fact, Stanley and Clinton argue that mentoring has at least six specific styles that become progressively intentional and intense toward the goal of empowering the mentoree.⁴¹

Egeler gives a relatively brief overview of the millennial generation and their unique qualities, contributions, and weaknesses. Reflecting his passion for developing younger leaders, he then features several stories from personal experience in working

³⁹ Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton, *Connecting: Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993).

⁴⁰ Daniel Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials: Shaping the Next Generation* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003), 75.

⁴¹ See Appendix C.

with millennials. These stories fit within the conceptual framework that he adopted over the years of working on the mission field. Compared to Pue, Egeler presents a much clearer definition of mentoring, which includes coaching, and that can help with refining the current understanding of how mentoring should work at New Life.

You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith
David Kinnaman

Kinnaman's work is arguably the most convincing, research-based presentation of the Christian young-adult drop out problem in the North American Church. Young adult Christians are giving up on the institutional church. The Barna Group, of which Kinnaman is president, confirms it. Yet, he argues that the church has an unprecedented opportunity to help millennial believers re-examine their faith and answer the question of what faithfulness to Christ looks like in the midst of a dramatically changing world.

Kinnaman offers analysis and interpretation on a multitude of data collected through interviews and surveys with millennials across the United States. He first identifies the three types of millennials that are leaving the church: nomads, prodigals, and exiles.⁴² Nomads have somewhat unintentionally faded away from the church slowly over time, yet still consider themselves Christian. They have wandered from their Christian religious upbringing and are wrestling with their faith.⁴³ Prodigals are those who have purposefully decided to leave church and change their faith persuasion.

⁴² David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Re-thinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 57, 71.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 64-5.

Moving on from Christianity, they feel varying degrees of resentment toward their former faith.⁴⁴ Exiles are those who grew up in church, but feel a profound disconnection with what is happening or not happening in church, yet they maintain a genuine desire to pursue God's call on their lives.⁴⁵

Kinnaman goes on to examine the radically changing cultural context in which millennials have been raised. He addresses the complexity through describing the three realities impacting the way millennials see the world: alienation, access, and authority. Access has to do with how technology has increased the speed and pace of life dramatically, disconnecting past from future. Alienation is the reality of a growing isolation from family and institutions. Authority is the increasing skepticism and mistrust that has developed toward traditional and institutional authority figures.⁴⁶ Put together, this cultural context has created a real challenge and opportunity for the church to rethink the "substance of its relationships" and the "shape of its institutions."⁴⁷

Near the end of the book, Kinnaman offers new ways to think about Christians and the Church. He suggests intergenerational partnership within the Church toward fulfilling God's purpose for all generations represented.⁴⁸ He also offers creative solutions for helping church leaders re-engage millennials. His ideas are both stimulating and refreshing. Overall, this book provides compelling contextual analysis of the world in

⁴⁴ Ibid., 68-9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 63-75.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 38-42.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 203-205.

which millennials live and how such influence has impacted the way millennials relate to the institutional church. It is a good primer for the thinking through the practical initiatives necessary to create a contextualized discipleship and mentoring pathway for millennials at New Life.

***Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church.* Brad Griffin, Jake Mulder, and Kara Powell**

Growing Young presents ground-breaking research on local congregations in America and their challenge in engaging young people (ages fifteen to twenty-nine). All three authors work as directors of the Fuller Youth Institute and have had significant experience pastoring youth, writing, and speaking at national Christian leadership events. They aim to provide leaders and members of the local church a strategy for empowering and retaining youth and youth adults. Their profiling of a significant sample of local churches that are growing young helps to bolster their cause and prove that despite the trend of congregational aging and decline across America, local churches can recover the energy and vitality of youth once again. According to the author's research, the churches that grow young tend to increasingly demonstrate six core commitments.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the authors dispel three common myths that do not help churches grow young. They address the myth of the single silver bullet, that there is one easy solution that will unlock the youthfulness of the congregation. They challenge the myth that bigger churches can change faster and more easily. This myth is connected to the idea that if a church has more material resources, then they can do more to empower

⁴⁹ See Appendix D.

young people. Lastly, they dispel the myth that hiring the right person will solve the problem. While good hires can help, the real problem is one that the whole congregation must be mobilized to solve.⁵⁰

The value of this book is found not only in its relevant research and insightful conclusions, but also its practical suggestions for strategizing ways to help any local congregation start or continue the journey of growing young. It will be quite useful as a type of practical, theological, and leadership handbook for any church that seeks to shift its culture to a more empowering one for young people. For New Life's millennial challenge, *Growing Young* is filled with solid insights, ideas and perspectives that can prepare its leaders for enabling and engaging millennials toward positive spiritual development within the community of the local church.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 279-280.

CHAPTER 4:

A THEOLOGY OF MENTORING AND COACHING

Any theology of mentoring and coaching must begin with a theology of leadership. This is because one of the purposes of mentoring and coaching is to assist the individual or group in recognizing and responding to the active leadership initiative of the Trinity in their life. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are already at work in them. The mentoring and coaching process must acknowledge and ultimately yield to the initiating presence of God's divine leadership. The reality remains that a theology for mentoring and coaching emerging adults should begin with a exploring a biblical theology of leadership.

The meaning and goal of Christian leadership first must be clarified. Because of the plethora of research, studies, and writing that has gone into the subject of leadership over the years, defining leadership can be a daunting task. Leadership theories abound, and with them, so do the various definitions that coincide with those theories. For the purposes of this theological exploration, Robert Clinton's definition will suffice. Clinton produced a groundbreaking work on Christian leadership in the late 1980s in which he introduced a theory of leadership emergence, namely, how God shapes the life of a leader

for increasingly focused influence over a lifetime. His book is arguably the foundational text on Christian leadership development. Clinton's definition of leadership encompasses both goal and meaning. "Leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God's people toward His purposes for the group."¹ Another way to understand this definition is to say that leadership is not locked into a position or a title, nor does it require formal training. The essence of leadership is influence with people over time. More specifically, the goal of Christian leadership is movement toward God's redemptive purposes in Christ. Those purposes include spiritual formation (the shaping of one's whole being to be more like Christ) as well as the fulfillment of one's calling (kingdom contribution).

It is necessary to balance Clinton's definition with a biblical theological foundation for leadership. This delineation is not to say that Clinton's definition is unbiblical or theologically unsound. His definition resonates with the truth of Scripture. There is, however, a need to highlight certain transcultural themes that will anchor this theological inquiry and serve as a solid theological basis for leadership, mentoring, and coaching the next generation.

Leadership Begins with God

The chronological starting point in Scripture is the account of creation found in the Book of Genesis, where God is the first leader. As leader, he initiates the first leadership act of creating the universe. In the Old Testament, the language of leadership is quite diverse. While there are specific Hebrew terms that are used to refer to human

¹ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 114.

leadership, a broadest use of these terms are used of God as the One who leads.² In particular, the opening word of the Hebrew Scriptures is “in the beginning” (*beresit*). The root derivative of this word is “*ros*,” which means “head.” This word is normally used to designate the one who is leading in any given circumstance.³ Thus, creation is the first act of leadership by the first leader, God.

The creation account starts with God as leader and yields insights into the nature of leadership. Of primary importance is the premise that God existed before everything else, and therefore is the most important one in the story, indeed he is the only leader. He stands alone in his creative and powerful leadership because he preceded everything else. In the midst of the polytheism and animism of the Old Testament world, it was important to understand that God’s leadership stands unrivaled and unequaled in comparison to all the other gods of Ancient Near Eastern mythology.⁴ Thus, God’s leadership evokes a sense of humility and caution. Humility recognizes his precedence, while caution warns of the danger of claiming, abusing, or misusing the power that is his alone.⁵ Hence, God’s leadership is sovereign, supreme, and the only legitimate power and authority to which all other forms of power and authority must yield. Leadership begins with him, as only he has the right, power, and authority to lead.

² Richard Davidson, “Leadership Language in the Old Testament,” in *Servants and Friends: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*, ed. Skip Bell (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2014), 11.

³ Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Creation Narrative,” in *Servants and Friends: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*, ed. Skip Bell (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2014), 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Leadership is Relational

With this first theological assertion in mind, the creation narrative uncovers another startling truth about leadership: leadership is relational. God does not simply create in order to flash his power and prove his dominance. He is interested, perhaps even motivated by relationship. More specifically, he created human beings for the purpose of loving relationship.⁶ This intentionality is what sets apart the creation of humanity from how God created everything else. God's creative work in the first five days is initiated with the words, "Let there be..." (Gn 1:3). But in creating the first human, his language changes to, "Let us make..." (Gn 1:26). These words are more personal, reflecting a divine deliberation and special intention.⁷ That special intention becomes clear. God makes humanity in his image, which in the Ancient Near East, was a way of designating a unique, special relationship with the divine.⁸ For human beings to be created in the image of God means that they have an unparalleled capacity for relationship with God. A further observation here is that this relationship between humans and God was to be marked with the intimacy of breath, and touch, and presence. Adam and Eve are the only part of creation that God forms with his hands, and that receive God's very own life-giving spirit (Gn 2:7). After the fall of humanity, God is found walking in the garden in the cool of the day, apparently searching for Adam and Eve, who have hidden themselves out of shame (Gn 3:8-9). All of this paints a picture of a God who is intimately

⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., In Near Eastern mythology, the image of a deity contained the spirit of that deity, "thereby ensuring a shared unity between the god and his or her image."

connected, intensely involved, and wholeheartedly engaged in this relationship with humanity. At tremendous risk of his own leadership power and influence being mistreated and violated, God willingly and joyfully involves himself in the journey of personal relationship with humanity. In doing so, he reveals the profound relational nature of leadership.

Leadership is Serving Generously and Graciously

In the polytheistic world of the ancient Near East, the multitude of gods and goddesses that dominated cultural reality were generally not fans of humanity. Human beings were an afterthought and an inconvenience, often “spoiling the tranquility of heaven”. These ancient Mesopotamian myths tell of the gods creating humans for the purpose of supplying food for the gods and relieving them of troublesome burdens.⁹ Others tell of the gods creating the world out violence, bloodshed, and warfare, with humanity being created from the blood of a vanquished god.¹⁰

In contrast, the Genesis account features humanity as the crowning climax of creation, not an inconvenient after-thought. God saves his best for last and is extremely delighted in what He has done. Humanity comes last in the order of creation not because of God’s forgetfulness, but because of his benevolence. Humanity does not get to witness how God creates everything. Rather, they come on the scene with everything already

⁹ G.J. Wenham, "Creation," in *New Bible Dictionary, 3rd Edition*, eds. I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman (Leicester, England: Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, 1996), 240.

¹⁰ Ira Spar, “Mesopotamian Creation Myths,” April 2009, The MET Website, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/epic/hd_epic.htm.

created and given to them as a gift.¹¹ The Sabbath is another example of creation given to humanity by God. At the end of creation week, God creates humanity and then invites them to rest with Him and enjoy the Sabbath (Gn 2:1-3). Again, humanity was not involved in the work of creation. They simply get to enjoy it as God's gift. Thus, God's leadership is marked by rich generosity and extravagant grace.

It is in this kind of spirit that God exemplifies leadership as service. Instead of using them as food-suppliers for Himself (like the gods of the ancient creation myths did), He provides food for humanity, giving them every seed-bearing plant and every tree with fruit (Gn 1:29). He recognized that Adam's unique need for companionship and initiated (and finalized) the process in finding him a "suitable" helper which was Eve (Gn 2:18-22). He serves Adam and Eve by creating a beautiful special garden in which they would live and work (Gn 2:15). This is evidence of God's gracious and generous servant-leadership.

Leadership is Sharing

The God of creation is also a leader who shares. He shares his image with humanity in creating them "male and female" (Gn 1:27). He shares his capacity to rule with humanity. He mandates them to "have dominion" over creation (Gn 1:26). He brings the animals to Adam to see what names he will give them. This is not a game God is playing with Adam for entertainment. Adam's decision stood. "...and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (Gn 2:19). He also shares his creative capacity with them. This is seen most powerfully in humanity's ability to procreate.

¹¹ Doukhan, "The Creation Narrative," 37.

Though animals are also given this capacity, human procreation is presented with a divine dimension directly connected to God's image. The genealogy at the end of the creation account in Genesis can be seen as a kind of creation in itself, evidence of humanity's "capacity to create the humans of tomorrow and thus to create future history."¹² Thus, humans become co-creators with God, invited to share even God's control over human history. This requires a willingness on God's part to trust humanity with what He shares. In the same way, humanity is designed by nature to share, and that sharing necessitates trust. God as leader demonstrates that leadership is sharing and trusting.

Leadership is Incarnational

Having explored briefly what the creation narrative reveals about the nature of leadership, it is apparent that there is so much more to be said about leadership from the Old Testament. Yet it is sufficient for the task at hand to limit Old Testament exploration in order to highlight a New Testament model. Christ's life and ministry as recorded in the gospels provide an exceptional leadership model and further clarify and enhance the previous leadership insights.

Whatever the Old Testament discloses of the nature of leadership, Jesus clarifies and heightens in the gospel narratives. In the same way that God, in the creation story, involves himself in the realm of humans (making them out of the dust of the ground, walking with them in the cool of day, gifting them with his presence in Sabbath), Christ steps into a now fallen humanity as the Word made flesh to dwell among them (Jn 1:14).

¹² Ibid., 39.

Jesus came to identify most deeply with humanity by being born, raised, educated, and assimilated into a particular place, culture, and family in history. According to Philippians 2, Jesus set aside His privileges and positions as God in order to humble himself and become a servant (Phil 2:4). His humility is reflected in the way he addressed His disciples, calling them friends instead of servants. This is also a feature of his leadership. The title of friend has no positional counterpart. While Jesus certainly deserved the title master, and none of his disciples would have an issue with addressing Him as such, he still chose the language that reflected relational parity and not power. It is a striking example of His incarnational leadership.¹³

Incarnational leadership is marked by a willingness to descend to a lower status, rank, and position for the purpose of serving. Jesus even uses servanthood language to describe His purpose, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). Jesus’ style of leadership is not to dominate or intimidate. His incarnational model added value to everyone He served regardless of position or privilege. “Such leadership is devoid of the search for dominance over others or the desire to ascend the ladder of position at the expense of others.”¹⁴

Just as remarkable as his humble attitude was the purpose for which He served. As servant, Jesus washed his disciple’s feet, cared for their spiritual, social, and personal

¹³ Stanley E. Patterson, “A Reflection on Leadership Principles in the New Testament,” in *Servants and Friends: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*, ed. Skip Bell (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2014), 358.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 359.

needs (Jn 13). However, his service to them was not simply for the purpose of catering to them. It was to develop them.¹⁵ He served them, and in the process, taught and equipped them for the future responsibility of carrying on the movement that he had started. In essence, he disciplined them and eventually made leaders out of them. It is this feature lies at the core of incarnational leadership. Not only is it about letting go of privilege in order to serve, it is also aimed at developing leaders for the kingdom of God through intentional, life-on-life discipleship.

The Importance of Spiritual Formation and Discipleship

With enough theological basis laid for the meaning and nature of Biblical leadership, it is necessary to explore the role of discipleship and spiritual formation in the process of developing leaders. The terms spiritual formation and discipleship can be arguably be used interchangeably, although there is some distinction. Dallas Willard, in an interview with *Christianity Today*, defined spiritual formation as, “the process of establishing the character of Christ in the person...taking on the character of Christ in a process of discipleship to Him under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.”¹⁶ Willard appears to blur the distinctions between the terms. He asserts that the term discipleship has become lost in modern culture, and that it needs to be redeemed.¹⁷ Thus in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, he refers to disciples as apprentices and

¹⁵ Ibid., 360.

¹⁶ “The Making of the Christian,” Dallas Willard, Richard Foster Interview with *Christianity Today*, Agnieszka Tennant, September 16, 2005, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/october/9.42.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

elaborates his definition of disciple as “someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to become capable of doing what that person does or to become what that person is.”¹⁸ It follows then that Christian discipleship begins when a person apprentices themselves to Christ in order to become the kind of person that Christ is and in order to do the kind of things Christ did.

Consequently, the call to Christian discipleship is as much about being as it is about doing. Mark 3:14-15 says that Jesus “appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” Christ’s summons to the disciples was first a call to be with Him in order to learn how to do things for Him. Thus, learning from Jesus as His disciple would result in an inside-out change. Outward obedience would become that natural outflow of a transformed inner life. A disciple of Jesus does not only learn to do as Jesus did, but more importantly, they learn how to do the life they know on His behalf, as if He Himself were doing it.¹⁹

Christian spiritual formation and discipleship are both after the same goal. They both aim at conformity to the likeness of Christ (Rom 8:21). They are better understood as a process rather than a formula or program. They involve three aspects of growth: knowing God, knowing self, and loving others. David Augsburger, in his book, *Dissident Discipleship*, designates a “tri-polar spirituality that integrates seeking God, discovering self, and valuing people into a seamless unity.”²⁰ Robert Mulholland defines spiritual

¹⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 282.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

²⁰ David Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), loc. 71, Kindle.

formation as a journey toward wholeness, “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.”²¹ He also emphasizes the community aspect of spiritual formation stating that there can be no wholeness in the image of Christ which is not incarnate in our relationships with others, both in the body of Christ and in the world.²² Richard Peace similarly shares a compelling perspective on spiritual formation, defining it in terms of discernment of God’s presence and learning to respond to that presence in ways that bring new life and love for God and others.²³

It is important to clarify that discipleship or spiritual formation is the primary leadership development model of the New Testament.²⁴ This is seen in the way Jesus took a mostly untrained, unschooled, working-class group of men and “transformed their character and their competencies in such a way that within four years, they could handle the responsibility of leadership.”²⁵ So biblical leadership development simply cannot happen without discipleship. It is the foundation for any kind of development in Christian leadership. It follows that when the leader’s discipleship suffers, so does the development of the leader.

²¹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 15-17.

²² *Ibid.*, 15-17.

²³ Richard Peace, “Exploring Spirituality: the Search for God in a Postmodern World”.

²⁴ Stanley Patterson, 359.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 360.

The Convergence of Discipleship and Leadership Development

The significance of these closely related themes for the growth and emergence of a millennial leader is found in their convergence. To explore this convergence, Clinton's theory of leadership emergence will be applied.²⁶ Clinton argues convincingly that God develops leaders over a lifetime through a series of stages, using people, events, and circumstances in each stage to shape a leader's life toward a kingdom contribution.²⁷ Each stage features varying degrees of overlap between discipleship and leadership formation. As stated earlier, there is an important correlation between the two. Deepening discipleship, which might be understood as apprenticeship to Jesus that results in inner transformation, allows for God to continue shaping the disciples' life for responsible and fruitful leadership. Thus, in all the phases with the exception of phase I (Sovereign Foundations), discipleship must ongoing and continuous, which means that issues of discipleship in each arena of the leader's life must be addressed by God. As the leader responds to God with obedience and humility, God expands their ministry influence, responsibility, and spiritual authority.

Discipleship and Inner Life Growth

For the emerging millennial leader, the second phase of Clinton's paradigm has particular relevance. This second phase is called "Inner Life Growth."²⁸ It begins at the

²⁶ Appendix A.

²⁷ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

time the individual makes a committed decision to follow Christ (conversion experience). In this phase, the emerging leader experiences basic training activities in the Christian faith. They learn how to grow spiritually through the exercise of spiritual disciplines and other faith-building practices that allow them to build their life around God. This is where they learn how to pray, share their faith, gather with other Christians for mutual encouragement, read the Bible, or serve in ministry through exploring their spiritual gifts. As leadership potential emerges, some may even enter a season of formal theological training. In general, the emerging leader seeks to cultivate a more intimate relationship with God in these different ways. However, Clinton is quick to point out that while there may be significant outward behavioral change during this phase, the actual focus of God's work is inward, toward the character of the leader. This inward work of God is to test the leader's inward convictions in order to develop character.²⁹

Hagberg and Guelich, who have written a widely referenced book on the stages in the life of faith, call this stage, "The Life of Discipleship." They emphasize the need for belonging in order to spur on faith development.³⁰ Similar to Clinton, this is a learning stage where the individual must feel free to explore and absorb the teachings of the Christian faith. Leaders in this stage can and should look to identify with a group of like-minded believers to encourage them and provide a safe, relational learning environment for growth.

²⁹ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 45.

³⁰ Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*. 2nd Ed. (Salem, Wisconsin: Sheffield Publishing, 2005), 53.

Additionally, this stage is about testing the inner character. God's spotlight will shine on the character formation of the leader. Testing character is the primary way that integrity is built into one's life. Integrity provides the foundation in the soul for building and expanding leadership influence. In this case, the relationship between discipleship and leadership development is somewhat causal. If the leader responds correctly to the tests of discipleship, then their development as a leader continues unhindered. According to Clinton, there are three types of discipleship tests God uses: integrity checks, obedience checks, and word checks.

Integrity checks are tests that God uses to "evaluate intentions in order to shape character." God tests the leader's ability to make choices that are consistent with their inner convictions.³¹ If the leader responds well to the challenge, it will result in the expansion of ministry and leadership influence. One example of this in Scripture is the life of Daniel.

Daniel and his three friends were young Jewish boys who were raised in educated, upper-class families in Jerusalem. These four young men are taken into exile into Babylon where they are forced to learn the language and literature of that pagan culture. They would also be required to eat food that they considered unclean. Brought up as a Jew, Daniel would have developed an inner conviction about the kind of food he could eat and the kind to stay away from. The situation becomes an integrity check for Daniel and his friends to see whether they will compromise their convictions. After they successfully passing the test by negotiating an agreement that would allow them to prove healthier and stronger than all the others in their class, Daniel and friends are given divine

³¹ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 58.

knowledge and skill, including the ability to interpret dreams and visions (Dn 1: 17).

What they receive from God is not just gifts and skills but also influence, credibility, and empowerment. In three years, they are all promoted to high levels of influence.

What makes this example of Daniel remarkable was that he was a teenager, away from his parents' influence, in a foreign country, and being placed in a situation where he had to decide whether he truly owned the faith in which he was raised. Under pressure for refusing to compromise his convictions, God gave him a creative way to stay true to those convictions. In the end, God honored Daniel's faithfulness by growing his character and entrusting him with greater influence as Daniel is promoted through the ranks of Babylonian leadership.³² Daniel's life is a prime biblical example of an integrity check.

Another test that God uses in this phase is the obedience check. If a leader is to influence obedience in others, they must also be learning it. Obedience checks test the leader's ability to discern, comprehend, and respond obediently to God's voice.³³ This is a test of the leader's personal response to God's truth. If the leader responds with obedience, then God expands their influence. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this in Scripture is when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gn 22). There are many lessons to take from this story in Genesis, but one principle to mention is that obedience to God does not require complete understanding or knowledge of the outcome. In fact, sometimes God may command something that makes no logical sense. Abraham was faced with a decision to obey God even though it looked like God was making a mistake

³² Ibid., 60.

³³ Ibid., 56.

(Gn 22:17-18). Yet Abraham obeyed and believed that God would provide. Abraham's obedience resulted in God confirming His covenant promise of increased fruitfulness to Abraham. Again, the discipleship test is one of obedience, that if passed, results in significant leadership growth.

The last type of test Clinton calls a word check. This tests a leader's "ability to understand or receive a word from God personally and then allow God to work it out in his life."³⁴ Receiving truth from God builds spiritual authority in the life of the leader. Spiritual authority forms the basis for true spiritual leadership. Thus, the word check functions to authenticate a leader's capacity for receiving truth from God and clarifying His truth to others. The result of passing this test is increased revelation, clearer confirmation of the leader's capacity to lead, and increased spiritual authority. This kind of test is seen in the life of Samuel (1 Sm 3:1-10). Samuel was a young boy that was given to priestly service by his mother. Growing up under the high priest Eli, Samuel served at a time when the nation was suffering from a corrupt priesthood and on the brink of major transition. God calls to Samuel, but Samuel does not recognize God's voice. By the fourth time God calls, Samuel has already been advised by Eli on how to respond: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (1 Sm 3:9). The Lord gives Samuel a word of warning for Eli and his corrupt sons, and Samuel faithfully obeys by delivering God's message. From then on, Samuel's spiritual authority seems to skyrocket. The Lord "let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Sm 3:19). He is also eventually recognized as a major prophetic voice for the nation. This example of a word check again emphasizes the

³⁴ Ibid., 57.

pattern of God's work within the life of an emerging leader. When they successfully recognize and respond to the word checks that God brings, their ministry influence increases.

In summary, certain key theological insights emerge when the themes of discipleship and leadership development converge. First of all, discipleship is the principal model for the development of a Christian leader. There are some noteworthy leadership development programs in the secular business world that are designed to build leaders and maximize leadership potential. However, in the kingdom of God, before leaders become leaders, they are first and foremost devoted apprentices of Jesus. Secondly, God is the one who initiates and superintends the leadership development process. That process is lifelong. If God is the first leader, then he is also the first developer of leaders. All true Christian leadership development begins and ends with him and is ultimately about him and his kingdom. Next, God uses discipleship challenges to deepen character and build integrity. In each stage of life development, there is a corresponding leadership development stage in which God tests the inner character of the person. Sometimes this is to build inward core values. At other times it is to see if their outward choices will remain consistent with their inner convictions under pressure. This is a matter of integrity. Integrity of life ensures that the leader can be trusted with the growing influence God wants to grant. Lastly, discipleship and leadership development are inextricably linked. While they retain their distinctions, they are processes that are mutually dependent. One way to illustrate the connection is to picture a railroad track. Discipleship and leadership development progress along two tracks that are tied together by the individual's recognition and positive response to God's work in his or her life.

Mentoring and Coaching in the New Testament

The biblical foundations for mentoring and coaching will now be considered. Mentoring and coaching provide a particular shape for discipleship. As mentioned in the literature review section of this work, there is some debate over the distinctions between mentoring and coaching in practice. While some experts like Clinton and Stanley present coaching as intensive form of mentoring, others like Terry Walling distinguish the coaching function from the mentoring role. In his book, *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, Walling explains the difference. “Mentoring has to do with depositing something in the person you seek to help. Coaching stands alongside and draws insights out through personal discovery.”³⁵ In practice, it can be helpful to make this distinction. However, for this section of theological inquiry, it will suffice to use the terms interchangeably to refer to a “relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources.”³⁶ The biblical and theological underpinnings of that experience will now be examined.

Biblical Examples

It will be necessary to provide some key biblical examples of mentoring and coaching as a discipleship function and a leadership development activity. Toward that end, the following examples will reflect two New Testament mentoring relationships. Mentoring principles will be taken from these examples and will provide initial insights into the shape of a mentoring and coaching pathway for millennials at New Life.

³⁵ Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, 34.

³⁶ Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993), 33.

Jesus and His Disciples

Jesus' model for discipleship can inform how mentoring and coaching can be applied to the contemporary setting of the local church. It is clear that Jesus' approach to discipleship was highly relational. But within this relational context, there are two elements that anchor His method. These elements are invitation and challenge. Jesus created a relational environment with his disciples that contained the right combination of invitation and challenge.³⁷

In Matthew 16, Peter received a powerful revelation of Jesus' identity. Jesus immediately affirmed Peter in that moment: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." (Mt 16:17-19a). Jesus gave Peter a new name, a new assignment, and new access and authority. In doing so, Jesus invited Peter to a new level of connection to Himself. But in the next few verses, Jesus rebukes Peter for thinking like the devil and challenging Peter's actions which were hindering His mission (Mt 16:23). This seems to be a consistent theme throughout Jesus' relationship with His disciples. He was regularly "inviting his followers into an intimate relationship with him while also initiating a direct challenge to

³⁷ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 2nd Ed. (Greenville, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2011), loc. 153-155, Kindle.

behaviors he knew were either wrong or unhealthy. He drew his disciples closer, loved them, but also gave them the opportunity to accept the responsibilities of discipleship.”³⁸

In addition to an environment of invitation and challenge, Jesus utilized three learning pathways to disciple his followers. He taught them. He apprenticed them. He immersed them.³⁹ These pathways represent the various ways in which human beings learn. The first pathway is formal or informal teaching. This learning happens by means of lecture. It could be a classroom, workshop, or Sunday morning sermon. It is where information, ideas, facts, and concepts are passed along in didactic fashion from teacher to student.

The second pathway is apprenticeship. This kind of learning can only happen when someone who has learned a set of skills (the master) shows another (the apprentice) how to do what they do.⁴⁰ It is a form of practical skills training. The goal is for the apprentice to become like the master in terms of capability and skill. This method takes the learning out of the abstractions and ideas of the classroom and places it right into the arena of practical reality. The apprentice learns by watching the master, imitating the master, until they can do like the master did with regularity.

The last pathway is immersion. When a person is immersed in a particular environment, they pick up the nuances and subtle cues in that environment that over time will rub off on them.⁴¹ What one learns from an immersion experience depends on the

³⁸ Ibid., loc. 123.

³⁹ Ibid., loc. 217.

⁴⁰ Ibid., loc. 235.

⁴¹ Ibid., loc. 244.

learning goal. If he or she is trying to learn a new language, then instruction from classroom lectures and private tutors can only go so far. The person may acquire a certain level of fluency, but only through immersion can they attain a high level of fluency. Thus, immersion helps to accelerate, heighten, and integrate the learning experience albeit in less obvious ways. When applied to discipleship, all three of these learning pathways are important. The effectiveness increases with the integration of all three in the learning environment. Jesus masterfully combines the power of all three pathways in His approach to discipleship. All three learning pathways are there in His ministry, but they are never used in isolation from one another.

When Jesus calls His disciples, he invites them into an immersive relationship. They are with Him often. He gives them access to His daily life on a regular basis. Immersion was happening all the time with Jesus and the twelve.⁴² It is within the context of immersion that Jesus teaches them and shows them how to do what He did (apprenticeship).

There are numerous examples of Jesus teaching His disciples in the gospels, the Sermon on the Plain being the most popular example. There are also distinct episodes where the disciples are apprentices, learning by watching then doing what Jesus trained them to do. One specific example is when Jesus sends out his disciples on short-term evangelistic trips to preach the gospel of the kingdom, drive out demons and heal the sick (Lk 9:1-6,10:1). Presumably, the disciples have been watching Jesus do this very thing for months. Thus, in the immersive environment of daily relationship with Him, the disciples watched Jesus at work, heard Him teach about it, and then were sent out to do

⁴² Ibid., loc. 401.

the very thing they saw Him do. This is apprentice-based learning at work.

The power of these three integrated approaches to learning is also seen in the disciples' request of Jesus to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1-2). Born and raised as Jews, the disciples would have already been taught how to pray like a good Jew. Yet when they saw Jesus pray, they wanted to learn His way. Perhaps they saw something in Jesus' prayer life that was lacking in their own. Even though Jesus immediately answers their request by teaching them a model prayer, it is likely that they have been watching Jesus pray like this for a while. His teaching them to pray in that moment was not a matter of giving them new verbiage to recite toward God. He had already been modeling this new way of praying, which called for greater reinforcement through teaching when his disciples asked for it. In this way, Jesus was demonstrating how to pray through apprenticeship and then clarifying it through teaching. All this is done in the context of high-level, immersive relationship.

To summarize, Jesus' model for discipleship and approach to mentoring begins with an invitation to relationship. Within that relationship, he further summons his followers into experiences of his power, encouragement, and friendship. But he also adds an element of challenge to this mix. Jesus must confront the places of dysfunction and unbelief in the soul. With the appropriate combination of invitation and challenge, he develops his disciples along the integrated learning pathways of teaching, apprenticeship, and immersion. The results were that in about three years, Jesus had mentored eleven leaders who would take on the responsibility of carrying on the mission He had begun.

Barnabas

Beyond Jesus and His disciples, the life of Barnabas and his mentoring influence further informs a theological base for mentoring and coaching. This New Testament leader in the early Church is first mentioned in Acts as a man who sold some of his land and donated the proceeds to the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36-37). Born on the island of Cyprus and raised in a Levitical family, Barnabas was a Diaspora Jew.⁴³ He was the cousin of John Mark, but was perhaps most known for his connection with Saul, who would later become Paul the Apostle.

Barnabas was a man of godly character and faith. His generosity introduces him in the Book of Acts at the inception of the Early Church community. His name means son of encouragement. He lived up to that name as he was sent by the Jerusalem church to investigate the conversion of the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:20-22). Upon finding evidence of God's favor there, he encouraged the new Gentile believers and went to find Saul of Tarsus, who at the time was not fully embraced by the Jerusalem apostles. He and Saul taught and disciple the believers in Antioch until they are commissioned by the Holy Spirit and the Antioch Church to bring the gospel to the Gentile world (Acts 13:3). During his ministry in Antioch, Barnabas was recognized as a "good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord" (Acts 11:24). Barnabas' character and spiritual gifting made him an exceptional mentor. Furthermore, his "island worldview- including his multi-cultural and maritime exposure-

⁴³ Jay Curry Treat, "Barnabas," *ABD* 1: 610.

and his network of friends and contacts and his Jewish heritage would all combine uniquely so that he became God's man to link Christianity to a Gentile world."⁴⁴

There are at least three areas of Barnabas' mentoring activity that are noteworthy. First, Barnabas was a bridger who used his resources to make vital connections that would result in the expansion of the gospel. Nowadays, one might call Barnabas a ministry networker. He negotiated and navigated often conflict-ridden circumstances in order to link people like Paul to the Jerusalem elders (Acts 9:26-27). He linked the opportunity of a new and Gentile believing community to the resources of teaching and leadership that Paul (Saul at that time) had to offer. He mobilized the Antioch church to send a generous financial gift to the Jerusalem believers who were suffering from famine, thus linking a church's corporate resources with a long-distance need. In addition, he served as a bridge of understanding between two theological positions, Paul's advanced missiology and Jerusalem's more Jewish Christian theology.⁴⁵

The risk that Barnabas was willing to take with Paul on a few occasions is not to be understated. In order to bring Saul to Antioch, Barnabas would have had to be convinced of what Saul had to offer. He would have risked a long and dangerous journey to find Saul, and then would have to be committed for the long haul to mentor Saul in his expanding theological journey.⁴⁶ Barnabas recognized Saul's potential, was willing to

⁴⁴ Robert Clinton and Laura Raab, *Barnabas: A Study in Mentoring* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1997), 11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

invest the time and treasure in Saul's development, and was patient with Saul's development.

Even more impressive is the second feature of Barnabas' mentoring activity. He used co-leadership "not only as a training method but also as a way to increase the futuree's credibility, status, and prestige."⁴⁷ He trained Saul side-by-side, introduced him into pastoral ministry at Antioch, and when it became clear that Saul's influence would surpass his, he sponsored and gladly added credibility to Saul's ministry.⁴⁸ It is clear in the Book of Acts that in the beginning of their relationship, Barnabas was the leader and Paul was the apprentice. "Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:1-2). In the culture of the day the leader of the group is always listed first. In this case it reads, "Barnabas and Saul" being set apart by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2). Later on in the same chapter, it reads "Paul and Barnabas" rather than "Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13: 42ff). This switch in the order is an indication that leadership has shifted. Paul has assumed the more prominent leadership role. Barnabas formerly led the group, but has now allowed Paul his apprentice to grow and mature to the point of surpassing Barnabas himself. As the Acts narrative continues, Barnabas seems to graciously fade into the back drop.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 57-59.

Even more striking is the fact that Barnabas did a similar thing with his cousin John Mark. In that case, Barnabas' decision cost him his relationship with Paul. Acts 15:37-41 records the tragic breakup of the most effective missionary team of that day. The deeper reasons for the dispute between Barnabas and Paul are not given, only that Paul "did not think it wise" to include Mark in the next missionary journey because Mark had deserted them on their previous trip (Acts 15:38). Clinton suggests that John Mark was not agreed to the change in leadership (Paul replacing Barnabas as team leader), and so he promptly left the team. This may have provided Barnabas enough reason to overlook Mark's decision and choose the opportunity to mentor him instead of going with Paul.⁴⁹

While his partnership with Paul may have been broken, Barnabas saw the importance of giving Mark another chance. He takes Mark with him to his home island of Cyprus, and there presumably, continues the mentoring relationship. It certainly paid off, as John Mark would go on to author the gospel of Mark, which would become a primary source for the other two synoptic gospels. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that the relational tensions between Paul and Mark were resolved. Near the end of his letter to Timothy, Paul tells him with noted affection to "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). Barnabas' behind-the-scenes mentoring ministry contributed indirectly but no less significantly to the movement of Christianity all over the world. "Christians today can be certain that Paul and John

⁴⁹ Ibid., 14.

Mark's contribution to the Christian faith was stimulated by Barnabas' ability to equip others to outgrow even Barnabas himself."⁵⁰

The third remarkable aspect of Barnabas' mentoring activity was that he was able to tailor his mentoring to the needs and capacities of the mentoree. Arguably, the Apostle Paul was the ideal mentoree. As intelligent, articulate, and gifted as he was, his rate of learning would have been high compared to most. But what Barnabas was able to do with Paul in less than three years, he would not have been able to do with John Mark in the same amount of time. John Mark had failed the dependability test, calling into question his ongoing commitment as a member of Paul's missionary band. In spite of this, Barnabas took the risk of mentoring his cousin Mark, according to his rate of learning and particular needs.⁵¹

In summary, Barnabas is the exemplary model of a New Testament mentor. From his mentoring ministry, a helpful picture of theological and leadership principles of effective mentoring can be drawn. First, effective mentoring requires a gracious and generous character. Barnabas' ability to link people and resources together in the way that he did—including the investment of time, money, and emotional energy involved in such effort—is evidence of his generous nature. Next, effective mentoring ministry must be grounded in a Spirit-filled life and godly character. Barnabas was a “good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith” (Acts 11:24). His solid Christlike character, was able to sustain the work of the ministry to which he was entrusted, including the mentoring work he did. Furthermore, effective mentoring must be willing to take risks on believing in the

⁵⁰ Dale as quoted in Clinton and Rabb, 57.

⁵¹ Ibid., 59.

potential in others. In particular, it begins with seeing both the potential of the mentoree, the need in the world, and evidence of God's favor in both. Barnabas saw the need in the fledgling Anitoch church, and he saw the potential of Saul's leadership, but it was the evidence of God's grace he saw in both that moved him to action that would connect the two.

Also, effective mentoring requires the willingness to endure personal conflict and loss of relationship in order to pursue a mentoree's potential. This includes the willingness to make the positional transition from a directing role to a supporting role if and when the time comes. For some mentoring relationships, this may mean giving up a position of leadership altogether in order for the mentoree to step in. This point is particularly relevant to situations where leadership transition is necessary.

Lastly, effective mentors must find great joy in helping others succeed. This point can serve as a check on the motives behind any mentoring endeavor. Mentoring, coaching, and all similar discipling activities will require a depth of character maturity that allows one to rest secure in Christ's love and unique calling. Barnabas' example is worthy of emulation because in his modeling of Christian faith and leadership, one realizes that the goal is not to be a good mentor or a fruitful minister. The higher goal is to be a good man or woman of God.

We cannot all be great men like Paul. None of us can. But we can be good men like Barnabas...Genuine goodness – not cleverness, not smartness, not intellectuality, but goodness – that is the fundamental thing in the Kingdom of God. We may not be great. We may not sway the multitudes. We may not have our pictures in the paper. There may not be written editorials about us. But we can be good men.⁵²

⁵² Truett as quoted in Clinton and Raab, 90, 91.

Theological Foundations

In addition to the principles derived from the previous biblical examples of mentoring, the practice of mentoring and coaching can be grounded in several interrelated theological themes. They are remembrance, relationship, process, calling, and empowerment. These themes are rooted in the nature of God, his redemptive activity in humanity, and his decisive purpose to restore creation. They will serve as umbrella categories under which other relevant theological points can be discussed. The following exploration will seek to connect these themes with the practice of mentoring/coaching, and delineate their significance through examples in Scripture.

Redemptive Remembrance

Amid the scholarly debate and contest to identify a unifying theme that brings coherence to all of Scripture, the theme of remembrance presents a strong case. The pattern of remembrance found in Scripture is not simply a normal function of the human mind. It is a particular way in which God and his people relate with each other. In the Old Testament, God binds himself to his people in a special relationship of covenant love (*hesed*). In that context, he is the one who remembers (*zakar*), and he is the one who is remembered by Israel.⁵³ On several occasions in Old Testament Scripture, God is said to remember his covenant with Israel, (Lv 26:45; Ps 105:8) with Noah (Gn 9:15), and with Abraham and Jacob (Lv 26:42). He even remembers particular covenant-making events

⁵³ Peter Toon, "Remember, Remembrance," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 668-9.

(Ex 32:13; Dt 9:27; 2 Chr 6:42).⁵⁴ This is not to accentuate God's sharp memory of the past, but to highlight his faithful and active presence among his people.

In responsive reciprocity, Israel is commanded to remember God and his covenant activity (Dt 5:15, 15:15, 16:12, 24:18, 24:22). This is arguably the whole purpose of the Book of Deuteronomy, to call Israel to a lifestyle of remembering the words and works of God as they prepare to enter into the land of promise. In particular, the focal point of their remembering in Deuteronomy was the exodus event, in which God revealed himself to them as the one who saves and delivers (Dt 15:15, 24:18). From the psalmists to the prophets, the call to remember is a central theme.⁵⁵

Remembering however, was more than cognitive recollection. Its purpose was to keep God's commands and character (name) central in all their affairs and to build their lives around his presence. Thus, there were several ways in which Israel engages in the activity of remembering. Israel's hymnody, its collection of theological assertions set to song, is one way they remembered God. The Psalms are replete with the summons to Israel to remember and praise God's character (Ps 106; 42:6-7; 119:55). The Hebrew word *zekher* was used to refer to God's very own memory. In the Psalms, the word was associated with praising God's name in such a way that in praising his name, his memory is to be praised as well.⁵⁶

Another way Israel is commanded to remember is through its annual feasts and festivals. These celebrations were linked to actual events that underscored their unique

⁵⁴ Ibid., 668.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

history of relationship with God. The annual Feast of Tabernacles recalled their wilderness wandering (Lv 23:33-44). The annual Feast of Pentecost invited reflection on the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai (Dt 16:12). The weekly celebration of the Sabbath anchored their lives in the memory of God resting on the seventh day. Such regularly practiced celebrations engendered a rhythm of remembrance that would not only keep Israel close to God, but would also provide them a hopeful way back to God whenever they got lost.

Perhaps the most notable festival was the Passover, which recalled God's delivering of Israel from a life of cruel oppression in Egypt. This festival was different in that it included powerful re-enactments of the experience of being rescued (the eating of bread without yeast, sacrificing the Passover lamb, sandals on the feet, staff in hand) (Ex 12:1-11). Remembering through re-enactment solidifies the exodus as not just a past historical event, but a cogent reminder of their collective identity as God's people and inspirational beacon of future hope. In this way, the pattern of remembering the past becomes an "integral part of living in the present and imagining the future."⁵⁷

Furthermore, this way of remembering the past always impacted the present. To remember God who performed miraculous and mighty deeds in ages past was to affirm God's present availability and power. This is not a remembering simply to recall the past or to stir nostalgia about days gone by. The function of remembrance in the covenant community of Israel was to attest to God's faithfulness and love present with them.

⁵⁷ John Drane, "Remembrance: A Biblical Perspective," in *Transmission*, Summer 2014, accessed January 29, 2019, https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/uploads/content/bible_in_transmission/files/2014_summer/BiT_Summer_2014_Drane.pdf, 12.

Remembering brings the past into the present so that what is remembered of God's character and saving activity can be activated and perpetuated in the present.⁵⁸

At the same time, remembering the past also impacted Israel's future, especially in times of great discontinuity. Invariably, the feasts and celebrations highlighted the grace and covenant faithfulness of God as demonstrated in his past saving, protecting, and preserving activity. This consistent focus could always fuel hope. In times of national crisis, the prophets would confront Israel with their sins of unfaithfulness, in essence declaring that God will "remember their wickedness" (Jer 14:10). But at the same time, they would call the nation to remember the grace and forgiveness of the covenant-keeping God who "will remember their sins no more," (Jer 31:34) thus promising hope and future restoration if they return to him (Jer 33:6-9). In this way, "memory of the past often became a way of navigating an uncertain future."⁵⁹ This kind of remembering then is not about getting stuck over past failures, but about God's grace and the future possibilities of new life. Furthermore, as John Drane describes, "Remembrance is invariably an invitation to a better future, though growing out of a realistic appraisal of the past...it is invariably presented as a way of pointing forward to a surprising new future rather than an excuse for raking over the ashes of the past."⁶⁰

This understanding of the practice of remembrance is perhaps most intensely magnified in the New Testament eucharistic celebration of the Lord's Supper. Arguably, the particular shape of Israel's pattern of remembrance carries over with relevance to new

⁵⁸ Toon, "Remember, Remembrance," 669.

⁵⁹ Drane, "Remembrance: A Biblical Perspective," 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

covenant eucharistic practice. The theological debates surrounding the nature and practice of eucharist aside, the interpretation of Jesus' words, "Do this in remembrance of me" must take into consideration the Hebrew understanding of remembering, in which the very past that is being celebrated is at the same time made powerfully present in the very act of commemoration.⁶¹ Remembering the work of Jesus in the practice of the Eucharist is therefore more than a spiritual meditation with gratitude for a past event. In this way of remembering, it becomes recalling the sacrificial death of Christ in order that its power, virtue, and blessing might be experienced in the present moment for all who would receive it.

In summary, a biblical theology of remembrance is centered on God's self-revelation and self-giving love. Its purpose is to perpetually exalt the character and activity of God in a way that invites one to build his or her life around him. In addition, while recalling the past, it opens the door to a present experience of God by recognizing that the God who worked in the past is always working in the present. Perhaps most noteworthy for the practice of mentoring, biblical remembrance is an invitation to a hope-filled future full of divine potential. Without denying past mistakes and failures, it is always forward-facing and redemptive because of God's redemptive work in Christ. Remembering moves one from dwelling on the negative past and propels one forward into future possibility under God's rule.

The significance of this theological theme for mentoring and coaching is that of awakening divine perspective and raising awareness of God's redeeming activity in the history of an emerging leader's life. Looking back at one's past need not be a depressing

⁶¹ Toon, "Remember, Remembrance," 669.

or guilt-inducing exercise. In fact, in light of a theology of remembrance, reflecting on one's story and life journey can yield tremendous insight when seen from the lens of God's redeeming activity. In order to envision future possibilities, the emerging leader must first identify God's working in their past. For the motifs of God's redemptive movements are not frozen in a season of time. Rather, when they are remembered, they awaken the emerging leader to the present working of God which is consistent and faithful to all he has done in times past. Mentoring and coaching thus become a means of helping a person remember God by recognizing God's activity in the past, realizing how God is revealing himself in the present, and embracing God's invitation to a future of new possibility.

The Precedence of Relationship

From the outset of the biblical narrative, God desires relationship with humanity. This desire emerges from the very nature of God. When God creates humanity, he says, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness" (Gn 1:26). In this verse, God is presented as a plurality. New Testament evidence makes it clearer that this plurality is a triune person, Father, Son, and Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundational truth of the Christian faith. It speaks of God's fundamental and most profound essence. While the actual word trinity is not mentioned in the canon of Scripture, it has become the designation for the three-fold revelation of the one God. In his essential being, God is one; and his eternal existence is expressed in three distinct coequal persons. This personhood is not necessarily linked to human individuality. Rather, such distinguished personhood "affirms the personal relationship, particularly of love, within the triune

Godhead.”⁶² Thus, relationship is at the heart of reality because God exists as a loving relationship of three. Furthermore, God is not just loving. He is love. He is the very essence of love. It is the triune God who has revealed himself in history through his purposeful design as Father, his redeeming work in Jesus the Son, and his empowering activity in the Holy Spirit.

The gospel of John presents undeniable evidence of the loving and intimate relationship shared within the Godhead. In nearly every chapter, four affirmations about the relational nature of the Trinity are made: their full equality, their mutual submission, their joyful intimacy with one another, and their mutual deference.⁶³ Furthermore, this communion of love and joy within the Godhead is shared with humanity and goes to great lengths to invite humanity into its flow. This is where the story of salvation begins. The love that Father, Son, and Spirit share within themselves in their oneness is a portrait of a “divine family at work to love, exalt, enjoy, and serve one another by loving, exalting, enjoying and serving redeemed sinners.”⁶⁴

While there are numerous theological dimensions to be covered with regard to the Trinity, the key issue to note is that God’s nature is first and foremost a relationship of love that seeks the highest good of humanity. In the same way, the practice of mentoring and coaching must be begin and continue as a highly relational process motivated by love. They cannot simply be a discovery-based approach to solving problems. As Walling

⁶² Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 502.

⁶³ Mark Shaw, *Doing Theology with Huck and Finn: Parables for Understanding Doctrine* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 62.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

argues, “God may have brought that person to you, as a coach, for something more than solving a problem.”⁶⁵ Keeping love at the heart of the coaching and mentoring relationship helps to anchor the coaching process in the nature of God.

Process Orientation

Another important theological theme to be considered is the process of growth and maturity. Process in general can be defined as a continuous, dynamic operation of activities that moves one toward a goal. Within the very nature of the Trinity, there is process. God is active in his world, and his activity is constantly moving toward a larger goal. He is a God of order (1 Cor 14:33) and displays his purposeful activity through the process of creating the universe (Gn 1). He also ordained life to function and flow in cyclical sequences called seasons. "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Ecc 3:1).

This reality is also reflected in the New Testament. Jesus spoke of spiritual growth as an organic process of bearing fruit by staying connected to him as the true vine (Jn 15:1-4). Paul the Apostle, in one chapter of his letter to the Corinthian believers, used both an agricultural and construction metaphor to help them understand how God uses leaders to sow into them and help them build solid lives upon Christ (1 Cor 3:6-11). The Apostle Peter exhorted his audience to “crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Pt 2:2). These metaphors speak of spiritual growth as an ongoing process.

⁶⁵ Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, 33.

In addition, the nature of God and the life within the Trinity can also be understood as a flow of inward fellowship resulting in an outward missional activity. The Father sends the Son (Jn 20:21, 7:29; Rm 8:3). The Son sends the Spirit (Jn 15:26, 16:7). But John records the intimate involvement of both Father and Son in sending the Holy Spirit, "and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever" (Jn 14:16). Thus, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son, and the Spirit glorifies the Son as the Son has glorified the Father (Jn 14:13-15). This sending activity is evidence of the process inherent within the relationship of the Trinity. This sending activity also has a goal, to carry out the redemptive plan and purpose within the heart of the Trinity.

In this context, human life and relationships are also marked by process and growth. More specifically, human beings are made in God's image and therefore experience life as a process of maturing. Among other things, growth and development take time, and for time to be purposeful, it requires a process. In particular, spiritual growth and development have a purpose and a goal. One way in which that goal is stated is found in Romans: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son..." (Rm 8:29). Paul the Apostle states it differently in his letter to Ephesian believers: "...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Eph 4:13). Thus, the goal of the spiritual life is to become more Christlike in character, including thoughts, attitudes, actions, and speech. Any effort at mentoring and coaching others must take into consideration this larger aim of spiritual growth and development. This leads to another related theological theme with regard to mentoring and coaching.

Awakening to Calling

The theme of calling as God's invitation to humanity to join him in his work saturates the biblical narrative. Scripture is full of examples of God taking the initiative to call humanity to participation in himself and partnership in his purposes. Humanity has always had the choice to accept or reject that invitation. In a simple yet profound way, these examples depict God as intentional and deeply involved in human history, more passionate about his purposes than his human subjects. The epitome of this theme of calling is illustrated in Christ's call to become his followers and apprentices. Inherent in the nature of Christ's call to discipleship is the necessity of dying to oneself, or as Christ put it, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). The call of Christ is a call to leave something behind in order to take something up. The first disciples left behind their fishing business to follow Christ. Matthew, the tax collector left behind his former way of life as a tax collector to answer Christ's call. Yet what is gained on the other side of that calling is the promise of a life of true purpose. Jesus called his disciples with these words: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:19 NKJV). Following Christ results in becoming someone as well as accomplishing something.

This dual nature of the Christian calling is an important feature. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Christ called his disciples first to "be with him" and then empowered them to "preach and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mk 3:14). Being with Christ is the call to intimacy and close fellowship with him. Out of intimacy with Christ, authority and influence grows that results in effective service for his kingdom. Awakening to the call is not about personal ambition, but about relationship and

alignment to God's plans for one's life. It is about intimacy with the divine and the good works God has sovereignly designed for one to accomplish (Eph 2:8-10).⁶⁶

Author Os Guinness defines the Christian calling as “the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.”⁶⁷ His definition presents three aspects of calling: identity, vision, and stewardship. The Christian calling is first a call to be in close friendship with the Trinity. In the process of deepening this relationship, one comes to realize their truest identity as a child of God. “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘*Abba, Father*’” (Rom 8:15). Certainly, such identity grows through a dynamic process of character formation driven by the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of the believer. The theological term for this is sanctification, “the growth in holiness that should follow conversion,” or the ongoing process of development that results in conformity to Christ.⁶⁸ It is out of this identity that one can begin to realize God's dream or vision for their life.

Vision in general has to do with what one does with their gifts, abilities, talents, and experience. It is glimpsing the “good works that God has prepared in advance” for one to do (Eph 2:10). It is when one catches the scent of destiny that propels the life

⁶⁶ Terry Walling, *Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God* (San Bernadino, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 22-3.

⁶⁷ Os Guinness, *The Call* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 4, Kindle.

⁶⁸ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1052.

forward in faith toward the unique and specific plans of God. Practically speaking, vision clarifies direction and creative pathways toward its fulfillment can emerge . Vision reinforces the sense in the emerging leader that God has been preparing their life for a larger and unique kingdom contribution. Of critical importance is to understand that such vision is not a self-made plan for personal fulfillment. Vision that flows from apprenticeship to Jesus is originated in God and unfolded to the emerging leader as something that captures their imagination and sparks their faith.⁶⁹ Vision fuels the disciple’s motivation to discover and develop his or her godly passions, gifts and skills in order to participate in the particular redemptive work in the world into which God has invited them. In experience, vision moves one a step closer to realizing as Frederick Buechner said, “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”⁷⁰

The third aspect of Christian calling is stewardship. The Christian calling is a stewardship of one’s life in service to the kingdom of God. Jesus’ parable of the talents in Matthew 24:14-30 indicates the nature of such stewardship. In the parable, a wealthy master goes on a long journey. Before he leaves, he entrusts some of his wealth to his servants with the expectation that they will invest it so that upon his return he will receive a return from what he gave to them. The shape of the stewardship that is expected of the servants is far from passive. The stewardship of the first two servants is demonstrated as they actively invested what was given to them. The one servant who did not invest what

⁶⁹ Pue, *Mentoring Leaders*, 79-80.

⁷⁰ Ryan Pemberton, “Frederick Buechner on Calling,” accessed January 28, 2019, <http://www.calledthejourney.com/blog/2014/12/17/frederick-buechner-on-calling>.

he was given was harshly criticized and what he did have was taken away in the end. The Christian calling is to be understood as an entrustment of God-given resources. The wise and active stewardship of these resources of time, talent, treasure, relationships and other sovereignly bestowed gifts is a crucial part of the way a disciple responds to God's call.

Coaching and mentoring emerging Christian leaders helps them to discover and respond to the call of Christ in all the aforementioned dimensions. In the process, it must address obstacles the emerging leader is facing that could prevent them from pursuing the call. In doing so, it demonstrates a high priority for the call of Christ upon the individual. The specific role that mentoring and coaching play in this regard is to relationally engage the emerging leader through a focused journey of asking questions that prompt discovery and awakening to the call, as well as offering periodic advice and guidance for processing the call when it becomes absolutely necessary.⁷¹

Empowerment

The final theological anchor is the concept of empowerment. The triune God invites his followers into relationship with himself, then empowers them to do his work. If the work is his, and the calling to be with him and do for him is initiated by him, then the power to be and do must also come from him. The sending activity of the Trinity is highlighted in the post-resurrection encounter the disciples have with Jesus in John's gospel. "Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:21-22). The referencing of all three persons of the Godhead in this passage is striking. This

⁷¹ Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, 34-5.

commissioning and empowering of the disciples is further elucidated in Luke's gospel, where Jesus commands his disciples to wait for the gift the Father promised (Acts 1:4), and then promises to send the Spirit for the purpose of empowering their witness (Acts 1:8). The empowerment of Christian disciples in the biblical narrative surfaces the theological assumption that the Christian life and calling cannot be lived or fulfilled in one's own strength or resources. Divine enablement is absolutely necessary.

Different Christian traditions debate the issue of Holy Spirit empowerment in the life of the believer. It is not in the interest of this project to delineate the various theological positions on this matter. One's biblical interpretation of how and when a Christian disciple is empowered by the Holy Spirit is somewhat irrelevant to the topic at hand. What is most important is to affirm that the Spirit's empowering presence is critical to the ongoing development and advancement of an emerging leader into greater kingdom influence. This is clear from the example of Christ's deferring to the role of the Holy Spirit in his commissioning of the disciples.

In the same way, Christ-centered mentoring and coaching must defer to the presence of the Spirit in the life of the emerging leader. Sensitivity and discernment should be exercised in order to help the emerging leader identify both the Spirit's sanctifying activity for deeper character formation as well as the Spirit's awakening activity for realizing God's vision. In the context of the coaching relationship, the Spirit can touch the life of an emerging leader in beautiful and mysterious ways. They might have a personal, supernatural encounter with God's manifest presence of love, or they might experience a moment of divine insight or revelation as they awaken to the work that God has been doing all along. Either way, these empowering experiences become

life defining moments that increase faith and motivation to implement whatever steps of obedience God has made clear. This experience of empowerment is what Walling calls “breakthrough” moments, when a Christian disciple is propelled to a new level of clarity and focus, and where the new insights revealed by the Spirit lead to a new way of viewing the future that inspires hope and instills courage.⁷²

⁷² Ibid., 68-9.

PART THREE
MINISTRY PRACTICE

CHAPTER 5:

A MENTORING AND COACHING INITIATIVE

This chapter will introduce a mentoring and coaching initiative for millennials at New Life. The initiative is based on the biblical and theological assumptions established in previous chapters. The initiative will have engaged four millennials at New Life in one-on-one interactions in a coaching environment over approximately eight to twelve weeks per individual. It sought to establish a coaching/mentoring relationship with each participant and guide them in a process of clarifying their identity, processing life issues, discovering their calling, and empowering their service for the kingdom. This initiative, while retaining programmatic elements, was designed to be highly relational and organic in its implementation, which partly explains the flexible timeline.

Theological Conclusions Regarding Mentoring and Coaching

From the theological and biblical basis that has been explored, mentoring and coaching millennial leaders might be defined as the relational process of influencing an emerging leader toward discerning God's past and present work in their life that they might discover their future calling and be empowered to walk in it. The result of this empowerment would be the advancement of such leaders into new levels of insight and

courage toward the fulfillment of Christ's call to both greater intimacy with him and greater influence with others. This definition weaves the practice of mentoring and coaching through the five theological themes of redemptive remembrance, loving relationship, process orientation, Christ-centered calling, and Spirit empowerment. These themes are interconnected yet distinctly vital to informing and shaping the proposed mentoring initiative. Moreover, the New Testament examples of Jesus and Barnabas inform the practice and posture of mentoring and coaching. Jesus' highly relational style of discipling, his three-fold approach to mentoring (teaching, apprenticing, immersing), and his exercise of balancing invitation and challenge prove instructive for anyone seeking to coach and mentor. In addition to this, there is the Spirit-filled example of Barnabas' life. The impressive way in which he tailored his mentoring to the specific need of the mentee, gave generously of his time and financial resources to see others succeed, and faded into the background to allow a younger mentee to take the spotlight all inspire the kind of coaching posture and environment needed for any Christian mentoring process to be effective.

With such biblical and theological considerations, the mentoring and coaching pathway for emerging millennial leaders at New Life can be rooted in the following guiding convictions and conclusions. First, it must be highly relational and not purely programmatic. Then, it must consider a process of spiritual growth that prioritizes conformity to Christ as it seeks to discern the real issues as distinct from the presenting issues in participant. Next, it should help participants reflect upon their life story as an exercise of redemptive remembrance in order to gain perspective on their present situation and discern how God has been shaping them. Furthermore, it must lead

participants toward the discovery of Christian calling in two dimensions, being and doing. This involves the integration and intersection between spiritual formation and destiny fulfillment, where the call to kingdom contribution flows out of the call to be in relationship with Christ. Lastly, the mentoring pathway and process could lead to breakthrough moments of empowering insight and revelation that propel millennials into the next season of ministry or life opportunity. These opportunities would allow them to invest their unique gifts, skills, and passions into the lives of others, reflecting an active stewardship of what God has entrusted to them.

The Goals of the Initiative

The general goals that drive this strategic experiment may be summarized in four points. First, this initiative will help participants understand the nature of Christian leadership and how God shapes leaders over a lifetime, preparing them to make a lasting contribution to the kingdom of God (Leadership Emergence Theory).¹ Secondly, this initiative will engage millennial participants in a discovery process intended to awaken them to the call of God upon their lives. Next, this initiative hopes to surface systemic issues in the participant's life that will welcome the Spirit's deeper sanctifying work. Then, based on the new learning, perspective, and clarity participants gain, the initiative will seek to empower them through the mentoring relationship into meaningful service to God and others. This will require the implementation of next steps and the exploration of necessary resources.

¹ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 22.

Coaching Model and Mentoring Resource

In the earlier section of this project which explored the theological foundations for mentoring and coaching, it was necessary to treat mentoring and coaching as interchangeable terms. Theoretically, in agreement with Stanley and Clinton, coaching is a particular kind of mentoring. However, for the purpose of this practical experiment, it will be necessary to distinguish the terms as Terry Walling does in his IDEA pathway. Coaching will be defined as the process of drawing out insights and answers that are just waiting to be discovered within the participant. While mentoring will be understood as the process of depositing or pouring into the participant new information, advice, guidance and wisdom that can lead to greater understanding and insight.

The main mentoring tool utilized is an online and print resource called *Focused Living*, which was adapted by an organization called Leader Breakthru. This organization was launched in 1988 by Dr. Terry Walling to “resource leaders who are called to make a difference in local churches, missional ministries and the marketplace.”² The *Focused Living* process is an online discovery process designed to lead participants through a reflection on their personal timeline (personal journey) in order to discern God’s sovereign work, uncover core values, and ascertain calling.³ The participant walked through a process of crafting a personal calling statement that was like a compass providing direction and clarity for their life. It was a statement of their best understanding to date of their God-given purpose, and their God-given vision.

² *Leader Breakthru* Website, accessed January 30, 2019, <https://leaderbreakthru.com/about/>.

³ *Focused Living Online*, accessed January 30, 2019, <https://leaderbreakthru.com/calling/>.

The coaching aspects of this initiative drew upon Terry Walling's IDEA coaching pathway. The integration of these two resources happened primarily through individual one-on-one sessions with the participants. They were guided through the *Focused Living* process, and the follow-up sessions provided a coaching environment for them to think through next steps. To be clear, the combination of *Focused Living* and individual coaching provided the practical substance of this initiative. Through these means, the initiative sought to accomplish the above stated goals.

Clarified Goals and Expectations

Thus, the general goals of this initiative stated earlier had a practical expression. First of all, participants drafted a personal calling statement. In the process, they reflected upon their life journey, God's redemptive work in their personal history, and the lessons, entrustments, and key lessons they have gained. From there, mined core values that will serve as anchors for their identity and decision-making. More importantly, these core values anchored their future vision in the reality of who they are and what God has done in them throughout their personal history. Along with core values, they explored their biblical purpose and Christian identity. Their Christian identity was established through their initial response to Christ's call to be his follower. Because Christ's first call is a call to be in close relationship with him, the response to that call is to offer one's total self to that relationship. It follows that the first expression of Christian identity must be a declaration of being. This biblical purpose statement was an articulated expression of the participant's particular understanding of their identity in Christ. Once core values and biblical purpose have been determined, participants were free to dream with God about

what He might be asking them to do. This is called vision. Vision is a clear picture of future possibilities. It is the last piece of the calling statement because it is intended to be interlaced with themes and traces of the participant's life journey and core values.

The outcome was concretized in a document that represented the clearest articulation to date of God's calling on the participant's life.

Secondly, through timeline construction and analysis, the participant identified key areas of personal struggle, emotional wounding, and even spiritual attack on their life. These areas, while they are not to consume the whole focus, became points of strategic inquiry in the coaching/mentoring relationship because they presented possible barriers to releasing fully empowered potential. The IDEA coaching pathway identifies these areas as the real issues that are hidden beneath the presenting issues. The goal here was to identify any or all of these real issues and resource the participant to deal with them. It is in these areas that the coaching function needed to yield to a mentoring role of pouring into the participant what he or she needed.

Thirdly, as a result of the discovery process, the participant was able to consider options for empowered, purposeful living and leadership, and process some of those options with me as their coach. For some participants, this empowering took the shape of a new approach to their current ministry assignment. For others, meant taking on a new ministry assignment altogether. For still others, it required taking the steps to live out their calling in the marketplace in ways that they felt uniquely equipped by God to do so. Whatever form of contribution was chosen, it involved a passion, a cause, and a people. It created joy in the participant, targeted some need in the world, and invited them to be a vehicle of Christ's love to others.

The last goal was not as easily quantifiable. It was to start creating an ongoing, organic coaching mini-culture within New Life. This is in the direction of what the authors of *Growing Young* would call “fueling a warm community” by creating an authentic relational environment of welcome and hospitality that fosters a sense of belonging.⁴ The difference was that this initiative sought to accomplish that through the ministry of mentoring and coaching. In other words, the coaching relationship must be fueled by an authentic desire to be in an ongoing relationship with the participant. This does not require friendship in a sentimental sense of the word. But it does require an ongoing availability and a posture of caring for the participant’s total well-being. Part of the way a coach can foster this sense of deeper connection and care is by regularly praying for the participants, and regularly checking in on them even outside of the coaching conversation. In this way, the coaching and mentoring initiative can align with the core mission of New Life, which is to be a place of belonging.

Key Components of the Initiative

The primary components of this millennial mentoring initiative were built upon the five theological anchors earlier discussed. The first component is relational connection. For most millennials who already have a proclivity towards distrusting the institutional church, keeping things organic and relational in the implementation of this initiative is important. The next component is remembrance, which is an invitation to explore their past journey. The coach led them in an exercise of creating a timeline of

⁴ Griffin, Mulder, and Powell, *Growing Young*, 166-172.

their life in order to get perspective and identify God's ongoing redemptive work. The third component is life processing. The timeline exercise helped to uncover core life issues that might keep the participant from fully responding to God's higher call. The fourth component is clarifying calling. This involves both the call to be with Christ and the call to do for Christ. The first call has to do with grounding one's life in Christian identity. The second aspect of the call is what the participant discovers of God's specific assignment they must now accomplish for his glory. It involves articulating more specifically how they will actively steward their gifts, passions, skills, and opportunities in the direction of ministry service either in a local church, para-church group, or larger family or community. Then the last component is called empowerment. This is where the next steps of faith and action were taken and the necessary resources were provided for a new level of influence and responsibility. In summary, the initiative invited participants into a coaching/mentoring relationship in which they attained God's perspective on their past, processed the struggles of the present, discovered clear vision for the future, and received encouragement and enablement to take steps toward those God-inspired possibilities.

Selection of Millennial Participants

Four millennial participants were chosen for this mentoring initiative. They were coached and mentored by me over a period of approximately twelve weeks per individual. The main criteria for selection was membership, age, faithfulness, availability, and life transition. First of all, participants needed to be members of New Life and fall within the millennial age category. From the data researched in this project, that age

range is roughly between twenty-one and thirty-seven as of 2018. The second criteria had to do with their faith profession and their involvement in the local church. If they professed to be a Christ-follower, they qualify. However, in terms of church involvement, there was more flexibility. One participant was involved at New Life on an as-needed basis, which was relatively infrequently. The second participant selected was involved once or twice a month in one of the church ministries. The third participant was already in an active ministry leadership role. The third criteria had to do with their relative availability and willingness to participate. This last criteria was established to determine the relative level of motivation in the participant to receive mentoring. When a person is experiencing a life transition, or is about the experience one, there can be a sense of feeling lost or stuck. Each participant expressed varying degrees of dissonance and dissatisfaction with their current life situation. They each expressed some level of needing to refocus and get clarity about their life.

Summary and Results of the Initiative

The following summary of the actual mentoring and coaching work that was done with selected participants will distill outcomes into three categories: recognition, calling, obstacles, possibilities, and follow-up. The basic plan implemented was to schedule at least four coaching sessions with willing participants. The first session would identify a presenting issue, and then confirm their willingness to begin the *Focused Living* process. The following three to four sessions followed the pattern laid out in the *Focused Living*

workbook.⁵ The goal was to help the participant produce a calling statement that would illuminate their life direction and personal calling from God. At the end of the process, the participants had constructed a timeline of their personal history, established an articulated set of core convictions, personalized a being statement of their identity in Christ, and crafted a vision statement that reflects the some of the specific good works that God has called them to accomplish in various arenas lives. Once their calling statement was completed, the remaining sessions were focused on removing obstacles and empowering next steps. What follows is an integrated analysis of the implementation phase and results of this coaching and mentoring experiment.

Recognizing God's Hand

The millennials who participated in this initiative were all Christ-followers at different levels of spiritual maturity, and all with different upbringings and experiences with God. This became clear from their timelines. The timeline exercise yielded much benefit to each one because for the first time, they were seeing their life as a story. In each of their stories, there was a mixture of joy and pain, hardship and healing. Two things emerged from this deeper reflection on their life. The first was the recognition of God's sovereign hand at work since the day they were born, and even before they were born.⁶ They were also able to identify what God was specifically doing in them in critical moments of their story, especially the painful ones. The process items presented in the

⁵ Terry Walling, *Focused Living: Mapping Your Journey* (San Bernadino, CA: Leader Breakthru, 2016), 2.

⁶ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 27, 37.

Focused Living workbook were especially helpful in this regard. Essentially, God was at work testing their obedience (word checks) and integrity (integrity checks), deepening their trust and dependence upon him, and using painful circumstances to embed deep convictions that would later surface as passions to accomplish great good.⁷ The events, people, and circumstances of their lives began to take on a redemptive shape as they began to discern God's larger and deeper work amid their story.

The second thing that emerged was the recognition that sin, suffering, and spiritual darkness sought to diminish their humanity. Each participant had been through life experiences that resulted in heartbreak and unwarranted suffering. Whether it was their own sinful choices, the sinful choices of others, or life's unexpected tragedies, such events left a mark and sent a message. One participant once again faced the reality of past sexual abuse which sent a message to her soul that her voice and her preferences and her opinions did not matter and would not make a difference. Another confronted the false assumptions he internalized in high school that his parents would not be pleased with anything less than him becoming a doctor. Still another found himself revisiting the pain of losing a father to cancer at an untimely season of life. Yet, the point of the timeline exercise was to view one's life through the lens of God's redemptive purposes. They used some of the process items from Clinton's leadership emergence theory to name the workings of God in their lives through particular events, people, and circumstances.⁸ This was an exercise in redemptive reinterpretation as participants were invited to see past the

⁷ Walling, *Focused Living*, 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

suffering into the deeper way God was superintending those situations to prepare them for a larger purpose (Gn 50:20).

The next level of recognition came as participants were asked to reflect on the particular chapters and turning points in their life journeys. Turning points are events or life experiences that change one's life and direction indelibly, and things are not the same for better or worse.⁹ The turning points are seasons in life where God deposits valuable learning and where participants can uncover profound lessons. These deeper lessons over time yield core values, which are one's base-level convictions or key assumptions by which they live their life.¹⁰ Therefore, from the turning points emerge life lessons, and from the lessons, core values are surfaced. Each millennial participant was able to articulate a set of core values by which they live their lives.

One of the most surprising features of this part of the Focused Living process was how many significant life experiences, circumstances, and people these millennial participants had. One might think that the more life one has lived, the wiser and more reflective one can become. These participants challenged this notion by the mere number of significant life events they listed on their timeline. One participant had four or five turning points that had shaped her. While the role of the coach would be to help them consolidate events and chapters of their life, it became apparent that God was doing some significant work in their youth.

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

Clarifying Calling

From a secular standpoint, any talk about calling can be spoken of in terms of moving forward with purpose in life or in living a life of self-fulfilling potential that makes a difference in the world. In contrast, the Christian calling is not centered in self-actualization. It is given by God and buried by him into the soul of every person. It comes to life as a person responds to the general call of Christ to follow, but it expands into the possibilities of a kingdom contribution as a Christ-follower deepens their commitment to serve God's purposes. The next step in the Focused Living process was to explore their calling. Because calling encompasses both being and doing, identity and destiny (discussed in Chapter Three), participants were invited to reflect on their reason for being first and then their potential future assignment. In the Focused Living process, these two aspects of calling are distinguished as "first order call" and "second order call."¹¹ The first order call is a statement of being and an affirmation of biblical purpose and Christian identity. It describes the participant's passion for Christ, and the distinctiveness of their personal walk with him.¹² It is of the first order because the calling of Christ is first the call to be in relationship with him that establishes one in their new Christian identity.

The second order call is about what one might do for Christ and his kingdom. It describes the participant's personal vision, what direction one is headed and what one hopes to accomplish as a result. Terry Walling states it well, "Vision is an exercise in

¹¹ Ibid., 17-20.

¹² Ibid., 15-17.

future perfect thinking. It calls for the discerning of those influences in our past that create a passion for extending God's Kingdom. Your Second Order Call is a word-picture of a future reality from God's perspective. It is your best understanding to-date of what Christ desires you to do."¹³ Pulling together these strands of core values and first and second order call, millennial participants did their best to articulate a personal calling that was forged by God's redemptive work in their history, rooted in their truest identity in Christ, and fueled with a passionate vision for the future.

These calling statements proved quite motivating for the most part. For one of the participants, the articulation and owning of her calling statement affirmed her in her current ministry assignment and allowed her to see what she was doing on the mission field with fresh eyes and engage with renewed passion for the long term. Another participant experienced a breakthrough of insight and clarity that propelled him to change his plans for future ministry and education. Months after, he stepped into a new ministry assignment as a youth ministry director at New Life. A third participant was already serving as a youth ministry leader at New Life (Norwalk campus), and the insight she received from going through the Focused Living process yielded the clarity and direction she needed to continue developing her core youth leadership team. It also compelled her to pursue further education in the field of organizational leadership.

¹³ Ibid., 19.

Identifying Obstacles

It can be quite exciting to have a breakthrough experience of divine clarity and insight, and it was apparent that these millennials were eager to move forward with renewed passion. However, a critical part of the coaching initiative was to also identify the real issues of their lives that could and would recur during moments of intense stress or conflict. In the IDEA coaching paradigm, there is a line of questioning that is intended to surface the systemic issue. A couple of examples of such questions would be, “What issue of character might this be touching?” and “What areas might this be touching with regard to struggles or wounding?”¹⁴ The questions are stated here because they emphasize the need for the participant to consider what could set them back as they pursue God’s call.

Setbacks are inevitable in life, as was seen in the life stories of these millennials. But at this point in the coaching process, it was necessary to have them reflect a little more deeply on their vulnerabilities and their weakness. In most cases, the weaknesses of these millennials were character flaws that were mostly hidden and would only show up in times of conflict or extreme pressure. Some of these vulnerabilities had to do with the inability to set appropriate boundaries, avoiding conflict and remaining quiet when it was necessary to speak up, or trying to live out the unrealistic, invalid expectations of others. These very real issues were invariably connected to core wounding, or false assumptions that participants embraced somewhat passively in their childhood, or even perplexing doubts about why God allowed certain painful events to happen. Deeper probing into a

¹⁴ Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, 56.

participant's past is probably better left to skilled professional counselors, sufficed to say, it is not the role of coach or mentor to offer such counseling but rather to raise awareness, encourage personal responsibility, and offer biblical wisdom if led to do so.

The other reason that identifying obstacles is necessary to the coaching and mentoring process is that the places of struggle and difficulty are where the Holy Spirit is increasing sanctifying presence and grace. This speaks to the theology of process discussed in Chapter Three, where the development of a Christ-centered leader requires an ongoing commitment to spiritual formation and discipleship. These areas of struggle are the seedbeds of spiritual transformation where the paradox of Christ's strength through one's weakness can be profoundly embraced and demonstrated (2 Cor 12:10). The millennial participants in this mentoring experiment were challenged to trust God more deeply with their weaknesses, and at the same time, to exercise accountability and transparency, and receive support and encouragement in these areas so that their outward service would be rooted in an ongoing experience of authentic spiritual growth and transformation.

Empowering New Possibilities

The most thrilling part of this initiative was witnessing these participants' choices to move forward in faith toward God's call. Once it became clear to them, there was a determined willingness to respond to whatever doors of opportunity and ministry God would open. For one participant, these doors were within her current ministry assignment and she was able to walk through them with greater confidence and intentionality. For another, the clarity of her vision surfaced new ideas for how to develop emerging leaders

under them. For yet another, new vision sparked his courage to engage all the people he relates with at work and at play with greater love and kingdom witness. He also began to consider the possibilities of becoming a coach in his field of martial arts. Another saw clearly that God had been preparing him for leadership in the local church among youth. He decided to start researching graduate programs that would allow him to continue doing youth ministry while pursuing a masters level education in theology and ministry. In light of these results, it is interesting to observe how a breakthrough experience of revelation and clarity yielded unforeseen options and a new motivation to push toward them.

Empowerment, however, is more than just the experience of breakthrough insight. It involves a plan of action and the will to execute. From the standpoint of the mentor and coach, it is about resourcing the participant with the necessary information, skills, connections, opportunities, tools, and even finances to move forward with effectiveness. For the scope of this project, was enough to observe that the participating millennial took empowered steps forward in the direction of their calling. In one exceptional case, the participant who took on a youth role was hired by New Life as their part-time youth director. Another participant expressed her new-found motivation for pursuing a doctorate degree in organizational leadership and pioneering new missions and evangelism projects that involve the youth she is leading. The empowerment experienced by participants of this initiative is a hopeful picture of what future millennial engagement might look like at New Life.

Assessment and Evaluation

The assessment of this initiative revolves around several observations. First of all, these millennials were willing to be mentored and coached, but not until the pain of their life situation drove them to it. All except one of the four participants were experiencing a significant level of dissonance, confusion, and struggle in their life that they believed required the help of a mentor or coach. This might suggest that the perceived value of mentoring and coaching may need to be increased in the local church context. Raising awareness through teaching, public announcements, messaging, as well as sharing personal stories of the benefits of coaching and mentoring can represent initial steps in building a culture of coaching and mentoring. Coaching and mentoring should not be perceived as simply another program to help people with problems, but as a normal part of the process of spiritual formation and discipleship.

Secondly, the participants' seamless use of technology allowed for some of the coaching and mentoring to happen online, on the phone, or through email. While the face-to-face sessions were quite necessary, technology made it possible to receive assignments, get immediate feedback, or perform necessary follow-up without the pressure of having to always meet in person. Three out of the four millennials in this initiative had no problem with meeting online, on the phone or even sending in assignments through text messaging. The use of technology will be an important consideration when further developing a mentoring pathway for New Life.

Thirdly, it seemed more natural and relational to weave in and out of the coaching role during the individual sessions. With millennials who in general have been receiving wisdom and expert advice all their lives from parents, teachers, and YouTube, expecting

them to enter the coaching relationship ready and able to engage in discovery-based learning was quite unrealistic. Blending the coaching and mentoring practices of drawing out and pouring in felt necessary because the Focused Living process required some upfront and just-in-time understanding of leadership development and how God shapes the life of a leader.

Next, the process of implementation was flexible and not rigid in part because it was very difficult at times to coordinate schedules and availability. There was perhaps too much flexibility or too much time in between sessions for some of the participants. This was due to seasonal demands on their time and the coach's time. Nonetheless, to go longer than two weeks between coaching sessions for the Focused Living process felt as if momentum was being lost and effectiveness was being diminished. The exception to this was if the participant had done well to record their reflections and discoveries (as the Focused Living process requires). Regardless, it would have been better to schedule once a week or once every other week meetings with the goal of completing the Focused Living exercises, and then set up bi-weekly or monthly coaching meetings to follow through with the new learning, action steps, and issues that had previously surfaced.

Lastly, the Focused Living process provided adequate structure for the initiation of the coaching relationship. However, the follow-up coaching sessions felt more fluid with less certainty about how long the coaching relationship should continue. To deal with this, the coach left it to the participant to decide if he or she needed more coaching. It would then require the participant's future initiative to request more coaching. Perhaps this speaks to the need of developing a clearer follow-up coaching pathway when dealing with millennials.

There was one evaluation form given to participants during their engagement with the mentoring initiative.¹⁵ The questions on this form were particularly keyed to the overall goals stated for the initiative. Questions One and Two sought to determine if participants' understanding of Christian leadership had shifted in any way as a result of the coaching sessions. Question Three addressed their general understanding of the nature of God's calling on their life, and what if anything had changed in their perspective. Questions Four and Five target the awareness of difficult issues and ongoing struggles, and are keyed to the theological anchor of progress in spiritual growth. Question Six seeks to determine whether the participant has actively responded to new learning from God about themselves and their real issues. Then Questions Seven and Eight address the issue of empowerment and what the participant has done in response to what they believe God has called them to do.

From the responses that came back to these eight questions, most of the stated goals were achieved. The participants received greater clarity and insight into their calling. They demonstrate an adequate awareness of obstacles to their growth in character that could set them back. They also express a clearer understanding of that for which God has shaped them, and the steps they have taken in obedience to that call. They affirm a sense of empowerment that has brought them new perspective on their lives and new momentum in the practice of their ministries.

In the category of empowerment, two of the testimonies of participants were quite remarkable. This first response came from a millennial (Participant Four) who had

¹⁵ Appendix F

experienced a difficult and confusing season of life and his participation in this initiative proved timely. He responded in this way (Questions Seven and Eight are included here for immediate reference):

Question Seven: What do you feel most empowered to do for God in this season of your life (as a result of having gone through this process)?

Question Eight: What steps have you taken to live out your best understanding of God's call upon your life to date?

Participant Four's Response to Question Seven:

This season of my life, I feel most empowered to simply build relationships with those that are younger than me, and show them that 1) it is okay to make mistakes 2) they are perfect in God's eyes and 3) that God is real and at work in their lives at this very moment.

Participant Four's Response to Question Eight:

There are two significant steps I have taken to live out my best understanding of God. The first is taking the position as youth director. I could have easily declined and have just gone straight to school for a masters or doctorate, but I felt like my understanding of my calling lined up with this job so perfectly. Secondly, I am making the effort to communicate in a healthy and open manner. My first order call says to "fearlessly be and love my authentic self." This means that I need to learn how to not fight for everyone else's approval, because the only approval my authentic self needs is God's. To get to this point, I need to communicate openly and healthy to clarify with those who I feel are placing invalid and unspoken expectations and pressures.¹⁶

This response is reflective of the growth in his understanding of the dual nature of God's calling, the call to be and the call to do. The clarity he receives with regard to vision gave way to new possibilities of empowered ministry service at New Life. The breakthrough in insight he experienced along these lines fueled the courage to accept the offer of that open ministry position. In addition, he makes reference to his first order calling, to

¹⁶ Appendix G

“fearlessly be and love my authentic self.”¹⁷ In his case, his statement of purpose/identity in Christ was a response to the area of ongoing struggle he was having.

An additional testimony highlights the response of a millennial (Participant Three) who was already serving in an empowered ministry role at New Life as one of campus youth ministry directors. Her responses to Questions Three and Seven are no less encouraging. They demonstrate the new discovery she made and the new clarity she has with regard to what God has called her to do (vision statement).

Question Three: What key discoveries have you made about God’s call upon your life?

Question Seven: What do you feel most empowered to do for God in this season of your life?

Participant Three’s Response to Question Three:

Before this, I had a vague sense of my calling and new that I was called to leadership, but always felt that I had to follow a leadership approach that most people around me have modeled. I knew God had called me to be in a right standing relationship with Him and that I was called to teach and lead others. Now, I can say that I have been called to encourage others into fulfilling their potentials and live their own calling from God through leadership development, motivating them to be emotionally and spiritually healthy, and advocate for themselves and those around them that are in desperate need of justice. I still need more work on clarifying what this could look like in my current context, simplifying my calling even more by integrating the pieces I have discovered, and other things. But, I have been able to identify and connect with even more details my life experiences, giftings and strengths, and passions to the calling God has in my life. I have a lot more clarity now than ever before.

Participant Three’s Response to Question Seven: “I feel empowered to pursue a new pioneering project in regards to leadership development and to push the leaders I

¹⁷ Ibid.

will develop to seek to help the distraught through evangelism and missionary projects.”¹⁸

This millennial leader has worked as one of the youth directors at New Life for nearly three years, and was experiencing certain pressures in life that engendered a lack of motivation and some cloudiness with regard to her vision for the youth ministry. What she gained from her participation in this initiative was greater focus (as seen in her vision statement above); and this focus generated new ideas for how she can lead the youth ministry forward. She expresses this as a new passion to pioneer leadership development projects and new missions/evangelism projects that meet the needs of the poor. For this leader, it emerged in the coaching sessions that she was most motivated and passionate when she was creating and initiating new things. But once the new thing had been established, her interest diminished significantly. So her response to Question Seven was her way of continuing in her current empowered ministry role but engaging in pioneering efforts that would summon her passion and focus her obedience to God’s unique call upon her.

In light of this, it is the assessment of this author that the initiative was by and large successful. It met the articulated goals in the areas of remembrance, relationship, process, calling, and empowerment. For at least half of the participants, it resulted in extraordinary breakthrough moments that accelerated positive changes in their approach to ministry, or gave them the courage to step into new opportunities that aligned with their newfound sense of calling. For all the participants, at the very least, the experience

¹⁸ Responses to Evaluation Questions in Appendix F.

solidified their intentions in maturing in specific areas of character; and deepened their awareness and appreciation of God's activity throughout their total life journey.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This project was an attempt to break ground in one small corner of the complex and difficult terrain of widespread millennial disengagement and the general decline of the institutional church in America. It focused on a thirty-five year old immigrant congregation called New Life and tested the possibilities for raising up leaders from its significant but declining millennial constituency. The overall purpose was to engage young leaders in a mentoring and coaching process in order to begin cultivating leaders for New Life's very near future. The mentoring process that was implemented sought to take into consideration New Life's history and congregational culture as well as the general mindset of millennials toward the local church. This coaching and mentoring initiative was anchored in New Testament examples of discipleship, and in theological themes that reflect the fundamental nature of God and his dealings with humanity.

The literature explored in this project provided a richer understanding of the relationship between discipleship and spiritual formation, leadership development, and mentoring/coaching. It helped to solidify discipleship and spiritual formation as the basis for any mentoring practice. It also provided good insight into the cultural mindset of the millennial generation. The literature examined a few contemporary models of mentoring and coaching, some of which were highly institutionalized, programmatic and top-heavy, making it somewhat difficult for local church to access.

Not surprisingly, it became apparent that there were differing perspectives on the relationship between mentoring and coaching. These distinctions made a difference when referring to the practice of mentoring and coaching people. But when discussing theological and biblical foundations, the distinctions between the terms were not as

relevant. Thus it was necessary in chapter three to state the interchangeability of the terms. However, in the following chapters, the terms were understood through their particular roles and functions utilized during the coaching process. To be clear, the initiative itself used a coaching model (Walling's IDEA coaching pathway) and maintained a coaching posture of listening and drawing out discovery. It also utilized the mentoring function in the sessions as needed to increase knowledge and deepen understanding.

In light of the theological and biblical foundations developed in chapter three, what resulted was a mentoring and coaching initiative that felt very organic and relational. Perhaps it was a bit too flexible. Yet, it was in the midst of the coaching relationship that the value of theological reflection played out. Perhaps a theology of relationship or relationality kept the initiative from being perceived as simply another program designed to keep millennials from leaving New Life. Moreover, the timeline exercise required by Focused Living was the most critical leveraging point in the whole initiative. Inevitably, there was some explaining that was done about leadership and even some practical advice given at times during the initiative. But the construction of their personal timeline established the undeniable sense that this process was about discovering God's past and present work in their lives, and not about what the coach or mentor could teach them. The reflective work they did on their personal history with God and His personal dealings with them in that history was a step toward taking personal responsibility. In the process, the coach's role was to ask good questions and then listen well, prompting them toward deeper discernment and discovery of the Spirit's work. Also, the coaching posture of listening and sensitivity to the Spirit's work in the life of

the participant was critical as well. In moments of deep reflection, the participant may not fully have understood the importance of their responses to certain questions. So recognition of the Spirit's work in the moment was key to not missing moments of insight and potential breakthrough.

This initiative took place in relative obscurity, as a sideline rational experiment that would not draw the attention of the congregation. This was intentional due to the desire to avoid it being perceived by younger leaders at New Life as just another program of discipleship for the young people. Instead, this was a highly customized coaching and mentoring pathway built on theological and biblical principles and themes, and that sought to personally empower participating millennials. From the feedback received by participants, it is enough to say that this initiative should be considered as an important addition to the existing discipleship pathway at New Life. Certainly there are perhaps adjustments and adaptations to be made in order to make this available to more people. However, for the millennials who live in the orbit of New Life in particular, this more personalized, customizable approach to leadership development may in fact be the place to start. If any reproducibility is to be added to this initiative, it would be in training more mentors and coaches to serve millennials at New Life.

In conclusion, perhaps it is a critique of this process that it does not guarantee that the millennials who participate in it will ever step into leadership roles in the local church. Indeed no leadership development process can make that promise. However, as set forth in this project, a more organic mentoring and coaching strategy that is customized toward one's life journey with God, and personalized by a trained coach and mentor could appeal to millennials more than the traditional, more systematized, lecture-

based approach to discipleship and development. At least, it will help get them started back in the direction of the local church and God's people there. For some, invariably, their calling will lead them into the marketplace. But even if it does, the local church can and should be perceived by millennials as a legitimate place for calling to be discovered and empowered. This is the hope with regard to New Life's millennials in years to come. Whether New Life's millennials ever re-engage or never re-engage with the local church, New Life can and must become a community of dream-releasers that do not utilize people to fulfill its vision, but rather assist them in ascertaining God's vision for their lives, and then equipping and enabling them to pursue it, no matter where it takes them. Mentoring and coaching strategies like this one can and will provide a way forward. It is the hope and intention of this author to offer this initiative as an ongoing practice at New Life, to be further improved, developed, and made reproducible as a unique tool for others to live out Christ's Commission to make disciples.

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE THEORY

Clinton's phases of development in a leader's life are outlined and defined as follows:

Phase 1: Sovereign Foundations- this is the initial phase in which God providentially works through a person's family, upbringing, history, heritage, and other environmental factors to bring that person to an initial awareness and acknowledgement of God.

Phase 2: Inner-Life Growth- this phase begins when the person begins to seek God and His Kingdom more intensely, taking to heart the invitation to know God intimately. In this phase, leadership potential is identified, and if the person responds well to the lessons God wants to teach them, they experience growth in ministry responsibility.

Phase 3: Ministry Maturing- the emerging leader begins to discover and experiment with their spiritual gifts, and they begin to see the importance of relationships in the Body of Christ. They can learn critical lessons from key relationships (both negative and positive), and they can start learning more about themselves, both strengths and weaknesses.

Phase 4: Life Maturing- the first three phases were about the work God is doing in the life of a leader, but in Phase 4, the leader starts to see the fruit that is born from years of investing in their own spiritual maturity. The leader understands his/her gifts and has learned best where and how to use them. But now, ministry flows more out of the leader's character than out of their skill.

Phase 5: Convergence- In this phase, the leader takes on a fulfilling role that is best suited to their maturity, skill, gift-mix, and experience. They have had to say "no" to the good in order to say "yes" to the best as God "moves the leader into a role that matches his gift-mix and experience so that ministry is maximized."¹ They begin to do the thing for which they were born. They begin to make the unique contribution for which God has been preparing them.

Phase 6: Afterglow- in this last phase, the leader blesses an ever-expanding network of people who recognize the leader's lifetime of faithfulness and storehouse of wisdom. The leader is able to reflect God's glory, enjoy the fruit of years of leadership emergence, and leave a legacy of finishing well for those to come.

¹ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 39.

APPENDIX B

Terry Walling's IDEA coaching pathway is made up of the following four steps:

1. **IDENTIFY.** Connect with the coachee and determine the core desire. This involves the art and skill of listening.
2. **DISCOVER.** Through the skillful use of questions, uncover the backstory and surface the challenges they are facing. In this step, the coach seeks to lead the coachee in personal discovery and ownership of the issues. This leads to the coachee taking greater personal responsibility for the solutions.
3. **EVALUATE.** Discern what the Holy Spirit is at work doing and pinpoint the real issue/s.
4. **ACT.** Address the issue and summarize the takeaways. Here, the coach helps the coachee take the next steps emphasizing obedience and new behavior that aligns with God's work. This is where the coachee is empowered to act in new ways to implement the results of personal breakthrough.¹

¹ Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, 26-27.

APPENDIX C

Egler re-presents Stanley and Clinton's seven mentoring types and three mentoring levels and applies them to working with millennials in ministry. The seven mentoring types are: historical/contemporary model, teacher, counselor, sponsor, spiritual director, discipler, and coach.

The three mentoring levels reflect increasing levels of intensity and commitment:

Level 1: Passive Mentoring. This kind of mentoring is done through the exemplary way in which the contemporary (living) or historical (deceased) mentor conducted their life. Here, the mentor's life becomes a powerful role model and example of principles and values worthy of emulation. However, there is little two-way relational connection at this level. The mentoree views these types of mentors as heroes of the faith, but is not receiving any life-on-life input from them.

Level 2: Occasional Mentoring. This kind of mentoring happens when the mentor has a direct relational connection with the mentoree. It happens within an agreed-upon timeframe. The intensity of the commitment and intentionality is significantly higher from both mentoree and mentor. The three styles that fit this level are teaching, counseling, and sponsoring.

Level 3: Intensive Mentoring. This kind of mentoring is done by a spiritual director, coach, or discipler. These mentoring roles require the highest levels of commitment from both mentoree and mentor. The mentor imparts what he/she feels the mentoree needs to further development and growth.¹

¹ Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 85-87.

APPENDIX D

Six Core Commitments That Help Churches Grow Young

1. Keychain leadership. Instead of centralizing authority at the top, these churches found a way to mobilize empowering leaders and maximize their influence at many or all levels of congregational life. ¹
2. Empathy. Instead of criticizing, or judging young people, growing-young churches have learned to empathize with them. They seek to understand their world, and even enter it, imagining life through their eyes. ²
3. Jesus' Message. These churches and leaders take Jesus' message seriously and seek to present a more robust gospel message. They move intentionally away from a gospel of behavior-modification (what Ammerman calls the "Golden Rule gospel"), and increase their emphasis on Jesus' life and teachings, God's larger story of redemption, and living in the kingdom of God here and now.³
4. Fueling a Warm Community. These churches strive to create a warm, hospitable, and authentic relational environment that fosters a sense of belonging. ⁴
5. Prioritizing Young People Everywhere. Instead of focusing on youth programming or youth ministries, they prioritize young people and families everywhere throughout congregational life. They are creatively finding ways to involve them in all facets of the faith community.⁵
6. Being Best Neighbors. They "infuse their young people with an integrated discipleship that enables them to thrive" in an ever-changing world. This includes modeling for young people how to be good neighbors to the local and global community in order to make a positive difference in the world for Christ. This involves embracing their neighbors with Christ's love across all the barriers of race, ethnicity, class, and culture.⁶

¹ Griffin, Mulder, and Powell, 53.

² Ibid., 89-92.

³ Ibid., 134-137.

⁴ Ibid., 166-170.

⁵ Ibid., 197-200.

⁶ Ibid., 237-249.

APPENDIX E

General Information Form

Note: All personal information is held securely, confidential, and treated appropriately.

Last name _____ First Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Numbers/Contact Details

Home _____ Cellphone/Text _____

Email/s _____ Best Contact Method/s _____

Best Time of Day to Contact _____

Days Available to Meet (circle all that apply): M T W Th F Sa Su

Available Time of Day to Meet: (circle all that apply):

Morning (8-11AM) Afternoon (noon – 4PM) Evening (4PM – 8PM)

Employment Information

Current Occupation _____

Employer Name _____

Personal Information

Date of Birth _____ Marital Status _____ No. of Children _____

Name(s) and Age(s) of Child(ren) _____

Education (circle all that apply)

High School Diploma / Bachelors / Masters / Post- Graduate / Trade Certification

Current Church Ministry Involvement

(describe your current involvement in the local church)

APPENDIX F

Coaching Assessment: Evaluate Your Experience

Reflect on the experience you have had and the learning you have gained from the coaching conversations and mentoring sessions you have had over the past months and answer the following questions:

1. What is your definition of a Christian leader?
2. How has your understanding of Christian leadership changed if at all?
3. What key discoveries have you made about God's call upon your life?
4. What core issue(s) surfaced during this time that present ongoing challenges or obstacles to your spiritual development?
5. What needs more work in your life at this time?
6. What steps of faith have you taken in obedience to God as a result of the coaching/mentoring sessions?
7. What do you feel most empowered to do for God in this season of your life?
8. What steps have you taken to live out your best understanding of God's call upon your life to date?

APPENDIX G

Responses to Coaching Assessment

Participant One: Arianna is a twenty-four year old female who has been a serious Christ follower since her teenage years. She has been a part of New Life for almost seven years to date. Currently, she is serving for a non-profit organization that is doing business as mission in India. Her responses are italicized.

1. What is your definition of a Christian leader?

Someone who is intentional about using their sphere of influence to help others grow in their Christian faith.

2. How has your understanding of Christian leadership changed if at all?

It broadened a bit, causing me to look outside only traditional, full time ministry roles.

3. What key discoveries have you made about God's call upon your life?

I think I really came away realizing that there is so much more than I can see or imagine right now. I have so many years ahead to discover new dreams God has put in me and I don't need a full picture now. It grows as I walk in obedience to what He has revealed to me.

4. What core issue(s) surfaced during this time that present ongoing challenges or obstacles to your spiritual development?

I find it hard to know the best way for me to process life. We talked about the need for good rhythms and taking adequate time in seasons instead of pushing through. I am aware of it now and still figuring out what works best for me.

5. What needs more work in your life at this time?

Discipline to focus on things that cause growth in the long term instead of being too consumed with the here and now.

6. What steps of faith have you taken in obedience to God as a result of the coaching/mentoring sessions?

I am working on making good rhythms part of my life and taking time to let God work in my heart.

7. What do you feel most empowered to do for God in this season of your life?

I feel empowered to help where I am needed. Taking a season to homeschool instead of jumping into more obvious ministry because that is what God has asked me to do right now. I can do this because I understand that God's timing is perfect and that He has good plans.

8. What steps have you taken to live out your best understanding of God's call upon your life to date?

Moved to India.

Participant Two: Arjo was thirty years old when he completed this evaluation. He has been a Christ-follower since his teen years and continued attending church even when many of his friends had stopped. He has been at New Life for about seven years to date. He works in the health sciences field. His responses are italicized.

1. What is your definition of a Christian leader?

Faithful, transparent, genuine, with sound mind.

2. How has your understanding of Christian leadership changed if at all?

Has not changed.

3. What key discoveries have you made about God's call upon your life and/or your identity as a Christian?

I was created to live life uniquely and different. My life is the example God wants to use for others to see.

4. What core issue(s) surfaced during this time that present ongoing challenges or obstacles to your spiritual development?

Transparency, staying true to who I am, remaining a branch connected to the Vine.

5. What needs more work in your life at this time?

Patience, more faith in times of waiting.

6. What steps of faith have you taken in obedience to God as a result of the coaching/mentoring sessions?

Blocking out time in my day to sit in His presence.

7. What do you feel most empowered to do for God in this season of your life?

Encourage others through words or action (depending on other person's preferred language)

8. What steps have you taken to live out your best understanding of God's call upon your life to date?

Read God's word daily, pray, ask/seek/pray.

Participant Three: Bianca was thirty-one years old when she completed this evaluation. She has been a Christ-follower since her teen years. She sensed a call to local church ministry early on and has served in the local church throughout her high school and college years. He has been at New Life for about five years to date. She serves as the youth and student ministries director at the New Life Norwalk Campus. Her responses are italicized below.

1. What is your definition of a Christian leader?

A Christian leader is someone who is an influence in the lives of other people as they are guided by the Holy Spirit themselves. They help others grow towards their purpose and calling that God has for their lives. They embody Christian principles and live the example themselves that want those under them to follow.

2. How has your understanding of Christian leadership changed if at all?

My understanding of Christian leadership has changed by allowing me to see that there are different ways of leading people, not just through leading a life group or a ministry. I have also learned that a call to leadership is about being with God just as it is about doing for God. I was also able to see an emotionally, spiritually healthy example of what leadership should be like. In addition, I have learned that leadership can change as one grows older and transitions into different seasons of life, but the call to leadership remains constant.

3. What key discoveries have you made about God's call upon your life?

Before this, I had a vague sense of my calling and new that I was called to leadership, but always felt that I had to follow a leadership approach that most people around me have modeled. I knew God had called me to be with in a right standing relationship with Him and that I was called to teach and lead others. Now, I can say that I have been called to encourage others into fulfilling their potentials and live their own calling from God through leadership development, motivating them to be emotionally and spiritually healthy, and advocate for themselves and those around them that are in desperate need of justice. I still need more work on clarifying what this could look like in my current context, simplifying my calling even more by integrating the pieces I have discovered,

and other things. But, I have been able to identify and connect with even more details my life experiences, giftings and strengths, and passions to the calling God has in my life. I have a lot more clarity now than ever before.

4. What core issue(s) surfaced during this time that present ongoing challenges or obstacles to your spiritual development?

A core issue that has surfaced is that I am a pioneering leader who can become unmotivated with projects or tasks that have passed their pioneering phase. I need to learn to continue moving towards my passions and calling within my current context. Also, learning to continue overcoming my past trauma and negative experiences and not allow them to keep me from moving forward.

5. What needs more work in your life at this time?

I need to work on developing a healthy balance at a wholistic level in my life. I also need to receive more clarity on how to pursue my calling within my current ministry context.

6. What steps of faith have you taken in obedience to God as a result of the coaching/mentoring sessions?

I am considering many new projects, a possible doctorate degree in the area of leadership development/life coaching, I have also began to plan a possible coaching plan for the leaders under me.

7. What do you feel most empowered to do for God in this season of your life?

I feel empowered to pursue a new pioneering project in regards to leadership development and to push the leaders I will develop to seek to help the distraught through evangelism and missionary projects.

8. What steps have you taken to live out your best understanding of God's call upon your life to date?

I have gone through spiritual direction counseling at Biola University, have taken multiple personality diagnostics to understand myself better, have done research, and have sought to pursue coaching/mentoring from more experienced leaders.

Participant Four: Miles was twenty-one years old when he completed this evaluation. He has been a part of New Life since birth. After a few years out of state to earn his undergraduate degree, he returned to New Life and currently serves as youth and student ministries director of the New Life Harbor City Campus. His responses are italicized below.

1. What is your definition of a Christian leader?

A Christian leader is someone who leads a life in accordance with God's word and has the capability of influencing others to do so as well. Unlike other leadership positions, this requires an understanding that they are in no way perfect and will struggle, but they have God to help them through the hard and difficult times. Furthermore, as Christian leaders mentor others, they themselves also need mentorship because at the end of the day, we are all disciples of Christ.

2. How has your understanding of Christian leadership changed if at all?

Christian leadership initially was a phrase that I would associate with perfection. Whenever I saw someone with a high position within a church, I would immediately think that they had no faults. Reflecting on my timeline and hearing how other leaders emerged into their roles, I now know that everyone was once broken, but that broken pasts shape callings.

3. What key discoveries have you made about God's call upon your life?

I was hesitant to revisit my past camp experience where I sensed a higher calling to ministry. I thought that it was a misinterpretation as years went by, but the opportunities presented themselves over the course of my transition and it all made sense.

4. What core issue(s) surfaced during this time that present ongoing challenges or obstacles to your spiritual development?

The core issues that surfaced during this time was my inability to manage pressures and expectations. This hindered my ability to do things simply for the Lord and be emotionally and mentally healthy, and instead I did things to gain approval from those around me.

5. What needs more work in your life at this time?

The core issue listed above has always been my Achilles' heel. Although the mentoring process has helped me tremendously, with my new role as youth director, I still see myself get inside my own head when it comes to what other's think of me and the unspoken pressure to be perfect.

6. What steps of faith have you taken in obedience to God as a result of the coaching/mentoring times?

My biggest step of faith I have taken in obedience to God was to simply trust him and not overthink things. As I learned to not plan everything out, I started to see how God presents things to me with his perfect timing.

7. What do you feel most empowered to do for God in this season of your life?

This season of my life, I feel most empowered to simply build relationships with those that are younger than me, and show them that 1) it is okay to make mistakes 2) they are perfect in God's eyes and 3) that God is real and at work in their lives at this very moment.

8. What steps have you taken to live out your best understanding of God's call upon your life to date?

There are two significant steps I have taken to live out my best understanding of God. The first is taking the position as youth director. I could have easily declined and have just gone straight to school for a masters or doctorate, but I felt like my understanding of my calling lined up with this job so perfectly. Secondly, I am making the effort to communicate in a healthy and open manner. My first order call says to "fearlessly be and love my authentic self". This means that I need to learn how to not fight for everyone else's approval, because the only approval my authentic self needs is God's. To get to this point, I need to communicate openly and healthy to clarify with those who I feel are placing

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