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# **AN EXAMINATION OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN YOUNG LIFE**

By

Brian T. Fletcher

A PROJECT/DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN PARTIAL  
FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF  
MINISTRY DEGREE

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN EXAMINATION OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN YOUNG LIFE**

Young Life, one of the largest youth ministries in the world, with over 3,100 full time staff and 15,000 volunteers, places a great deal of emphasis on leadership. With so much information on leadership in the secular world and in the Christian world, how does the leader discern what to teach other leaders? More specifically, how does the Young Life Area Director know what to train his staff and volunteer leaders? Since there is no Young Life curriculum for Area Directors, each Area Director is free within certain parameters to develop his or her own material. Young Life's mission statement is "to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith." Young Life leadership training materials need to reflect this mission statement.

The overall plan of this study was first to look at the Scriptures to see what they have to tell us about leadership. The study looked specifically at God as leader, Jesus as leader, Moses, David and Paul as leaders. This gave the Biblical framework and grid to see if the Area Directors were teaching Biblical principles of leadership. Secondly, the study reviewed the extra-Biblical literature on the topic of leadership. This revealed what Christian leaders were saying about leadership development. Thirdly, eight Area Directors were interviewed by the author and asked to discuss what they were teaching in their leadership training times. Fourthly, the results were compiled from these three sources and concluded whether or not the Area Directors were on the right course in teaching

Biblical leadership principles. Fifthly, recommendations were made based on the findings.

Young Life has a great program structure in place to reach adolescents with the Gospel. This research project sought to determine if there is greater emphasis placed on running the “program” of Young Life versus understanding the biblical principles behind the program. The study also sought to discover whether the Area Directors themselves articulated biblical principles undergirding a gospel-centered mission.

While there are many ways of teaching, this study concentrated on the content of leadership training rather than technique. The three key research questions included the following:

1. What leadership principles are Young Life Area Directors teaching their staff and volunteer leaders in leadership training?
2. How biblically based are the leadership principles Area Directors teach to their staff and volunteers?
3. What factors influence the Area Director in his teaching and training of volunteer leaders?

This study found the Area Directors were biblical in their leadership training and understanding of the gospel. One central theme that crystallized the ministry philosophies of the Area Directors was that of incarnational ministry. All of the Area Directors understood the significance of the incarnation and our calling as incarnational ministers. They wanted their leaders to understand that ministry is about loving people in and through the spirit of Jesus that indwells us.

## **Dedication**

To my loving and patient family who make my life rich and full. My wife Julie, who works tirelessly to support and take care of us. You constantly love and shower me with grace. And to my three awesome kids, Taylor, Tessa Jane and Molly. You have all been so encouraging and are truly a blessing.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership training commands significant attention in twenty-first century American culture. The University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia, established the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, which offers an undergraduate degree in leadership. Numerous books and articles have been written in the past fifty years on the subject of leadership. Many companies offer leadership training to other companies. Companies themselves train their own people in leadership. Conferences abound that revolve around the subject of leadership. One of the most well attended Christian seminars on leadership, the Leadership Summit hosted by the Willow Creek Association, is satellite cast to over 100 cities with over 50,000 participants.

Young Life, one of the largest youth ministries in the world, with over 3,100 full time staff and 15,000 volunteers, places a great deal of emphasis on leadership. For instance, we do not call our volunteers..."volunteers." We call them volunteer "leaders." Each Young Life Area Director conducts weekly

leadership training meetings. Young Life holds several region-wide leadership training conferences during the year. Leadership training is a central core value to Young Life.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE**

With so much information on leadership in the secular world and in the Christian world, how does the leader discern what to teach other leaders? More specifically, how does the Young Life Area Director know what to train his staff and volunteer leaders? Since there is no Young Life curriculum for Area Directors, each Area Director is free within certain parameters to develop his or her own material. Since Young Life's mission statement is "to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith," leadership training materials would need to reflect this mission statement. They would also need to reflect Young Life's statement of faith and core values (see Appendices 1-3). The purpose of this study is to explore what leadership principles Area Directors are teaching their volunteer leaders and staff and to evaluate how biblically-based those principles are.

If we do not study this subject, local Young Life ministries may be hindered because volunteer leaders may not be biblically grounded. Their Area Directors may be training them in legalism rather than grace. Area Directors and volunteers may not understand biblical grace-infused principles of leadership. These gaps in understanding may produce poor ministry practices and possibly lead adolescents away from the gospel instead of towards it.

A key component of this study will be to research what Young Life Area Directors are teaching to their leaders. Young Life has a great program structure in place to reach adolescents with the Gospel. This research project will seek to determine if there is greater emphasis placed on running the “program” of Young Life versus understanding the biblical principles behind the program. It will also seek to discover whether the Area Directors themselves articulate the biblical principles undergirding a gospel-centered mission.

While there are many ways of teaching, this study will concentrate on the content of leadership training rather than technique. The three key research questions include the following:

1. What leadership principles are Young Life Area Directors teaching their staff and volunteer leaders in leadership training?
2. How biblically based are the leadership principles Area Directors teach to their staff and volunteers?
3. What factors influence the Area Director in his teaching and training of volunteer leaders?

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study will be to strengthen the leadership training of Young Life Area Directors. Once we find out what Area Directors are teaching and training their leaders, then we will be able to guide them toward a biblically-centered approach. Although I personally have no authority over other Area Directors, I believe the findings of this project could be profoundly helpful for

those who are in the position of authority over Area Directors. Of course, if certain Area Directors are found to be training leaders extensively in Biblically-centered leadership, then the findings from these Area Directors will help the others. Therefore, Area Directors will benefit from examining the content of their leadership training in order to align it with the content of those Directors who are teaching biblically-centered principles.

Training leaders in biblically-centered leadership will have an impact on volunteer leaders by helping them understand and process a biblical approach to leadership. Once volunteer leaders are trained well, then the expectation is that they will be able to lead better.

As volunteer leaders impress biblical-centered leadership principles on to adolescents, then the adolescents become the beneficiaries. Adolescents will be impacted by the gospel as it is lived and taught by their leaders. Adolescent leaders will then begin to impact their peers by living out the gospel before them.

Understanding and applying biblically-centered leadership will impact the entire community of Young Life in a particular Area. As the Area Director leads with a biblically-centered approach, the culture of an Area will be changed. When the gospel is central to everything that is taught, then it becomes a natural part of everyone's language and thought processes. The gospel affects people's hearts and minds and transforms their lives.

The impact of this study will go beyond the realm of Young Life. Many volunteer leaders in Young Life do not stay Young Life leaders forever. They will eventually move on, and in most cases they get more involved in a local church.

Their ministry training in Young Life can play a vital role in their effectiveness in other leadership roles in the church. Young Life training in the ministry of the gospel is really training people in incarnational ministry for the Kingdom of God.

Biblically-centered leadership training will replace program-centered leadership training in those Areas where the focus has shifted away from the gospel. Since Young Life has an extremely effective program, it is easy to focus on teaching leaders how to run a program. If the content of leadership training centers on the programmatic, then the gospel is relegated to a minor position. This approach starts with the “form” (program) of a ministry and then moves towards its “function” (the proclamation of the gospel). The reverse is a more biblical approach. The function of a ministry, which is proclaiming the gospel, should precede the form or program. A Biblically-centered ministry will ask the question, “How does our program fit with the proclamation of the gospel,” instead of, “How can we fit the proclamation of the gospel into our program?” The mission of Young Life as a whole as well as each individual Area Director will be more Biblically sound and effective if the gospel is placed at the very center of everything taught (see Appendix 4).

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Young Life:** Young Life is a non-denominational Christian ministry that reaches out to adolescents. Young Life's mission statement is "to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith."

**Young Life Area:** This refers to a geographic location that an Area Director oversees. Most Young Life Areas consist of a county.

**Area Director:** An Area Director is a Young Life staff person who oversees a particular geographic area and the Young Life ministry in that area. Areas usually are broken down into counties.

**Volunteer leader:** A volunteer leader in Young Life is a person who works directly with kids. Volunteer leaders build relationships with kids, introduce them to Jesus Christ, and disciple them in their faith. Volunteer leaders actually run the programs in Young Life alongside the Area Director. They may be high school students, college students, young professionals, parents, etc.

**Committee member:** The Young Life Committee is a group of adults in a local Young Life Area that help support the ministry of the staff and volunteers.

**Gospel-Centered Leadership:** Leaders who lead others from a foundation of understanding the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This type of leadership involves Christ-like character and motivations, and a biblically-centered understanding of the Gospel.

**Young Life Training:** Young Life is very intentional in its training of staff and volunteers. Many Young Life Areas have weekly leadership training meetings led by the Area Director. This paper will explore the content of those meetings.



Young Life also has various regional and national leadership training conferences throughout the year for its staff and volunteers.

**Culture of a Young Life Area:** Each Young Life Area is led by a different Area Director and has many different volunteer leaders and adults involved in every aspect of the ministry. Each Area develops its own “culture” as leaders interact with one another and minister to adolescents. The culture of a Young Life Area includes its attitudes, beliefs, thought processes, behaviors, and characteristics. Since the Area Director is the key leader in an Area, the culture of an Area is strongly influenced by the Area Director’s gifts, abilities, and passions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Review of Young Life Literature

Emile Caillet, in his 1963 edition of *Young Life*, says this about how Jim Rayburn, the founder of Young Life, viewed training: “What accordingly matters is not *how* it should be done, in terms of technique (Jim abhors that word), but *by whom* it should be done, in terms of the quality of the Christian leader.”<sup>1</sup> From the founding of the Young Life mission in the 1940s, Jim Rayburn looked for individuals who had such a love for Christ that they were willing to go out and share that love with teenagers. Rayburn saw the need to share the gospel to teenagers who were outside the church walls. These were teenagers who were either unchurched or ex-churched, meaning they had tried church but given up on it. Rayburn felt that these teenagers had not heard the gospel in a way that was attractive. Rayburn knew that Jesus Christ was the most attractive person a kid could ever meet. Rayburn’s sense of adventure and love for Jesus were combined to create a mission that would revolutionize youth ministry for decades

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Cailliet, *Young Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 27-28.

to come. Rayburn operated on the principle, "It's a sin to bore a kid with the gospel."

The Young Life mission grew and in 1940 became an official organization called "The Young Life Campaign."<sup>2</sup> As the mission added more staff, Jim Rayburn knew he needed to train them. The Young Life Institute was created to give graduate-level training to the Young Life staff. "In order to effectively witness for Christ...staff leaders needed to know the essentials of the gospel, be grounded in theology, church history, Christian philosophy, adolescent psychology, and even the humanities."<sup>3</sup> This training was given during summer sessions in Colorado.

The following four books provide the history of Young Life and its leadership training programs:

1. *Back to the Basics of Young Life*, John Miller
2. *Young Life*, Emile Cailliet
3. *It's a Sin to Bore a Kid*, Char Meredith
4. *Dance Children Dance*, Jim Rayburn III

Each of these books contains a section on how Young Life trained their staff. However, there is no mention of how Young Life Area Directors were to train their volunteer leaders. A possible inference could be that the staff would transfer the information they learned at the Young Life Institute and other training conferences to their volunteer leaders. As I am sure some of this took place,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 28.

there still seems to be a void in structure, methodology or specific materials to be used to train volunteer leaders.

Currently there is a two-volume staff training manual called *Leadership I & II Training* available to Young Life Area Directors. There are forty four pages in this manual dedicated to “Building Spiritual Leaders.” This portion of the manual deals mainly with the spiritual disciplines of a leader such as developing a vital prayer life, being grounded in the Scriptures, engaging in spiritual warfare, understanding life purpose, etc. It also deals with topics such as calling, character, and moral purity. There is no section specifically designed to help the leader study the gospel in Biblical detail. A strong theology of the gospel is lacking.

Also in this manual is a fiftyone-page section entitled, “Building Volunteer Leaders.” This portion is designed to help enable the staff person to equip volunteers for the gospel ministry. Topics include recruiting, nurturing and developing teamwork among volunteer leaders. This section does include a sample outline for a leadership training course. Topics in this course revolve around hands-on ministry details such as understanding teenagers, leading a team ministry, giving the message at a Young Life club, developing disciples, etc. These aspects of the ministry are critical to understand and master. However, it appears the manual is lacking material related to understanding the gospel; a theology of salvation appears to be virtually non-existent. Young Life does a wonderful job of training staff and volunteers “how to communicate the gospel” but appears to be neglecting careful study of the gospel itself. This negligence

very likely translates into weakened and less-than-solidly-biblical leadership training.

## **Theological Framework**

*"In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed.  
In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling."* Exodus 15:13

Leadership is a major overarching theme in the Scriptures. When we think of certain men from the Bible – men like Moses, David, and Paul – we think of their leadership abilities. Although these men do play a major role in forming a biblical understanding of leadership, God is the greatest of all leaders. God leads His people perfectly. The Bible reveals a God who loves His people deeply and who leads them to Himself. God has a plan, and nothing can thwart that plan. Jesus, who is God incarnate, continues to carry out God's plan as His Son. This study will examine the ways God leads His people, with particular attention given to His character qualities and leadership model. Some of the leadership characteristics and principles to be noted include the following:

God's integrity in carrying out his Covenantal promises, God's holiness, God's love, God's mercy and grace, and Jesus' incarnational love for his disciples.

### **God's Leadership is Founded upon His Integrity to Carry out His Will**

We see God's leadership in action when He carries out His covenantal promises. Seminary professor and theologian, O. Palmer Robertson, states, "By creation God bound himself to man in covenantal relationship. After man's fall into sin, the God of all creation graciously bound himself to man again by

committing himself to redeem a people to himself from lost humanity. From creation to consummation the covenantal bond has determined the relation of God to his people. The extent of the divine covenants reaches from the beginning of the world to the end of the age.”<sup>4</sup>

God carries out this covenantal promise through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If God had not lived up to his end of the covenant, then he could not be trusted. But since God is holy and his integrity is perfect, he carried out his promised covenant. God as the leader of his people can be trusted based on his integrity. History has proven God’s integrity to be intact and unshakable.

God also makes a myriad of promises throughout the Scriptures. As God leads his people and makes and keeps promises along the way, his people learn to trust his leadership – his integrity and commitment. Numbers 23:19 puts it this way, “God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?”

### **God Promises to be Present with His People**

One of the most consistent promises that God makes is his promise to be with his people. As Joshua is taking over the leadership of Israel after the death of Moses, the Lord commands Joshua, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord

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<sup>4</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 23.

your God is with you wherever you go”(Joshua 1:9). King David knew the presence of the Lord well as he led. David writes in Psalm 23:4, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

The prophet Jeremiah had some very disturbing news for Israel. As God called and prepared Jeremiah, he promised in Jeremiah 1:8, “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.” As Jesus sends his disciples out into the world with the great commission, he tells them, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”(Matthew 28:19-20).

Each of these tasks to which the Lord was calling these individuals required great courage and faith in God. The promise and fulfillment of God’s presence gave these men the courage and strength to carry out his will.

### **God is Holy**

The holiness of God impacts his leadership by giving his followers a leader who will lead perfectly. There is no other leader who leads perfectly. As God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, he made it clear that Moses was in the presence of a holy God. “Then he said, ‘Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground’(Exodus 3:5). When Moses reaches the end of his life, he has experienced the holiness of God

and pens a song declaring, “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he”(Deuteronomy 32:4). God told Moses that he was holy, and then Moses was able to see this holiness lived out before him as he followed God’s perfect leadership in leading the people of Israel.

Isaiah saw the holiness and glory of the Lord in a vision. The angels were declaring, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”(Isaiah 6:3) The holiness of God was revealed to Mary the mother of Jesus and she declared, “...for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name”(Luke 1:49).

Hebrews reveals the importance of the holiness of Jesus as our perfect high priest, “For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens”(Hebrews 7:26).

### **God Loves His Followers**

The apostle John shows the connection between love, God and his people. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love”(I John 4:7-8). God is love and God loves his followers.

God chose the nation of Israel to follow him based on his love for them.



“It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

God’s love is better than life itself. David worships God by saying, “Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you”(Psalm 63:3). David knew the intimate love of God. As David led the people of Israel with love and compassion, he did so out of knowledge that God loved him and his people.

Jesus’ knowledge of the love of God the Father enabled him to carry out the work of God. “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel”(John 5:20).

God shows his love for his people by sending his Son, Jesus to die for them. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”(John 3:16).

As God leads, he extends mercy and grace. God’s people are rebellious, sinful and stubborn. And yet God continually shows mercy and grace to them. After Moses and the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and saw the mighty hand of God part the waters so they could cross on dry ground, Moses wrote a song declaring, “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have

redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode”(Exodus 15:13).

In Psalm 130:3-4 the writer cries out for mercy, “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.” The prophet Joel tells the people, “Yet even now”, declares the Lord, “return to me with all our heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster”(Joel 2:12-13).

In speaking of the coming redemption in Christ, Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all”(Isaiah 53:6). Paul declares in Romans 5:8, “...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

As the writer of the book of Lamentations experiences deep distress over the destruction of Jerusalem, he looks to God’s faithfulness and mercy. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”(Lamentations 3:22-23).

### **Jesus as God-in-the-Flesh Leader**

God’s leadership with his people culminates in his Son, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1-3 states:

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”

God has chosen to lead his people face to face, man to man. John puts it this way, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”(John 1:14).

The life of Jesus and his leadership continues to reveal the leadership qualities of God himself, since Jesus is God in the flesh. As Jesus lives and walks among humanity, and the disciples in particular, we get to see the truest of leaders in action.

Jesus’ leadership was characterized by his being a servant. Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” James and John, the sons of Zebedee ask Jesus to do whatever they ask of him. Jesus sees straight to their hearts and knows their ambition is self-centered. Jesus answers them by saying, ““You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first

among you must be slave of all”(Mark 10:42). Jesus came to serve his followers and ultimately to give his life for them.

John records one act of service that Jesus performs for his disciples as an example for them to follow. Jesus washes his disciples' feet. This job was reserved for the servant to carry out when guests came to the home of their master. However, Jesus wants his disciples to know that true leadership is equal to serving others. After Jesus washes the disciples' feet he says, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him”(John 13:12-16).

The servanthood of Jesus also reveals his humility towards others. Only an attitude of humility would cause the God of the universe to bend down and wash a sinner's dirty feet. The posture that Jesus takes before God the Father is one of a humble servant carrying out the will of his master. In John 6:38 Jesus says, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

Jesus' leadership is also characterized by compassion for his people. Matthew 9:36 records, “When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. In dealing with the widow of Nain, Luke writes, “And when the Lord saw her, he

had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'"(Luke 7:13). As Jesus went through the towns healing people, he was not afraid to touch them. In Matthew 8 a leper comes to the feet of Jesus and asks to be made clean. This leper had probably not been touched by another human since he contracted his disease. The fact that Jesus reaches out and touches this man is itself an act of compassion. These acts were done in the presence of the disciples. They were able to witness and learn firsthand the character it would take for them to be leaders in God's kingdom. Jesus walks through life with them, living out godly leadership.

Jesus' leadership was also courageous. Jesus was popular among many but also had his enemies. Many of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were not putting their faith in Jesus. They were skeptical of this man who claimed to be God. Jesus was not afraid to confront the Pharisees and their ways of trying to gain God's approval through their performance. In Matthew 23 Jesus gives seven "woes" to the Scribes and Pharisees. These woes condemn them for living hypocritical lives. They obeyed the laws with their actions but their hearts were far from God. In Matthew 23:27 Jesus says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness." As Jesus continued to rebuke the religious establishment, they plotted to kill him. Jesus, knowing that this was going to happen, still courageously spoke the truth.

Jesus' greatest act of courage was his willingness to go to the cross. Again, the disciples were with him throughout this whole process, watching Jesus courageously carry out the will of God.

### **Prayer and Dependence on God the Father Typified the Leadership of Jesus**

Mark records in his gospel that, "...rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he [Jesus] departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed"(Mark 1:35). Even though Jesus was God in the flesh he had a deep, intimate relationship with God the Father. Jesus was not sent into the world to do his will but to do the will of his Father, and he needed to be in constant communication with him. Jesus also prayed to show the people around him that he was dependent upon God the Father. Jesus' prayer at the resurrection of Lazarus shows this. As they took away the stone behind which lay Lazarus' dead body, Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "...Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said this on the account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me"(John 11:41-42). Again, we see so many characteristics of Jesus coming out in scenes like this one. Jesus is looking to glorify God the Father, he wants people to see God through him. He is humble and compassionate with those who are present and mourning. Jesus' prayer shows his dependence on God the Father to carry out this miracle.

Jesus' life is also one that has the Scriptures at the center of his teaching. It may seem paradoxical that Jesus teaches and interprets the Scriptures when he actually is the center focus of the Scriptures. However, this is how God chose to reveal himself and his word to the world. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John is speaking of Jesus, God incarnate. Jesus not only proclaimed the Word but he was the Word. Jesus came not only to teach and proclaim God's truth but also to fulfill it. Luke writes of Jesus' conversation with the two men on the road to Emmaus, "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself"(Luke 24:27). Luke also records a time early in Jesus' ministry when he was teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and he read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"(Luke 4:18-19). After reading this portion, Jesus said to the people there, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"(Luke 4:21). The Scriptures were central to the leadership and ministry of Jesus because he was the embodiment of the Scriptures.

Jesus also had a message of mission for his followers. They were not to sit back, enjoy life and wait for his return. They had a mission to carry out until he returned. Their mission was to make disciples. Matthew 28:19-20 records the great commission, "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in

heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” In the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as he called his disciples to him, he put it this way, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”(Matthew 4:19). Jesus’ plan to build the Kingdom of God was to invest himself into these men and then unleash them to go out and proclaim the gospel to the world. As Jesus taught and trained these men throughout his earthly ministry they began to understand their mission. They would eventually be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and start to build God’s church. This would be done relationally, life on life, just as Jesus had spent his life modeling to them.

### **Review of Three Key Leaders in Scripture**

A review of Moses, David and Paul reveals that these men were key leaders used by God’s sovereign hand in the lives of his people. We find these men in the middle of the story of God’s redemptive activity. Moses was called by God to be a leader during the time of a theocracy, David was called and anointed King over Israel and Paul was called by Jesus himself to take on a leadership role in the early church. There is tremendous value in examining these three men even though we stand at a different time of history today. These men led God’s people in many different circumstances. They were intimately connected to God and desired to carry out his will.



These brief overviews of the lives and ministries of Moses, David and Paul will allow us to see from a redemptive historical view how God molded and shaped them. Even though it was not necessarily God's intent for these men to be lifted up as role models, we still understand their inclusion in Scripture is for our benefit. We can look at their lives and process their character, successes and failures in order to see how they contributed to redemptive history.

### **Moses**

Moses was called by God to lead the Israelites out of bondage from the Egyptians and into the promised land. Exodus 3 records the famous story of God speaking to Moses from a burning bush. God tells Moses that he is to go to Pharaoh, one of the most powerful rulers in the world, and ask him to let the Israelites go. Moses discusses with God the obstacles to such a directive. In verse 12 God gives this promise to Moses, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

God is asking a monumental task of Moses. For Moses to go to Pharaoh and ask him to release approximately 600,000 slaves is unthinkable. Why would Pharaoh not immediately put Moses to death for even asking such a request? God sometimes asks his leaders to do impossible things from a human standpoint. This is so God can reveal his power and glory and when the task is accomplished, he gets the glory, not his chosen leader.

The promise of God's presence is enough for Moses to accept this call and go to Pharaoh. Moses will continue to meet with God and this will prove to be a key characteristic in the leadership of Moses.

Moses' first task is to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. His next task is to lead the Israelites to the promised land. This second task proves to be as difficult as the first. The Israelites were stubborn, rebellious and stiff-necked people. They constantly resisted Moses' leadership. They complained about their situation and blamed Moses for it. They turned their backs on God to worship idols. It seems as though the only friend Moses has is God. As Moses faces crisis after crisis he goes to the Lord for help. Throughout Moses' life we see his relationship with the Lord continue to develop and grow deeper and more intimate. The truth of God's presence and his accessibility to Moses through prayer enables him to lead in a way that glorifies God.

When the Israelites are stuck between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army, Moses tells the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent" (Exodus 14:13-14). Even though Moses does not know exactly how God is going to save his people at that point, he believes that God will do it, for he knows the presence of the Lord is with them.

Three days after Moses and the Israelites cross the Red Sea they are in the wilderness with no water. The people grumble against Moses and he cries out to God. The people see having no water as Moses' problem. Moses sees

having no water as God's problem. God sees having no water as no problem. But Moses goes straight to the Lord in the midst of this crisis. In Numbers 11 Moses is at the end of his rope. He is discouraged and depressed and asks the Lord to kill him. The Lord talks to Moses and tells him he is going to give some of the burden of leadership to the seventy elders of Israel. This frank conversation that Moses has with the Lord is characteristic of how Moses and God related to one another. Moses' success as a leader depended entirely on his relationship with the Lord. Their open communication and Moses' dependence on the Lord for wisdom and guidance sustained him. Exodus 33:11a sums up this relationship, "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend...".

Moses' character is revealed in his leadership. The crossing of the Red Sea is one of the first times the people begin to believe in Moses as their leader. Exodus 14:31 records, "Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses." In this passage we see that the Lord is the central redeemer, and Moses is just his servant. However, this leadership moment gives Moses credibility with the people. It is also said of Moses in Numbers 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all the people who were on the face of the earth." The New International Version translates this verse and says that Moses was a "very humble man." This character trait of Moses was critical in his leadership.

Moses loves the Israelites, even though they constantly complain and made leadership for Moses extremely difficult. In Exodus 32 the Israelites are tired of waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain, so they made a golden calf and began to worship it. This infuriates the Lord and he tells Moses, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you" (Exodus 32:10). But Moses responds by pleading with the Lord to not unleash his anger against the Israelites and to relent from bringing disaster upon them. He defends the people based on God's covenant to make them into a great nation. Moses argues that it would be the Lord's name that would be damaged if he were to destroy the people. Here we see how much Moses loves the Lord and desires to defend the Lord's reputation. However, he must have felt a constrained desire to plead with the Lord on behalf of these people because he loved them. In another instance in Numbers 16, Korah, a Levite, assembles a group of people to rebel against Moses and his leadership. The Lord puts all these men and their families to death. The entire community of Israelites is taken aback by such graphic punishment that they too start to rebel against Moses. The Lord decides to send a plague among them to destroy them. But Moses decides to intercede on behalf of these rebellious people who desire to take away his position of leadership. As the plague starts to go throughout the congregation, killing people, Moses sends Aaron throughout the assembly with a censer of incense to make atonement for them. Numbers 16:48 says that Aaron literally "stood between the dead and the living, and the plague stopped." Moses' love for the

people gives him grace and mercy to extend to them. Deuteronomy 34:10 says this at the death of Moses, “And there has not risen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face...”

In understanding the training of leaders in relation to Moses' life we can look to his relationship with Joshua and to the seventy elders. First, they watched Moses' life and his leadership. The task of leading so many people who were characterized by being stubborn and stiff-necked must have been overwhelming for Moses and astonishing to Joshua and the elders. The task is obviously too great for one man. But they watched his life and how he lead and how he failed. They watched how he dealt with crisis after crisis. They watched how he dealt with impossible situations. They listened to Moses speak to them the very words of God, for Moses was a true prophet. They watched how Moses resisted the Lord at times but how God promised him he would take care of him. God always came through on his promises. They watched Moses listen to his father-in-law Jethro, telling him to delegate leadership to the elders. They watched Moses diligently obey the laws and commands of the Lord. They saw the intimate face-to-face relationship that Moses had with God. In Exodus 34 they saw Moses' face shine so brightly after meeting with the Lord that they could not look directly at him. Then they listened to Moses bless the entire assembly of Israelites with this blessing, “The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace”(Numbers 6:24-26). The people had to wonder, “Could they too have such a relationship with God?” Moses trained his leaders and the

people to put their trust in a relational God who keeps his covenants. This is the foundational principle to leadership.

### **David**

The calling and anointing of David to be King of Israel gives us a look at what God desires in a leader over and against what the world desires. The Israelites wanted a king and God gave them one. He gave them Saul, a man whose outward appearances made him a good candidate for a leader. He was a man of great wealth and substance, he came from a family of high consideration. Saul was also a tall man, “a head taller than any of the others”(I Samuel 9:1-2). However, Saul turned out to be a terrible leader. He did not follow the Lord and was eventually rejected by God as king of Israel.

The Lord sends his prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a new king. But even Samuel is looking for someone of strong outward appearance. Samuel thinks that Eliab, the firstborn son of Jesse, will be the one because he looks the part. However, the Lord says to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart”(I Samuel 16:7). The Lord eventually prompts Samuel to anoint David the youngest of Jesse’s sons. After Samuel anoints David with the horn of oil, the Scriptures tell us that, “the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward...”(I Samuel 16:13). The Lord is interested in the heart of a leader not in the outward appearance.

As David leads, his outward character reveals his inner heart. In I Samuel 29 we see that even David's enemies regarded him as an honest man. More than once did David have the chance to kill Saul who was chasing him all over the country in order to kill him. David respected Saul as God's king until it was time for him to take over the throne. David was a man of integrity. After Saul had died, David did not take revenge on Saul's family; he shows them kindness. David even adopts one of Saul's lame grandchildren named Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan (II Samuel 9).

David proves to be a mighty warrior who knew he needed to depend upon the Lord. In one of his first public displays of faith in action, David slays the Philistine giant, Goliath. David reveals a heart that desires to defend the name of the Lord and to trust in that name to defeat his enemies. As Goliath taunts him, David proclaims, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand" (1 Samuel 17:45-47). If David had challenged Goliath to further his own reputation or to get the glory for himself, I doubt the Lord would have allowed him to kill Goliath. But the Lord

knew the motives in David's heart, and "he prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone..." (I Samuel 17:50).

David also understood the importance of ongoing dependence upon the Lord and the need for wise counsel. Before David would go out to fight certain battles, he would first inquire of the Lord to see if this was the Lord's will. In I Samuel 23 he prays, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" After the death of Saul, David knew he was to be king. But before he goes up to the cities of Judah, he inquires of the Lord to make sure it is good for him to do this now (II Samuel 2:1). The Psalms, which David wrote almost half of, reveal his heart in prayer and dependence upon God. David finds his refuge and strength in the Lord. In Psalm 28:8, David writes, "The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed." And again in Psalm 59:16, David says, "But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress."

David was not without his failures. In II Samuel 11 David commits adultery with Bathsheba. In his effort to try to cover up his sin, David has Bathsheba's husband Uriah, killed in battle. Adultery, murder, and deceit reveal that even a strong leader with integrity is able to commit a heinous sin. David is rebuked by the prophet Nathan, who confronts him, exposing his sin. The result of David's sin is that his son whom Bathsheba bore to him died. The Lord also said that "the sword shall never depart from your house." But the Lord also said through the prophet Nathan to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die." The Lord forgave David even though he would still have to suffer



the consequences of his sin. This incident led David to write Psalm 51. In this Psalm David pleads for forgiveness and a cleansed heart. It reveals David's remorse for his sin and his humility after a prideful fall. The leadership quality that this reveals is David's repentant heart. He confesses, asks for forgiveness and turns away from his sin. All leaders will fail at some point. The question is how will they respond to their sin. Will it be with continued pride or humility?

David's gives this charge to Solomon as he passes the throne on to him.

"Be strong and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, that the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel'" (I Kings 2:2-4).

The central theme in David's charge to his son Solomon is to keep the commandments of the Lord. Carrying out the will of the Lord is the focus of strong and lasting leadership. Obeying the Word of the Lord will bring prosperity for Solomon's kingship. David seems to be saying there is nothing more important in leadership than listening and obeying the Lord's commands. But it is an obedience that flows out of love for God and a desire of the soul to do his will. God wants the motives of our obedience to be pure.

### **The Apostle Paul**

In Philippians 3:4-6, Paul recounts his credentials as a religious leader:

“...If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless.”

Before Paul became a follower of Christ, he had already become a leader in Judaism. The statement that Paul makes here in Philippians gives us some background into who Paul was before his conversion. Paul had certain characteristics that carried over from his pre-conversion days to his post-conversion days. For instance, Paul had a zeal for the truth to be guarded and proclaimed. Before Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was convinced of the truths of Judaism and felt that the Way was in opposition to those truths and that they were trying to “change the customs of Moses.”<sup>5</sup> Paul vigorously opposed any change to the Law and decided to take on this Jesus movement, trying to put an end to it.

After Paul encounters Jesus and is converted, he still has a zeal for the truth. The difference now is that he understands the truth more fully. Paul begins to understand that the truth he was defending during his pre-conversion years is the same truth he is defending during post-conversion years, only now that truth has been fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah. Paul had zealously traveled around persecuting the church; now Paul traveled around the world planting churches. This zeal pushed Paul to do extraordinary things for God.

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<sup>5</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 70. Bruce is quoting the charge against Stephen.

Paul claims to be so righteous that he could call himself blameless. He also prided himself on being a Pharisee, which meant that he was a strict adherent to the law and knew the law. After Paul's conversion, he is able to see the fulfillment of the law in Jesus Christ. Paul's immense knowledge of the law before his conversion led him to be a highly intelligent theologian as he continued to realize and understand the gospel after his conversion.

Paul's conversion experience was quite dramatic. He was traveling along the road to a city called Damascus. His purpose was to find any followers of "the Way" so that he could put them in prison. Acts 9:1 says that Paul (who was called Saul at that time) was "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord." As he was traveling, he was suddenly engulfed by a light from heaven. He then heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him. F.F. Bruce makes this comment regarding Paul's encounter with Jesus: "Some verbal communication, beyond the heavenly vision in itself, is implied in Paul's statement that 'he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles' (Galatians 1:15ff). Objective as the revelation was, it was experienced inwardly as well as outwardly: it was granted, as Paul puts it, not merely 'to me' but 'in me'. He speaks as if the call and commission were part of the one conversion experience."<sup>6</sup> Paul's call to ministry by Jesus was one that was so definitive that Paul would look back on it to confirm and defend his ministry (see I Corinthians 9:1; 15:8).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 75.

Paul's ministry of planting churches and spreading the gospel reveals his character as a leader. Paul considered himself a bondservant, he was an encourager, he had a tremendous zeal for the truth, he ministered out of integrity, and he persevered.

In Romans 1:1 and Titus 1:1, Paul calls himself a servant, which can be translated slave or bondservant. This points to how Paul viewed himself in relation to God. Paul was "a servant of God" or "a servant of Christ Jesus". A servant's job was to do the bidding of his master. Paul did not consider his life his own, but it belonged to God, and it was Paul's goal to live in obedience to faith to God. This self designation by Paul is lived out as he labored for the churches he was planting. Leadership meant serving, for Paul.

Encouraging believers and churches was important for Paul. Paul knew that being a Christian in the first century was not easy. He knew that these new churches were going to have conflict. Paul's desire was to plant churches and then go back and encourage them. Acts 15:36 records Paul saying to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." Paul also encouraged churches by writing to them. The letters in the New Testament written by Paul attest to his love for these people and his desire to see them grow in the Lord. Paul also sent people in his absence to visit churches in order to encourage them. In Ephesians 6:21-22, Paul writes, "So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you

everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.”

Paul lived a life of integrity which gave his leadership credibility. In his speech to the Ephesian elders he states that he “served the Lord with all humility and tears”<sup>7</sup> and then that he “coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.”<sup>8</sup> As Paul lived and worked among these people, they saw first hand a life of moral integrity. However, Paul was always quick to state that he was only able to live a godly life by the grace of God. In I Corinthians 10:15 he says, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”

Another important aspect of Paul’s ministry and character was his perseverance. Paul faced immense opposition. He records some of these events in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28,

“Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”

Paul never gave up, he always continued on with the mission he was called to.

The energy Paul used to persevere was found in Christ alone. He says that Jesus told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 20:19

<sup>8</sup> Acts 20:33

weakness”(II Corinthians 12:9). As believers throughout the Roman Empire witnessed Paul’s perseverance, I am sure that they too were encouraged to live through the hardships and to stand firm in their faith. Following a leader like Paul would be inspiring and instill courageous efforts for the kingdom of God. Only by the grace of God could he write this encouraging verse to the Corinthians (and to us as well); “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain”(I Corinthians 15:58).

As Paul encourages other leaders in the church, he wants them to understand the leadership role that they have. In Acts 20:13-37 we witness Paul’s departure from the Ephesians and his charge to the elders. Paul writes, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them”(v.28-30).

Leaders are overseers and shepherds of God’s flock. This role requires that leaders protect their people from false teaching and that they continue to proclaim the truth. Leaders must take a proactive role in the oversight and care of the flock of God.

Prayer characterized Paul’s ministry. In his letters to the churches, Paul often writes that he is praying for them. Colossians 1:9 says, “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled

with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding....” And again in 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10, “For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?” After being put in prison and their feet bound in the stocks, Paul and his companion Silas are found praying and singing hymns. Paul was dependent upon the Lord for his life and his prayer life revealed this.

### **Paul Passing on Leadership to Timothy and Titus**

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, we see Paul teaching them important principles in pastoral leadership. Some of the main themes that Paul shares with these two men include; qualifications for church leaders, personal holiness through grace, and the importance of the Word of God. Paul’s demeanor in writing these letters is one of encouragement and a charge to continue to lead, even in the face of difficult people. At one point Paul says, “Fight the good fight of faith”(1 Timothy 6:12a). Paul knows the struggles of leadership and wants Timothy and Titus to persevere in leading God’s people.

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are very similar in their descriptions of the qualifications of overseers and deacons, i.e. leaders in the church. The list of traits centers around a person’s character. Qualities like self-control, hospitality, being above reproach, not violent, not a drunkard, respectable, upright and able to teach are attributes that Timothy and Titus are to look for in a leader. These observable features tend to be reliable indicators of a person’s spiritual maturity.

They describe trustworthy people. A godly leader will possess and exhibit godly character.

As Paul writes to Titus, he wants to make sure his “true son” understands personal holiness comes from the grace of God at work in the life of the believer. Paul writes these profound words in Titus 2:11-14:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

It is the grace of God that has trained us to renounce ungodliness. Our character and holiness only come from what Christ has done for us in our hearts. Jesus has not just modified our behavior, he has given us a new heart and our new heart has in turn modified our behavior. Holiness comes from the redemption of Christ that has been applied to our hearts.

Another theme that Paul wants to impress upon Timothy and Titus is the importance of God’s Word. One of Paul’s key verses to Timothy is in II Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” The Word of God, which brings us the story of redemption, is the foundation for the leader’s life.

In the list of qualifications of leaders, Paul makes sure that they are able to teach sound doctrine. He makes statements like, “guard sound doctrine,” “rightly handle the word of truth” and “preach the word.” The leader must be aware that



false doctrine abounds and that it can lead people astray. Paul was intent on the leaders in the church being faithful to the Scriptures and in teaching them to God's people.

Moses, David, and Paul help make up the theological framework of leadership from a biblical perspective. Their lives reveal the handiwork of the Spirit of God as well as some common themes that help us to understand biblical leadership today. Each of these men had a specific call of God on his life. They all had a deep relationship with the Lord that was exhibited in their prayer life. They all modeled leadership to their followers and passed on the leadership baton to someone behind them.

In their worst failures Moses, David and Paul were all murderers. Each of these great men played a role in murdering another human being. Moses murdered an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew (Exodus 2:11). David orders the murder of Uriah in battle (II Samuel 11). Paul oversees the murder of Stephen (Acts 8:1). The grace and mercy of God allowed for forgiveness and he still used them in mighty ways for his kingdom. Even though they had failed greatly at certain times, these three men are portrayed as godly, upright leaders, whose hearts are devoted to the Lord. They all had to persevere through extremely difficult circumstances. And finally, Moses, David and Paul were totally convinced that leaders are to be students, followers and teachers of God's Word.

As we apply the leadership principles gleaned from Moses, David and Paul, we do not say to ourselves, "I need to be like them." Rather we look to

Jesus as the one who will sustain us, be with us and enable us to be godly leaders for His kingdom. The redemptive history of these three men will be different from ours, yet we will have the same Redeemer who will walk through our own history with us.

## **Themes from Other Literature**

### **The Scriptures are the Source to Lead From**

A leader's source for leadership principles is the Word of God. Richard Rardin is a laymen who started a ministry to churches and parachurch organizations in order to help them understand the Biblical standard of Christ-centered leadership. In his book, *The Servant's Guide to Leadership*, Rardin answers the questions, "What does the Bible say about leadership?" And "How do I put these truths into practice?" If a leader wants to know and understand how to lead, then he needs to go to the Scriptures. Rardin says, "Leadership models and philosophies employed in the business world have typically been stripped of their moral content."<sup>9</sup> Many leadership models are based on what works, not on their moral considerations. Godly leaders will not be able to lead using unscriptural methods. The Bible will be their handbook. All of the Christian authors reviewed in this study used the Scriptures to either back up their ideas or extract their leadership principles. What this tells us is that the Bible is the foundational source in order to understand leadership.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Rardin, *The Servant's Guide to Leadership : Beyond First Principles* (Albany, OR: Selah Pub., 2001), xviii.

Steve Smallman, a pastor for over forty years, writes in his book, *The Spiritual Birthline*, "...Scripture is also very clear that the instrument or tool the Spirit uses in that transforming work is the preaching of the Gospel."<sup>10</sup> In this quote, Smallman is referring to the Spirit's work of regeneration. But the point is still made that the Bible is used by God to cause change in people's lives, whether this change comes in the spiritual birth process or in the sanctification process. All truly Christian leaders have been regenerated and are in this process of sanctification, and they need to be exposing themselves to the Scriptures in a variety of ways. Studying, listening, meditating, memorizing and teaching the Scriptures will enable the leader to be transformed. Like a sponge saturated with water, so the leader needs to be saturated with the Bible. As John Piper often says: when he speaks or writes he wants to "bleed Bible."

Paul Tripp, a Christian counselor and author, uses the Scriptures as the foundation for his book, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*. The premise for Tripp's book is that people are broken and sinful. The only agent of change is Jesus Christ, the Gospel, found in the Scriptures. He writes, "Hope is only to be found in Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. In him, lasting, personal heart change is possible. Any other message encourages false hope."<sup>11</sup> Leadership is leading people to the only hope they have in life and death, Jesus Christ. Jesus is found in the Scriptures, and we need to focus on this in our teaching and training of leaders.

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Smallman, *Spiritual Birthline : Understanding How We Experience the New Birth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 85.

<sup>11</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands : People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 2002), 7.

In *The Practices of a Healthy Church*, Donald MacNair, former seminary professor and pastor, says that the number-one practice is that “the church must retain its commitment to the Holy Scriptures without compromise.”<sup>12</sup> He makes the case that we must not omit the very words of God in our communication because “Scripture alone is the authorized word, the official interpretation of reality, the certified revelation of God.”<sup>13</sup> MacNair continues throughout two more chapters to discuss that church leaders are to be shaped by this biblical authority.

John Piper, preacher, author and theologian, agrees with MacNair in believing that the leader must be shaped by the Scriptures. In his article on The Marks of a Spiritual Leader, Piper writes of the necessity of personal Bible study and meditation. Just as a person must take in food for sustaining him throughout the day, so the leader must take in the Scriptures in order to sustain his spiritual leadership with people. Piper says, “...in order to lead you have to be out ahead of your people in Bible study and prayer. I think there will be no successful spiritual leadership without extended seasons of prayer and meditation on the Scriptures.”<sup>14</sup> Piper also writes in his book to pastors, *Brothers we are not Professionals*, “If we are going to feed our people, we must ever advance in our grasp of Biblical truth. We must be like Jonathan Edwards who resolved in his college days, and kept the resolution all his life, ‘Resolved: To study the

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<sup>12</sup> Donald J. MacNair and Esther L. Meek, *The Practices of a Healthy Church : Biblical Strategies for Vibrant Church Life and Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 1999), 10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>14</sup> Piper, John. “The Marks of a Spiritual Leader.” *Desiring God Ministries*, January 1, 1995: 2, [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Articles/ByDate/1995/1575\\_The\\_Marks\\_of\\_a\\_Spiritual\\_Leader/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Articles/ByDate/1995/1575_The_Marks_of_a_Spiritual_Leader/)

Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.’ Growing, advancing, increasing – that is the goal.”<sup>15</sup>

The source for leadership learning, teaching and training come from the Scriptures. Although some of the authors are speaking directly about “church leadership”, the principle is still transferable to all Christian leadership. To lead as God desires, the leader must be biblically centered. MacNair, Tripp, Smallman, Rardin and Piper are all in agreement on this principle.

### **Spiritual Health: A Vital Walk with God**

Doug Fields, a long time youth pastor, wrote a book entitled, *The Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*. The first section in Fields book deals with the spiritual health of the youth leader. “Health is more attractive than hype.”<sup>16</sup> Fields goes into a description of his own life and journey in ministry. He tells of how he tried to run his ministry strictly programmatically without much emphasis on his own spiritual walk. He of course began to burn out and not see the results he wanted. Fields felt as though he was spending all his time “doing the work of God” without “being a person of God.”<sup>17</sup>

On page 33 and following, Fields asks and answers this question:

“How does one become a youth worker who depends on God?”

He offers three answers:

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<sup>15</sup> John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals : A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 74.

<sup>16</sup> Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry : 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 28.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 33.

1. Recognize God's power through personal humility. Youth workers need to realize it is God who does the work, not us. We cannot take the credit for anything that happens in our ministry.<sup>18</sup>
2. Submit your abilities to God and allow his power to work through who you are. God has gifted each individual differently. We may not feel adequate enough to minister to students, and without God's power we are inadequate. We need to allow the unique gifts and abilities that God has given us to be used by Him in the ways He wants to use them.<sup>19</sup>
3. Focus on being the person of God before doing the work of God. God is more interested in who we are than what we are doing. Value spiritual maturity more than ministry.<sup>20</sup>

These are very good answers to the question of "how a youth worker depends on God." However, I still found this section to fall short in a couple of areas. First of all, Fields does not use the name Jesus Christ in this section except when quoting Scripture. The power of God comes from the power of Jesus Christ living and dwelling inside the youth worker.

Secondly, the term gospel is not used at all. One of the answers to how to become a youth worker who depends on God needs to focus on the importance of the youth worker understanding the gospel and believing it in his heart. How this idea gets pushed out of the way continues to astound me. I would imagine that the heart of Doug Field's is that the gospel would be proclaimed. But not to discuss this vital foundation in this section of the book is amazing. How can we effectively share the gospel with others if we do not know and understand it ourselves? I believe too many leaders think the gospel is just for the lost and not for believers. We all need the gospel, everyday. We need to preach the gospel to ourselves first before we preach it to anyone else.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 36.

Another prominent church leader, Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, has written his own volume on leadership entitled, *Courageous Leadership*. At the end of the book Hybels includes a chapter called, “The Leader’s Pathway; a Vital Walk with God.” Hybels believes the supernatural component, “the God-part” of a leader is the most important part. He says that Jesus’ promise from John 15:5 “reminds us that if we stay in close connection with him, he will infuse our leadership with power, creativity, courage, and whatever else it takes for us to bear fruit for the glory of God.”<sup>21</sup> If this is the most important component to a leader, then why does Hybels leave it to the second to last chapter?

In writing on the subject of spiritual leadership, John Piper says that, “If you want to be a great leader of people you have to get away from people to be with God.”<sup>22</sup> Henry Scougal, a pastor and professor in Scotland during the mid-to-late 1600s, would agree with Piper. Scougal was convinced that the soul of a leader must be possessed by God if it will seek to glorify God and not itself. Scougal writes in his little treatise, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, “The love of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and

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<sup>21</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 216.

<sup>22</sup> Piper, John. “The Marks of a Spiritual Leader.” *Desiring God Ministries*, January 1, 1995: 2, [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Articles/ByDate/1995/1575\\_The\\_Marks\\_of\\_a\\_Spiritual\\_Leader/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Articles/ByDate/1995/1575_The_Marks_of_a_Spiritual_Leader/)

communion with him, being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake, or at his pleasure.”<sup>23</sup>

Richard Baxter, a Puritan pastor, begins his book entitled *The Reformed Pastor* with a call to “take heed to ourselves.”<sup>24</sup> Baxter wants the pastor to make sure that the work of saving grace has been wrought in their own souls before they begin to give it away to others. We cannot be strangers to the effectual work of God in our hearts through Jesus Christ. Only a closeness and a personal, intimate knowledge of the grace of God will enable the pastor to share this grace with his people. As Baxter puts it, “...lest you famish yourselves while you prepare food for them.”<sup>25</sup>

As quoted above, Emile Caillet, in his 1963 edition of *Young Life*, says this about how Jim Rayburn, the founder of Young Life, viewed training: “What accordingly matters is not *how* it should be done, in terms of technique (Jim abhors that word), but *by whom* it should be done in terms of the quality of the Christian leader”(p.27-28). From the founding of the Young Life mission in the 1940s, Jim Rayburn looked for individuals who had a such a love for Christ that they were willing to go out and share that love with teenagers. Rayburn wanted staff with a vital walk with God and a willingness to grow in their relationship with Christ.

Each one of these authors agrees that a vital walk with Christ is essential to being a godly leader. This truth may sound elementary, but in each generation

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<sup>23</sup> Henry Scougal, “The Life of God in the Soul of Man,” in *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1986), 46-47.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 51.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



some leaders who were supposed to be godly failed to connect with God through personal spiritual disciplines. Our communion with God is through Jesus Christ, the Gospel, our Redeemer and friend. Theologians call this “union with Christ.” Therefore, we understand that a believer’s relationship with Christ cannot be broken. Our union with Christ will stand for eternity. However, our fellowship with God can be interrupted. We can choose not to consciously connect with God through devotions and other means of grace. Jesus is the one who makes us who we are on the inside, which in turn, will produce God-glorifying leadership on the outside. He invites us to participate in this process through personal spiritual disciplines.

### **Character and Integrity**

Along with understanding that our walk with Christ is of utmost importance is the leader’s character and integrity.

Robert Clinton is professor of Leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary. He has studied and taught on the topic of leadership for several years. An important contribution that he has made to the study of leadership is his book, *The Making of a Leader*. In this book he discusses recognizing the lessons and phases of leadership development. Clinton entitles Phase II as the “Inner Growth Phase.” This phase involves the leader desiring to know God in a more intimate and personal way. During this phase the leader grows in discernment, understanding and obedience. God uses testing experiences to develop character and teach the leader fundamental lessons. Another word that Clinton

uses to describe character is integrity. As Clinton has studied various leaders he believes that “an emerging leader becomes aware of the importance of integrity through integrity checks. An integrity check is a test that God uses to evaluate intentions in order to shape character. This check is a springboard to an expanded sphere of influence. There are three parts to an integrity check: the challenge to consistency with inner convictions, the response to the challenge, and the resulting expansion of ministry.”<sup>26</sup>

Credibility is another way of discussing character and integrity issues. James Kouzes and Barry Posner are professors in the field of leadership at Santa Clara University. They have written *Credibility*, a book about why and how leaders need to gain credibility with their constituents. Through extensive research and their own personal experiences, Kouzes and Posner have found that the best leaders are ones that are considered credible, that is, their followers believe in them, trust them, and consider them worth following. They found that people want to be led by someone with character and integrity. They conclude that the top four characteristics of admired leaders included honesty, vision, the ability to inspire, and competency. When a leader fails or makes a mistake, Kouzes and Posner say that recovery is possible. “Recovering from mistakes that damage leadership credibility is similar to service recovery. It requires six responses: accept, admit, apologize, act, amend, and attend. We call these the six A’s of leadership accountability.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 58-59.

<sup>27</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility : How Leaders Gain It and Lose It, Why People Demand It* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 204.

In their book *The Ascent of a Leader*, Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol and Ken McElrath combine the ideas of character and community in speaking of the development of a leader. Character and community go hand in hand. Thrall, McNicol and McElrath pick up on what few other leadership books write about. “The climb up the character ladder is a climb toward interdependence.”<sup>28</sup> Building character includes our own efforts at doing the right thing but also others efforts in helping us know what the right thing to do is. “*Others*” include God and His Word and the direction of the Holy Spirit. Living and working in a community developed around relationships of grace has a tremendous impact on leaders and followers.

When we think about leadership, we tend to think individualistically. *Ascent of a Leader* discusses the leader’s relationships with others. Leadership does not happen in a vacuum, but in a community. The leader and his followers make up a community, and therefore the relationships developed in this community will determine its success or failure. Ephesians 4 speaks directly to this theme. Unity in the body of Christ is critical in the Kingdom of God. Pursuing and obeying the “one anothers” sprinkled throughout Scripture will enable us to fulfill God’s vision for His people to love Him and love others. If there is mutual trust, honesty and care for one another, then our leadership functions in a God-honoring way and encourages everyone to lead more courageously.

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<sup>28</sup> Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader : How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 96.

In a sermon on Acts 20:17-24, Alistair Begg, pastor of Parkside Church in Cleveland, Ohio, says that there were three factors essential to the Apostle Paul's biblical leadership: transparency, integrity and urgency. In speaking of integrity, Begg says that Paul warned leaders against telling people just what they want to hear. "Paul declares the truth everywhere he goes... his message does not change when his audience changes."<sup>29</sup> Begg's point is that Paul kept his integrity in tact because he was willing to speak the truth even when people did not want to hear it. If Paul had changed his message out of fear of what people would do or say or to be popular, then he would sacrifice his integrity to preach the truth of the gospel.

### **Humility and Servanthood**

Two key characteristics of leaders are humility and servanthood. In Richard Rardin's book, *The Servant's Guide to Leadership*, he says that "leadership is a partnership," and we have been selected to partner with God in accomplishing His will.<sup>30</sup> We are not alone in leading others, we work along side the God of the universe. "The first shall be last" reveals that leaders are not in it for themselves but for the good of those they lead.<sup>31</sup> This principle is the heart of servant leadership. The servant leader leads in order to carry out God's will, not his own. Putting the needs of others before his own is characteristic of a servant leader. The goal of leading is not outside the follower, but the goal leads to the

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<sup>29</sup> Alistair Begg, "Three Factors Essential to Paul's Leadership," sermon, Parkside Church, Cleveland, OH, 19 June 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Rardin, 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 34.

accomplishment of God's will for the follower. The "inside-out" principle deals with character and conduct. The inside of a leader is his character. God is more concerned with character than with conduct. In I Samuel 15 King Saul is commanded by the Lord to completely wipe out the Amalekites. But Saul decides to spare their king, Agag, and the best of the sheep. The Lord sees this as rebellion and arrogance on the part of Saul. He sends the prophet Samuel to condemn Saul. I Samuel 15:22 says, "But Samuel replied to Saul, 'Does the Lord delight in burnt offering and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams'". Saul's lack of obedience reveals his character. Saul feared the people more than the Lord. Saul was more concerned about what the people thought of him than what the Lord thought of him.

Jack Miller's book, *The Heart of a Servant Leader*, is a compilation of letters written by him to many different individuals. Humility and repentance are also key characteristics of Jack's life and what he encourages other leaders to develop. Jack Miller advises that the way to nurture these qualities is to make it "a first order of business not to do things to impress people or to gain a reputation or protect your reputation."<sup>32</sup> Pure humility in the life of a gospel minister exalts pure sovereign grace. When we acknowledge that we are the chief of sinners and repent, then those who listen or follow us will get the message of the cross. We are broken people whose only hope is the Savior. If we as leaders lead from pride and arrogance, then we boast in ourselves and not

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<sup>32</sup> C. John Miller and Barbara Miller Juliani, *The Heart of a Servant Leader : Letters from Jack Miller* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 2004), 57.

in the cross. False humility does not work either. Only a heart full of sorrow and anguish for sin will be a heart that truly repents and receives the gospel. Pride and self reliance often creep into a leader's life, especially when things are going well. Constant repentance for these deceiving characteristics is Jack's advice to leaders.

Servanthood was another chief characteristic of Miller's leadership. His servant heart is revealed in many ways. The number of letters he was willing to sit down and write and mail off shows extraordinary service. He knew the value in taking time to love people, and his many letters proved his servant heart. Writing about him, his daughter, Barbara Miller Juliani, says, "Instead of using leadership as a way to establish identity, significance, and power, he taught that the role of the Christian leader is to be the chief servant."<sup>33</sup>

Peter Scazzero, pastor of a multi-cultural church in New York City, feels the same way about leadership when he makes this statement about healthy churches: "They understand that leadership in the Kingdom of God is from the bottom up, not a grasping, controlling, or lording over others. It is leading out of failure and pain, questions and struggles – a serving that lets go."<sup>34</sup> Scazzero says that the opposite of brokenness and vulnerability is being proud and defensive. Only when we admit our brokenness and humbly bring it to Jesus will we really be able to live in his grace and mercy. Too often our pride keeps us from admitting our shortcomings or even our major failures. The truth of the gospel is that Jesus is ready and willing to heal us, forgive us and shower us with

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Scazzero and Warren Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 110.

his grace. We do not have to be afraid of being broken, Jesus is going to fix us and redeem our brokenness.

In discussing qualities essential to spiritual leadership, Oswald Sanders says that “humility is the hallmark of the man whom God can use...”<sup>35</sup> Sanders comments, “...in God’s scale of values, humility stands very high. Self-effacement, not self-advertisement, was Christ’s definition of leadership....The spiritual leader will choose the hidden pathway of sacrificial service and the approval of His Lord rather than the flamboyant assignment and the adulation of the unspiritual crowd.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Who You are In Christ/Self Awareness/Spiritual Gifts**

One of the most critical aspects to living the Christian life and being a leader is understanding who we are in Christ. In her book *From Fear to Freedom*, Rose Marie Miller helps us understand that we are children of God. Because of Christ’s life, death and resurrection we have been adopted into the family of God. This truth has profound implications on our lives.

For most people, just coming to the realization that without Christ we are orphans is monumental. This usually comes through some sort of “crisis” in our lives. Somehow we are faced with the realization that we are helpless sinners, and without God will have to live as spiritual “orphans.” This usually happens when we uncover deadly habits or patterns in our hearts. As Christians we sometimes enslave ourselves to a certain way of living. We believe being a

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<sup>35</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 80.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Christian means living a moral life, being in total control of our desires and appetites and creating our own “perfect” world. We may be able to achieve this for a time, but the falsehood of believing these things catches up and we are faced with spiritual despair.

Through Rose Marie’s story she helps us understand that living a so-called perfect Christian life is not what God wants. God wants us to live as His children. We may be doing all the right things on the outside, but unless our heart is motivated by our love for Christ and living life for His glory then it is all in vain. We desire to be able to live this Christian life on our own, by our own strength. However, the reality is that we cannot live in our own strength. Nor has God designed us to live on our own. God has designed us to live in reliance upon Him alone, just as a baby is totally reliant upon its parents for everything.

Only through a biblical understanding of grace and forgiveness will the believer be able to move on from living as an orphan to living as a child of God. The power of God’s grace and forgiveness in Christ is so profound, I am convinced it will take us an eternity to appreciate it. But for now, realizing that we are totally forgiven of our past, present and future sins and that God rejoices in showering us with His love and grace every moment of everyday will allow us to live as a totally dependant child.

Peter Scazzero agrees with Rose Marie Miller. He assesses church leadership in his book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. He writes, “The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual



health of its leadership.”<sup>37</sup> Scazzero believes that the leader’s internal life is more important than his external gifts and abilities. Because the internal life is both spiritual and emotional, the leader needs to develop health in both areas. A leader struggles with a great deal on the inside. When the leader denies his emotions or suppresses them in a way that is not congruent with his actions, then he is being a hypocrite. When a person acts a certain way on the outside but feels a completely different way on the inside, he is not being authentic. The gospel can be applied to heal both areas of our life, although many leaders do not want to admit that they have emotional issues.

Scazzero shows from the Scriptures that Jesus had intense emotions. “Jesus cried (Luke 19:41), he was filled with joy (Luke 10:21), he grieved (Mark 14:34), he was angry (Mark 3:5), he felt sorrow (Luke 7:13), he showed astonishment and wonder (Mark 6:6; Luke 7:9), he felt distress (Mark 3:5; Luke 12:50).” Jesus did not separate his emotions from his spirituality. Jesus was both God and man having a spirit that was directly connected to his emotions. The gospel is the answer to all our problems and pain. We receive the gospel through the Word, prayer, fellowship, worship, etc. The issue is how we apply these spiritual disciplines to our emotional health.

Scazzero discusses six principles of an emotionally healthy church. Principle one is developing an awareness of what I am feeling and doing. Being aware of our physical state can point people toward emotional issues. “A knot in the stomach, a tension headache, teeth grinding, sweaty palms, neck tightening,

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<sup>37</sup> Scazzero and Bird, 20.

insomnia, can all be physical signs of emotional feelings.”<sup>38</sup> Just asking ourselves the question, “What am I feeling right now?” can begin to help us discern our emotional state. The other question that goes along with this is asking, “Why am I feeling this way, what is going on inside of me?” If I am aware that I am anxious or nervous about something I also need to ask why I am feeling this way. These questions continue to cause us to go beneath the surface and get into our heart and souls. Scazzero points out that searching the depths of our soul can be scary. He rightly shows how the gospel is right there in the midst of our introspection. God knows our deepest emotional issues and he has given us the gospel to heal them.

Self-awareness is one of the four pillars that made the Catholic Order of the Jesuits so successful for the past 450 years. Chris Lowney, a former Jesuit, writes in his book entitled *Heroic Leadership*, “We’re all leaders, and we’re leading all the time, well or poorly. Leadership springs from *within*. It’s about *who I am* as much as what I do. Leadership is not an act. It is my *life*, a way of living. I never complete the task of becoming a leader. It’s an ongoing process.”<sup>39</sup> “Leadership is about who I am.”<sup>40</sup> Too often we think of leaders in terms of what they do, not who they are. Who they are does not seem to produce results. However, that is simply not true. Who a leader is will determine whether any results are achieved. Lowney makes this comment about how the Jesuits viewed this idea of who a leader is.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>39</sup> Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership : Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 19.

*“...a leader’s most compelling leadership tool is who he or she is: a person who understands what he or she values and wants, who is anchored by certain principles, and who faces the world with a consistent outlook. Leadership behavior develops naturally once this internal foundation has been laid.”<sup>41</sup>*

The Gospel lays this foundation in a person’s life. Understanding who we are in Christ will impact all that we do, all our relationships and our outlook on life. Henry Scougal agrees that this is important for new believers. Scougal knows that the Christian life begins with Christ’s transforming work on the inside first and then will expose itself on the outside in our actions.

*“The love which a pious man bears to God and goodness, is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and prompting him to it, nor doth he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute, only to appease the divine justice, or quiet his clamoring conscience; but those religious exercises are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of the new-born soul.”<sup>42</sup>*

Understanding the Christian life from this biblical perspective will enable us to instruct new believers in their walk with Christ. It is quite normal for those of us who work with new believers to immediately train them in the spiritual disciplines of reading Scripture, prayer, fellowship, witnessing, etc. We want believers to grow and experience this new life that God has given them in Christ. However, the result many times is only to burden new believers with more things “to do.” The tension is to help new believers understand “who they are in Christ,” on the inside and to give them a vision for what their outward life can look like. So do we start with teaching them “what to do” or “who they are?” I believe Scougal is pointing us in the direction of helping people see their union with

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Scougal, 36.

Christ first. New believers need to know who resides in their hearts, namely the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will naturally develop “new affections” in the new believer’s life.

Francis Schaeffer, philosopher, theologian and pastor, looks to Ephesians 4 and the book of Romans to understand the importance of our identity in Christ. If we are fooled into believing we are the creator and at the center of the universe, we miss who we really are, and this causes us to live counterfeit lives. Our knowledge of who we are is not just in our conscience and in creation but in God’s Word. God’s Word is our epistemological base.<sup>43</sup> “We were made in God’s image – rational, moral and with significance. But because we have refused to acknowledge ourselves as creatures, we have found it necessary to make God in our own image.”<sup>44</sup> This exchange of identity has had disastrous consequences namely, death. But it affects how we live and lead others in life. Significant problems arise when we base our identity on who we have made ourselves rather than on who God has made us.

Schaeffer goes on to examine Romans 2:17-24 and says the Jews (God’s people) have taken others astray. The nation of Israel was supposed to be an example to the rest of the world to show the world that the Lord God Almighty was the one true God. But instead, they became a people who disobeyed God and turned to other idols and to their own ways. This led other nations away from God, not towards Him.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Finished Work of Christ : The Truth of Romans 1-8* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 36-39.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-59.

As God's leaders, the nation of Israel forgot who they were and who God really was. The result was to lead others astray. If Christian leaders forget who we are in Christ, they will lead others astray. Others will not see the Almighty God, they will see disobedient and rebellious people. Christian leaders need to believe and live out who we are in Christ so that others will look to Christ as the truth and to God as the only true God. We defeat ourselves, but more importantly, we defeat the purpose of God when we live apart from who we really are as His people.

Again, Schaeffer applies Romans 2:25-29 and explains that our identity does not come from external things such as circumcision or baptism (or, by extension, confirmation or church membership). It does not come from the external things we do, but our identity comes from a circumcision of the heart which Jesus Christ has done. Our identity is a matter of the heart.<sup>46</sup>

Many people believe their position as a leader gives them certain rights and privileges. Many leaders think because outwardly they are a leader they can lead a certain way. But leadership comes from inside us. It comes from our hearts that God has changed and molded to be like Christ. Luke 6:45 says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks". Knowledge is not equal with believing. Believing in God's truth will lead us to acting upon it. Just knowing God's truth is not enough; we need to believe it. Leaders in God's Kingdom will be judged not just by our knowledge but by whether we believe the knowledge and then act upon it.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 61-63.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Along with understanding our identity in Christ, leaders need to know their spiritual gifts. Richard Rardin argues that leadership itself is a spiritual gift. He uses Romans 12:6-8 as his basis. "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." Rardin says that "leadership is a spiritual gift conferred by the Holy Spirit upon those called to lead. As such, it is the Lord's means of empowering those He calls into leadership to meet the many challenges of that function. He never calls us into a place of service where He does not provide us all we need to complete our assignment."<sup>48</sup>

### **Leadership is about Relationships and Discipling Others**

Leadership is influence. Paul Tripp makes the point that all relationships involve influencing the other person. Since leadership implies relationships, leading others is not a matter of handing down mandates or just telling people what to do; it is about influencing them. But it takes time and effort to build relationships, trust, and credibility – all necessary for the exercise of leadership and influence. If we prove that we can be trusted, then relationships will flourish, and we will influence others towards the gospel. If we are believing the gospel and applying it to our lives everyday, then those people with whom we have relationships will see it and be impacted by our lives in Christ.

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<sup>48</sup> Rardin, 40.

Richard Baxter believed that developing close personal relationships with his parishioners was the best way to disciple them and teach them the truths of the Christian faith. His practice was catechizing each family. He says, “Throughout the whole course of our ministry, we must insist chiefly upon the greatest, most certain, and most necessary truths, and be more seldom and sparing upon the rest. If we can but teach Christ to our people, we shall teach them all.”<sup>49</sup> In order to carry out this duty of teaching the basic truths of the Gospel, Baxter exhorts the minister to embrace the use of personal catechizing. This is quite a relational way to carry out ministry - taking time with each individual, each family to teach the Gospel, to discuss it, to mull it over with them, to answer specific questions.

### **The Message is the Gospel**

The central message in Paul Tripp’s book, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, is that the Gospel has the power to change people. Without the Gospel there is no power for change. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ has come, and now lasting heart change can take place. Change is needed because people have been ruined by sin. The only cure for sin was for Jesus to die on the cross to take away our sin. Tripp offers a wonderful section on pages 6-7 to explain this.

*“In all of this, God’s ultimate goal is his own glory. Christ came to restore people to the purpose they were made for: to live every aspect of their lives in worshipful, obedient submission to him. He accomplishes this by breathing life into dead hearts so that we grasp our need for him. He lives*

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<sup>49</sup> Baxter, 113.

*sinlessly, keeping the law on our behalf. He lays down his life as a penalty for sin, so that we can be fully forgiven. He adopts us into his family, giving us all the rights and privileges of his children. He daily conforms us to his own image. He enables us by his grace to do what is right. His Spirit lives inside us, convicting of sin, illumining truth, and giving us the power to obey. He places us in the body of Christ where we can learn and grow. He rules over every event for his glory and our good. He makes us the objects of his eternal, redemptive love.*

*The Bible calls this change redemption. We are not only changed, we are restored to God. This makes all other change possible.*<sup>50</sup>

Tripp makes it clear that offering any message other than the gospel to produce change encourages false hope. Offering people a system of redemption, a set of insights and principles will not help; only the Redeemer will help. Tripp also points out that the Bible should not be treated as a collection of therapeutic insights. Again, Tripp states...“We don’t offer people a system; we point them to a Redeemer.”<sup>51</sup> Eugene Peterson makes a similar point when he says, “...my job is not to solve people’s problems or make them happy, but to help them see the grace operating in their lives.”<sup>52</sup>

The message we give to everyone is the message of the gospel. As leaders, if we can train other leaders in understanding the message of the gospel of grace, then we have given them a message to give to others. Again, Tripp makes the argument when he says, “Biblical personal ministry must not be reduced to a set of principles to live by. Its central focus is the Redeemer who rescues people from the power of sin and progressively eradicates its presence from their lives. We are simply agents of this grace. Our goal is to help people

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<sup>50</sup> Tripp, 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>52</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor : Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1993), 5.



understand it and follow where it leads while they wait for their Redeemer's return."<sup>53</sup>

The two books written by youth culture experts Wayne Rice and Doug Fields failed to mention the centrality of the gospel in ministry. In his book, *Junior High Ministry*, Rice says, "Junior high ministry is about people not programs. The junior high worker is absolutely central to the success or failure of programs and methodologies."<sup>54</sup> While I believe the intent of this statement is found in its belief that solid leadership is critical to ministry success, I still believe there is an underlying belief that our giftedness supersedes the sovereignty of God. The reason I have come to this conclusion is that the majority of the book is about programs and methods and not about the Gospel. A leader will only be effective in ministry if he knows and understands the Gospel in a deep, life-transforming way. In the back of Rice's book there is a listing of 113 resources for youth workers. Of the 113, not a single one deals with the spiritual formation of the youth leader or about understanding the gospel in a deeper way.

In his book *Spiritual Birthline*, Steve Smallman defines discipleship this way, "Discipleship is the process of calling people to follow Jesus and then walking with them through that process."<sup>55</sup> In relation to this definition he says that the issue of following Jesus needs to be heard a great deal more than for calls to make some sort of decision or acceptance.<sup>56</sup> Smallman rightly makes the case that discipleship, the following of Jesus, is not just teaching new converts

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<sup>53</sup> Tripp, 100.

<sup>54</sup> Wayne Rice, *Junior High Ministry : A Guidebook for the Leading and Teaching of Early Adolescents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1987), 31.

<sup>55</sup> Smallman, 132.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 133.

certain spiritual disciplines. But it is rather helping them to learn to follow Jesus and continue to believe and understand the gospel. The gospel is not just for evangelism; it is for discipleship. We all need the gospel, whether we are just learning about Jesus or have been a Christian for several decades. Smallman discusses the relationship between the gospel and discipling this way,

“The core problem with discipleship, as it is now understood in the evangelical church, is not with *methodology* but with *content*. In one form or another, discipleship is typically the teaching of what a Christian is to believe and how he or she is to live. The emphasis is usually on what are called the Christian disciplines, such as Bible reading and prayer as well as church participation and service to others. Rather than trying to repackage that basic approach, we need to get back and recognize that the essential element of discipleship needs to be *the gospel*. The term I have been using for this is *gospel discipling*. When I use the phrase *go back*, I mean that I believe this is how Paul followed up his converts. He kept teaching the gospel both *before* and *after* men and women came to believe it.”<sup>57</sup>

This quote by Smallman summarizes my goal in examining what Area Directors are teaching and training their leaders. It is easy to fall into the trap of teaching people to do new things when we really should be teaching them that they are new people in Christ. The new things to do will eventually flow out of who we are. This does not mean that we do not teach spiritual disciplines, but it points in the direction of how to teach them. The imperative (doing) flows from the indicative (being). If we teach people who they are in Christ according to the gospel, then when we tell them what to do, they understand it is a natural outflow of who they are.

Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, has written a manual for the congregation’s fellowship group ministries. On the first

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

page of this leadership training manual he explains that the gospel is the central core value of their church. They believe that, “The gospel is not just the A-B-C” but the “A-to-Z” of the Christian life. The gospel is not just the way to enter the kingdom, but is the way to address every problem and is the way to grow at every step.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, spiritual leadership training needs to be based on the principles of the gospel. Biblical leaders lead out of grace and an understanding of their identity in Christ. The only way to understand that identity is to study the gospel, believe it and live in it everyday.

### **Incarnational Ministry**

The incarnation means God in the flesh, Immanuel. Jesus was God incarnate. His ministry was incarnational. Jesus has now conferred this ministry on to believers who are indwelt with his Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Jim Rayburn, the founder of Young Life, wanted his staff to know that the mission of Young Life was about one person, Jesus Christ. He was often quoted saying, “Jesus Christ is not just what we are about, it’s all that we are about.”<sup>60</sup> Jim wanted to communicate the love of Christ so badly to kids that he developed a whole new way of thinking about incarnational ministry. One of the hallmarks of Young Life is “contact work”. Contact work is simply hanging out with kids on their turf, going where kids are first instead of waiting for them to show up at something we are doing. God invented contact work by sending His son Jesus Christ into the world to

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<sup>58</sup> Timothy Keller, Jeff White, and Andrew Field, *Fellowship Group Handbook: A Manual for Leaders and Coordinators* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 1997), 1.

<sup>59</sup> II Corinthians 5:17-21.

<sup>60</sup> John Miller, *Back to the Basics of Young Life* (Colorado Springs: Young Life, 1991), 88.

meet us on our turf and to enter into our lives. Jesus does this in order to build a personal relationship with us. In Young Life, we follow this model of ministry by going out to be with kids in their environment, in order to build relationships with them, so that we can “win the right to be heard.” If there is one particular focus in Young Life training it is incarnational ministry.

Rayburn saw the need to share the gospel to teenagers who were outside the church walls. These were teenagers who were either unchurched or ex-churched, meaning they had tried church but given up on it. Rayburn felt that these teenagers had not heard the gospel in a way that was attractive. He knew that Jesus Christ was the most attractive person a kid could ever meet. Rayburn’s sense of adventure and love for Jesus were combined to create a mission that would revolutionize youth ministry for decades to come. Rayburn operated on the principle, “It’s a sin to bore a kid with the gospel.”

In his discussion of emotionally healthy churches, Scazzero points to the incarnation as a model for loving well. Scazzero says, “In emotionally healthy churches, people intentionally follow the model of Jesus. They learn to follow the three dynamics of incarnation found in the life of Jesus in order to love other people: entering another’s world, holding on to yourself, and hanging between two worlds.”<sup>61</sup> Incarnational love is what we need to continue to train our Young Life leaders to practice. The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the embodiment of the gospel. Since Jesus lives in our hearts, we embody the gospel to the people around us. We carry with us the gospel in our hearts wherever we go. Every conversation, every relationship, every person we touch

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<sup>61</sup> Scazzero and Bird, 172.

can be touched by the gospel that lives in us. This sixth principle of living out the incarnation is really the sum of the other five principles. We live out what we have on the inside. The first five principles deal with inward issues. The incarnation principle is the outward expression of what Jesus is doing on the inside of our hearts.

Tripp says that our love for Jesus and for others is the key to being effective incarnational ministers. “The love of Christ is not only the foundation for our personal hope, but our incarnation of that love is our only hope for being effective for Christ with others.”<sup>62</sup> The incarnation of God in his Son Jesus Christ is the incarnation of his love. The only power we have to love others is through the love that has come to our hearts from God through Jesus.

Here is a summary of the key themes found in the literature review.

- The Scriptures are the source to lead from
- Spiritual Health flows from a vital walk with God
- Character, Integrity, Humility and Servanthood are essential leadership qualities
- Understanding who you are in Christ and your Spiritual Gifts creates the foundation for leading
- Leadership is about Relationships and Discipling Others
- The Message is the Gospel
- Leaders are incarnational minister

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<sup>62</sup> Tripp, 119.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PROJECT METHODOLOGY**

The research design of this study followed a qualitative approach. Sharan B. Merriam in *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* makes the following assumptions about qualitative research:

1. Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes or products.
2. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning – how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their structures of the world.
3. The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines.
4. Qualitative research involves field work. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural setting.
5. Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.

6. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details.<sup>1</sup>

Since leadership training is a process, this paper lends itself well to qualitative research. Data was collected through two primary ways. One was to interview Area Directors. The second was to research the topic of leadership from several different sources. These sources included the Scriptures, Young Life material, and books written on leadership and spiritual development.

### **Interview Design and Goals**

I interviewed eight Area Directors one on one either in person or by telephone with a semi-structured format. I took notes during the interviews. The goal of interviewing Area Directors was to explore the content of their leadership training. The interview process was designed to reveal whether or not the Bible is the foundational source of their leadership training. Is the Area Director mainly discussing the “form” of Young Life ministry or its “function”? Or is he doing both equally? The forms of Young Life would include the club meeting itself, skits, music and the message. The function of what Young Life does will answer the question, “Why are we doing this?”

Another key goal of the interviews was to examine how the Area Directors define the gospel. Do these men have a Biblical understanding of the gospel? Is their understanding of the gospel impacting their lives and their training of volunteers?

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam, S.B., *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 19-20.

As I researched Biblical leadership themes, I wanted to see if these themes overlapped with what the Area Directors were teaching and training their leaders. I matched these themes with themes found in the extra-Biblical literature review.

I was also interested in examining what influences bear upon the Area Directors in their leadership training. I asked them to discuss their own ministry training, mentors in their life, reading habits and spiritual disciplines.

### **Overall Plan**

The overall plan of this study was first to look at the Scriptures to see what they have to tell us about leadership. I specifically looked at God as leader, Jesus as leader, Moses, David and Paul as leaders. This gave me the Biblical framework and grid to see if the Area Directors were teaching Biblical principles of leadership. Secondly, I reviewed the extra-Biblical literature on the topic of leadership. This revealed what Christian leaders were saying about leadership development. Thirdly, I interviewed the Area Directors and asked them to discuss what they were teaching in their leadership training times. Fourthly, I compiled all of the results from these three sources and concluded whether or not the Area Directors were on the right course in teaching Biblical leadership principles. Fifthly, I made recommendations based on the findings.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to interviewing eight Area Directors. This only gave me a small sampling of the entire mission of Young Life. However, I did interview



Area Directors from different parts of the country in order to get somewhat of a cross section of Young Life. I knew five of the eight Area Directors previous to the study. Two of those five shared with me similar ideas about leadership training. We had discussed over the years what we were teaching in our leadership meetings. However, I wanted to get their own philosophy of ministry and theology through this project. The other three that I had previously known are well respected Area Directors with successful ministries. Since these men had a proven track record I wanted to see if their training of volunteer leaders had a bearing on their success. Three of the eight Area Directors I had not known previously. I intentionally chose these men in order to keep my research from being biased towards only interviewing people I knew. And even though I did know some of the Area Directors, I had never actually attended any of their leadership training times. It was my goal to research more specifically the content of their meetings and factors contributing to their understanding of the gospel.

Because there is so much information on leadership, this study was limited in utilizing only a fraction of those resources. Since I was interviewing people in Young Life, the specific results will benefit the mission of Young Life. However, as data is collected and interpreted, leaders outside of Young Life will benefit from the Biblical-centered leadership principles which will emerge from the data. Ultimately the principles are transferable from a Young Life setting to any Christian leadership setting.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Interview Findings**

The Interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

A list of the Area Directors interviewed can be found in Appendix E.

#### **Specific Structure and Content of Leadership Meetings**

In Young Life, each Area typically has a weekly meeting in which the Area Director teaches and trains his volunteer leaders. This meeting is simply called Leadership. Certain questions were asked in order to examine specifically what took place during the meeting that the Area Directors hold with their volunteer leaders and staff. There was one Area Director who did not have Leadership meetings with all of his leaders and staff together. Josh Powell, Area Director in Issaquah, Washington, oversees four staff and fifty volunteer leaders. Instead of having weekly meetings he does two things. First, he has a leader retreat in the beginning of the Fall and Spring Semesters. Secondly, he and his staff meet with leaders individually several times over the course of the year. This practice

was different than that of the other seven Area Directors interviewed. When I mention “seven of the eight Area Directors”, I am referring to Josh Powell as being the one left out.

The first question was, “How are your Leadership meetings structured?” Of the eight Area Directors interviewed seven had the following elements in common: worship, Bible study, ministry training and prayer. Each Area meets regularly, usually three times per month for their leadership meetings with the exception of Powell. Six of the seven do not use their leadership training time to do planning for events. One Area Director, Jason Rinne from Flagstaff, Arizona, meets on Sunday nights and adds team meetings to the end of the Leadership training. A team in Young Life is simply the group of leaders that are in a particular club ministry. After they meet all together, then the teams meet for planning and preparation. This makes the meeting longer for one night but helps the leaders to not have to be out at another time to meet as a team. It was important to the Area Directors to not plan for events such as club during the Leadership meetings. Each Area Director wanted the Leadership time to be set aside to specifically invest in their leaders through worship, Bible study, ministry training and prayer. Planning and preparation would take up too much time, pushing out these other four vital elements. Another component was fellowship, which included eating a meal together.

Worship was one of the four key elements to each Leadership meeting. Worship included singing and prayer. Sometimes the prayer was intercessory; other times it was confessional, thankful and adoration. Another activity

mentioned by a few of the Area Directors was sharing. Part of their worship time together was spent sharing what was going on in their lives or ministry.

Bible study and ministry training often went hand in hand. Sometimes the Bible study would lead toward some aspect of specific ministry training. One Area Director, however, is careful about combining Bible study with Young Life discussion. Tim Toy, Area Director for Young Life in Richmond's West End, said that he tried to caution himself from "reading the Scriptures through the lens of Young Life." The danger was that he would miss an application of Scripture that was not directly related to his ministry in Young Life. During his Bible study time with his leaders, Toy will often just speak on what God has been teaching him lately through his personal Bible study or try to give his leaders a Biblical Kingdom mentality to inspire and encourage them. The Area Directors agreed that they desired their leaders to understand the Biblical foundations for ministry. This leads them to focus on Scriptures that can be applied to a ministry such as Young Life.

Joe Marks, Area Director in Newport News, Virginia, has taken his leaders through the World Harvest workbook entitled, *Gospel Transformation*. He wants his leaders "to have a sound understanding of the fundamentals of the gospel and what it means for them today."

Rich Dargenio, Area Director in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, wants to model to his leaders how to approach Scripture. He says that we should not just approach it devotionally but also to mine out the truths that it holds. He feels that he can teach his leaders how to study the Bible by doing solid Bible studies with them,

therefore modeling good exegesis. Dargenio does not want to use Scripture just to motivate people; he wants them to understand it and make applications to their life and ministry. He has used DVD series and looked at pictures of Christ in the Old Testament. Dargenio says he concentrates on the discipleship aspect of helping his leaders understand what it means to follow Christ. He also wants them to see from a Biblical perspective what discipling others looks like.

Ministry training was also a time set aside for specific teaching on a particular aspect of ministry. Mike Cramer, Area Director in Charlottesville, Virginia, said that his Area would periodically have a “spotlight on ministry”, when he would teach on a particular aspect of Young Life such as contact work, club, Campaigners or camp. While these activities have their Biblical foundations, he would separate teaching on them from the Bible study time for a higher concentration of attention to Scriptural truth. Several other Area Directors, mentioned, as well, that they focus more of their time on Bible study than on Young Life preparation. Nathan Gunn, Area Director in Syracuse, New York, talked about taking the ministry training time to discuss issues adolescents are facing and helping his leaders get a better understanding of those issues. Each Area Director also mentioned that periodically his leadership team reads a book together. This book may be one directly related to ministry such as *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, by Robert Coleman, or it may be more about spiritual development. The book is then discussed at Leadership. This is done maybe once per year.

Jason Rinne said that he will spend a semester focusing on the “nuts and bolts” of Young Life. He wants to make sure his leaders understand “what they are doing and why they are doing it.” Rich Dargenio takes a few training times to go over the gospel with his leaders. He does this to help them have a better understanding of the gospel and teach them how to share it with others. Dargenio wants to make sure that there is a Christ-centeredness to the entire meeting. He wants this Christ-centeredness “reflected in everything being taught,” from the Scriptures to ministry training specifics. He feels that “they should never get far off the gospel message and that the cross is not just for Easter.” In keeping with this theme, Rich wants his leaders to see the role the cross plays in the sanctification process.

For Jace Thompson, Area Director in Fort Worth, Texas, leadership training involves three key things: “equip, encourage and evaluate.” He desires to equip his leaders for ministry through the teaching of the Word and modeling ministry to them. He wants to encourage them in all they do. Finally, he sees great value in evaluating what has been done to see what was done well, what was learned and what could be done better.

Prayer is an integral part to each Area’s Leadership meeting. Intercessory prayer on behalf of kids and one another is valued. Joe Marks says that they devote two leadership meetings a semester to prayer alone. Three of the Areas get together with their Region to pray and fast for 24 hours at a Young Life camp in January each year.

## **Important Biblical Truths seek to Communicate/Biblical Principles undergirding a Gospel-Centered Mission**

As I was interviewing the Area Directors, it became apparent that answers to the following two questions began to blend together:

1. What are the two most important Biblical truths you seek to communicate to your volunteer leaders?
2. In your opinion what Biblical principles undergird a gospel-centered mission?

The reality is that these two questions are quite similar and question number two is not worded very well. As the Area Directors answered the questions, they began to either give similar answers to both questions or just had a difficult time understanding the latter question. Question number two became more of an elaboration on question number one. I also gave the interviewees freedom to not be confined to only “two most important Biblical truths.” Some of them mentioned more than two. Several themes came out of these questions.

### **Incarnational Ministry**

Incarnational ministry was one of the most prominent themes to emerge from the Area Directors’ answers to the two questions above. Rich Dargenio defines incarnational ministry as “literally going to the lost and being with people.” Just as Jesus became incarnate and came to be with a lost world, so we as incarnational ministers must go and be with lost people. When we are with them, Dargenio says that we must love them and proclaim the gospel to them in words

and actions. He points out that being incarnational is not about just being relational so they will come to us but being relational with them in their environment. Along this line of thought, Josh Powell says that there is power in “going to” people. And as we minister to kids, they need to know “that there are no strings attached to the relationship.” If they do not come to a Young Life club or camp, then we will still go to them and love them. Jace Thompson says that the incarnation is about our taking initiative in relationships with kids. “Just as God took the initiative with us and modeled it through Jesus, so we need to do the same thing with kids.” Nathan Gunn also agrees that leaders need to understand the incarnation of Christ and that the central thing we do in Young Life is incarnational ministry. Tim Toy says “that Jesus does not have to work through us, but he does and this is a testimony of his mercy.”

### **Understanding the Gospel of Grace**

As Josh Powell individually trains his leaders, his desire is that they “consistently teach grace and how to extend grace to kids and others.” He goes back to his “no strings attached” policy even when kids and leaders fail or do not live up to the expectations we have of them. Joe Marks wants his leaders to understand that God’s love for them as believers is not conditional. “It is not conditional on how well we live or how well the ministry goes.” If he can impress upon his leaders a sound understanding of the gospel, then they can apply it to their own life today. Joe knows that the gospel is for everyone, not just the new



believer. Each Christian needs to believe the gospel of grace everyday and allow it to impact their life and ministry.

The theme of understanding the gospel of grace dovetailed into another theme the Area Directors discussed: the idea of life transformation and the power of the resurrection. They want their leaders to experience the life transforming power of Jesus. Tim Toy says that “resurrection power is accessible to us.” This power of Jesus gives us confidence and courage to love people and minister to them. Mike Cramer wants his leaders to be motivated to obedience through an understanding of grace. Grace applied to our lives transforms us. Cramer also wants “grace interwoven throughout all his teaching.” Nathan Gunn desires that his leaders grasp that “Christ wants all of us. Our total lives are to come under the Lordship of Christ.”

### **Our Relationship with Christ is Most Important**

These Area Directors’ commitment to the centrality of the gospel emerged again when many said that they wanted their leaders to make their relationship with Christ the most important thing in their life. Jason Rinne tells his leaders that Jesus is all, and their relationship with him is primary. He wants his leaders to passionately fall in love with Jesus. Rinne uses John 14:6 to back up his thoughts, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” In order to train his leaders in this concept, Rinne says his primary way is “to just be with them and reveal his own lifestyle with Jesus.” He wants them to experience Jesus as they experience life.

Rinne wants his leaders to know “following Jesus is worth all the hardships and joys.” Rich Dargenio agrees that our “lives need to be Christ-centered.” Our own walk with Christ and growth as a Christian is of paramount importance. Tim Toy puts it this way, “If we are absorbing Jesus, then we will love others in a unique way.” Toy quotes Earl Palmer as saying, “The gospel of grace is about loving because you have been loved first.” We get to know and experience God’s love through our relationship with Jesus. And in turn, Jesus teaches us how to love others.

Jace Thompson believes that part of nurturing his relationship with Christ is to make time for “rest and retreat.” He sees Jesus doing this over and over again in his ministry. Thompson believes that if you “take care of yourself then you will have the energy to be involved with other people.” Jace quotes Howard Hendricks as saying, “You do not impart what you do not possess.” He knows the deep need we have to experience Christ, to be renewed and refreshed by Christ in order to minister to others. Each Area Director is challenged by his Regional Director to take a “day away” each month. This day is to be spent in a spiritual retreat with Christ and his Word. Young Life knows the value of intentionally taking time out of busy schedules to just be with Jesus and allow him to renew us.

Understanding our identity in Christ is also a theme attached to our relationship with him. Tim Toy seeks to communicate to his leaders that “God loves you and you are a co-heir and co-son with Christ.” This truth leads to believing that we, as believers, get all the spiritual blessings by knowing our

identity in Christ. Leaders need to know these truths so that they can live out who they are in Christ.

### **God's Word and Theology**

One of the most important Biblical truths that Rich Dargenio wants his leaders to understand is the power of God's Word. He wants them to live their lives around it. Dargenio's desire is that his leaders be "immersed in the Scriptures, learning how to study it for ourselves and how to teach it to others." Dargenio believes there is tremendous value in "looking at the Scriptures as a community." Since there is a community in the Leadership meeting, this is a great time to look at the Scriptures together, not just listening to Dargenio teach it to them. Nathan Gunn also says that he wants to give his leaders the tools to study the Bible on their own. He wants them to "grasp the Scriptures in their historical context and help them see the big picture items in the Bible." Joe Marks agrees and desires his leaders to have general Biblical literacy. He has a semester-long curriculum that helps the leaders get a brief, but solid, overview of the entire Bible. Nathan Gunn also spends a semester teaching a survey of the Bible. He feels that "leaders need to understand the theology of God from Genesis to Revelation."

Each one of these Area Directors seeks to teach their leaders the fundamentals of the Scriptures and its message for themselves but also so that they can teach it to others. There is a strong sense of passing on what we have learned and discipling others in the faith. They want to teach in such a way that their leaders

learn how to teach it to others. This goes back to the principles learned in II Timothy 2:1-2, “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

### **Other Minor Themes**

There were a few minor themes mentioned by individual Area Directors that are worth mentioning. Mike Cramer believes that an undergirding Biblical principle in Young Life ministry is one of community. He gets this from Jesus’ command to love one another. Leading, worshipping and living in community “frees people to grow.” Mike knows that Christians do not grow isolated from one another but in community with one another. Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”

Another focus for Rich Dargenio is humility. It is a character trait needed to lead others. Nathan Gunn wants the Beatitudes to be instilled in his leaders. He feels that the Beatitudes as found in Matthew and Luke should help define the Young Life mission statement. The statement reads “Young Life exists to reach adolescents with the gospel of Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith.”

Casting vision is important to Tim Toy and Rich Dargenio. For Tim Toy, giving vision to his leaders means helping them see the big picture of God’s Kingdom and their role in building that Kingdom. Rich Dargenio sees vision casting as something that will enable his leaders to go out and lead others to Christ.

### **Defining the Gospel and Key Landmarks**

Nathan Gunn uses Isaiah 52:7 to define the gospel. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” He says it is about the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Christ. Nathan also believes that “acts of mercy are the gospel.” Key influences in his life have been his exposure to Catholicism and watching clergy that he has known lead.

Mike Cramer says that the gospel is Jesus. “It is reconciliation, God bringing back that which was broken.” This reconciliation also takes place in our relationships with others. He says the gospel motivates kids to love other kids. Cramer also believes the gospel is the incarnation, God intentionally coming to his people. Cramer pointed out three key landmarks that influenced his understanding of the gospel. The first was his own coming to Christ. He saw what Christ did for him as a gift that changes and transforms us. Cramer said that “watching one of his mentors struggle through an extremely difficult situation forced him to see that we are all great sinners, but God’s grace is much bigger than we thought.” Finally he pointed out that marriage had taught him a great deal about the gospel. He sees “a reflection and expression of God’s love through his wife Laurie while she loves him in spite of his shortcomings.”

Joe Marks breaks down the gospel this way. “God created man to be in relationship with himself. Man disobeyed, he rebelled and the relationship was broken. Man is a slave to sin. God sent Jesus to die and bring us back to himself. Jesus pays the penalty for our sins, and we receive righteousness. Saving man is God revealing himself and his glory.” Marks was influenced by his understanding of his depth of sin and the concept of total depravity. This helped him see the extent of God’s grace in his own life. He also says that being under the ministry of Steve Smallman, then a pastor in Northern Virginia, for two years was influential. Between Smallman’s preaching and his new members’ class, Marks gained a much better understanding of what the gospel is all about and a clearer understanding of Biblical theology. He also said that watching Smallman live out the gospel before him had a huge impact. Marks mentioned that the World Harvest material called *Sonship* made a very deep impression on his understanding of the gospel.

Josh Powell says that “the gospel is a person, Jesus Christ, and it is a relationship with Jesus.” It is the good news that we as sinners have the opportunity to have this relationship. Josh clarifies by saying “the gospel is about Christ loving us, dying for us, being resurrected and giving us access to the Father and eternal life.” Books on God’s grace have given Josh a better understanding of the gospel. He specifically noted two authors, Brennan Manning and Philip Yancey. Josh mentioned that a talk given by Doug Coe in a small group setting had a profound impact on his understanding of being a Christian. Coe made the statement that he does not call himself a Christian but

rather “a follower of Christ.” Josh said this talk “helped him strip away some trappings of the faith.” Christian literally means “follower of Christ.”

Rich Dargenio says the gospel is “the redemptive plan of God through Jesus and that all of time points towards this plan.” According to Dargenio “the gospel is Jesus Christ, it is the incarnation. It is the need of man being met in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel brings a new life and continues to transform a person’s life.” Rich says the process of doing evangelism and sharing the gospel has made him understand it in a deeper way. Also his own personal study of the life and ministry of Jesus has given him a Biblical perspective on the gospel. Developing training materials for college leaders forced him to really examine the gospel in the Scriptures.

Tim Toy defines the gospel this way. “God created us to be in relationship with him. We chose to worship the created things, not the Creator. God chose to help us by sending Jesus to die for our sin so that we would not have to suffer the consequences. We need to thrust ourselves upon Jesus and believe him to have eternal life. Then we live in relationship with him and worship him.” Toy identifies a key influence of his understanding: being under the preaching of Steve Shelby, pastor at West End Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia. It was there that he began to comprehend that “the gospel was not about performance but about our identity in Christ.”

Jace Thompson says “the gospel is the good news that Christ became a man (he was 100% man and 100% God). Jesus lived and loved. He told people to believe in him and trust in him. The gospel is by faith alone through Christ

alone. It is about the death, resurrection and second coming of Christ.” The most important influence for Jace was having to teach the gospel all the time. Presenting the gospel to kids who do not understand it caused him to look at it closer himself. He also feels that his own life and interactions with Jesus have shaped his understanding.

Jason Rinne defines “the gospel as Jesus showing up in a relationship with us. This relationship is one of trust and love and creates a significant change in heart.” Rinne used John 3:16 as a foundational verse to understanding the gospel. He also pointed to the books of Romans and Titus. Finally, Rinne said that “the gospel is about becoming a new creation, a new person.” He cited II Corinthians 5:17 for this statement. A key landmark for Rinne was a guy in college who poured himself into Rinne when he was really hurting and looking for help. He also said that just being a part of a ministry like Young Life stretches him to do uncomfortable things and be in messy situations; these challenges then force him to rely on the gospel and see its power.

### **Other Contributing Factors**

Four other factors contributed to the overall understanding of the gospel and leadership training of the Area Directors. They include the following: mentors, spiritual disciplines, reading habits and ministry training. These had varying degrees of influence. The interviewees mentioned these factors at some point during our conversation. The following chart shows which factors influenced each Area Director.



### Factors Contributing to the Area Directors' Understanding of the Gospel

- ✓ = This was influential in the interviewee's ministry training and understanding of the gospel.  
 ✗ = This was not influential in his ministry training and understanding of the gospel.

Name	Mentors	Spiritual Disciplines	Regular Reading Habits	Intern/ Training Program	Seminary
Mike Cramer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tim Toy	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Joe Marks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nathan Gunn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jace Thompson	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Jason Rinne	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Josh Powell	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Rich Dargenio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Mentors

All eight Area Directors said that they had influential mentors at some point in their life. Many were their Young Life leaders from high school, college or older Young Life staff. Some were pastors or clergy. These men poured their own lives into the Area Directors, modeling incarnational ministry. They also helped shape their ministry by just being there for these men and walking through life with them. Rich Dargenio said that one of his mentors, Rick Barr, showed vulnerability and openness. His being real and authentic with Rich helped Rich grow in ministry and his own personal life. Three of the Area Directors mentioned that their mentor walked through times with them when they

were ready to quit Young Life staff. Jason Rinne said his mentor, Marty Caldwell, “helped him stick it out.”

### **Spiritual Disciplines**

All eight Area Directors were practicing certain spiritual disciplines. Two disciplines common to each person were daily Bible study and prayer. All Area Directors are involved in their church and worship weekly. However, Nathan Gunn points out that he enjoys “liturgical worship” which he practices personally as well as corporately. Jason Rinne has found “great joy” in his prayer life. He feels that as he grows spiritually, his prayer life “becomes more natural and has a spirit throughout the day of praying without ceasing.” Tim Toy said that as he has grown spiritually, he sees his need for Jesus more. This translates to his “going to Jesus when he is stressed out, or just traveling in the car.”

### **Reading Habits**

All eight Area Directors have a regular habit of reading. Reading material mainly stayed within the spiritual genre. Those who are currently in a seminary program are typically dominated by what they are required to read for their classes. Most staff mentioned that they always had a book on the topic of leadership at their desk. Other reading material included apologetics or current issues such as the emergent church movement.

### **Ministry Training**

Young Life offers a variety of ministry training conferences throughout the year which each Area Director attends. When someone comes on Young Life staff he normally enters the “Intern/Training Program.” This is a two-year stint working alongside an Area Director, being trained and mentored by him or her. During this two year period, the trainees meet regularly with other trainees and a specific staff person who is in charge of that training time. Four of the eight Area Directors went through the training program. Six of the eight either had a seminary degree or were enrolled in seminary classes. Joe Marks discussed how his seminary degree from Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, had given him a much deeper understanding of the doctrine of salvation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore what leadership principles Area Directors are teaching their volunteer leaders and staff and to evaluate how Biblically based those principles are. During this study I interviewed eight Area Directors to find out exactly what they are teaching in their leadership meetings. I tried to get a cross section of Area Directors from around the country to see if there were any trends of different leadership material being taught in different parts of the country. As the interviews progressed, I did not see any trends that would differentiate leadership training from one part of the country to another. There was one Area Director, Josh Powell in Issaquah, Washington, who did not meet with his leaders all together on a regular basis. Instead, he and his staff met with them individually for training several times over the course of the year. This was out of the ordinary. All seven of the other Area Directors meet regularly, at least three times a month, with their volunteers for training.

Before starting this study, I speculated that some Area Directors were leaning heavily on teaching the “program” side of Young Life. I thought that I might find Area Directors spending more time training leaders how to run a club, create a skit, or spend time planning events. I found just the opposite in the actual study. Each Area Director was very careful to mention that most planning was done outside the leadership meeting. Club teams would meet outside of the

actual leadership meeting in order to plan or prepare for an event. The leadership meeting was a sacred time to be spent teaching and training the foundations of Young Life ministry. All of the Area Directors included a Bible study and worship time in every leadership meeting. Of course there was time during the meeting to look at a specific area of ministry, but it did not dominate the time.

I also wanted to see how the Area Directors defined the gospel. Was their definition going to be based on Scripture, or was it going to be based on their own experiential spiritual encounters? Each Area Director pointed to Jesus as being the embodiment of the gospel. This was an encouraging find. Each defined the gospel in terms of who Jesus was, what he did through the cross and resurrection and the life transforming power he exhibits now. The official Young Life mission statement reads, "Young Life exists to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith." These Area Directors were training their leaders to accomplish this mission.

I was concerned that if Area Directors were not Biblically grounded in their understanding of the gospel, then they may be teaching legalism rather than grace. This study found that the Area Directors were trying to be faithful to a Biblical understanding of grace. This was seen in their study habits and in their extra-Biblical reading. As they taught and trained their leaders, they were intent on making Christ the central focus. They wanted to lead people to rely on Jesus, not on the program of Young Life.

One central theme that crystallizes the ministry philosophies of the Area Directors is that of incarnational ministry. All of the Area Directors understood the significance of the incarnation and our calling as incarnational ministers. They wanted their leaders to understand that ministry is about loving people in and through the spirit of Jesus that indwells us. They knew that being incarnational ministers was about living our lives before people in such a way that they see Jesus. It is about unconditionally loving people through the hard times as well as the good times. It is about teaching people that Jesus infiltrates every single area of our life and that he cares about every area. Many of the Area Directors witnessed incarnational ministry first hand. They witnessed it as people loved them, cared for them and shared Christ with them. They in turn began to pass on the love of Christ to others.

### **Were the Area Directors Biblical in their Leadership Training?**

I believe that this study found the Area Directors who were interviewed were Biblical in their leadership training. I think the fact that they mentioned fifteen out of twenty Biblical leadership themes puts them in the category of being Biblical. These Area Directors were teaching the Scriptures in their meetings. They were studying the Scriptures in their own personal walk with Christ. They were reading books that helped them understand the Scriptures better. They had a desire to understand the gospel of grace and then see it lived out in their own lives and ministry. I found each one talking about incarnational ministry at some point. They could all articulate in their own way that Jesus is the most

important relationship in their life and that they wanted others to know how to have a relationship with Jesus.

The following chart shows the overlapping Biblical themes from the literature review and the interviews. This chart gives a snapshot of how Biblically based the Area Directors were and whether or not the literature agreed with them.

**Overlapping Biblical Leadership Themes Chart**

Theme	Biblical Framework	Literature Review	Interviews
Grace/Gospel	✓	✓	✓
Relational	✓	✓	✓
Prayer	✓	✓	✓
Humility/Servant	✓	✓	✓
God's Word	✓	✓	✓
Training Others	✓	✓	✓
Modeling	✓	✓	✓
Relationship w/Lord	✓	✓	✓
Identity in Christ	✓	✓	✓
Incarnational	✓	✓	✓
Worship	✓	✓	✓
Community	✓	✓	✓
Vision	✓	✓	✓
Integrity/Character	✓	✓	
Love	✓		✓
Presence	✓		✓
Holiness	✓		
Calling	✓		
Overcoming Failure	✓		
Perseverance	✓		

✓ = theme found prevalent in that section

### **Summary of the Overlapping Chart**

In the biblical review I found twenty leadership qualities associated with God, Jesus, Moses, and David. While this study was not exhaustive of every leadership theme found throughout the Scriptures, it was thorough in its investigation regarding the five people mentioned above. Thirteen of the themes were found to be prevalent in all three sections of my study; Biblical framework, literature review and the interviews. One theme found prevalent in the Biblical framework and in the interviews but not in the literature review was “love.” This was disappointing to see since love for others is so central in the Bible’s view of leadership. The Area Directors were motivated by love for kids and leaders and this characterized their entire ministry. Each of the Biblical characters studied were also characterized by love. Moses led a stubborn and rebellious people who at times wanted to kill him. Yet Moses loved the Israelites and consistently had mercy on them, pleading for them before the Lord. Having love in us is an expression of the Spirit of God in us. God is love; since God’s Spirit lives in us, we are lovers. It would be refreshing for someone to write a leadership book based on love.



## **Review of the Fifteen Themes Overlapping between the Area Directors and the Biblical Framework**

### **Gospel of Grace**

God and his Son Jesus, are the embodiment of the gospel. They are the authors and players in the story of redemption. Moses and David knew God as their Redeemer. They believed, in faith, that God would save his people from their sins and he would eventually send a Redeemer. Paul encountered Christ personally in a way that was undeniable and life changing. Paul's understanding of the gospel of grace is written in the Scriptures. In many ways, God has used Paul to explain the gospel of grace to everyone who has come after him.

Each Area Director was able to give a Biblical definition of the gospel. Though their exact wording differed, they all saw the life, death, resurrection and transforming power of Jesus Christ at the center of the gospel. Their desire was to teach this gospel to their leaders and to show it to them through their relationships.

### **Relational and Incarnational**

Relationships are at the very heart of creation. God created Adam to live in relationship with him. God created Eve to live in relationship to Adam, and then they were to multiply and fill the earth. God is all about relationships, and therefore life is all about relationships. God's plan of redemption centers on mankind's relationship with God being restored through a relationship with Jesus

Christ. This is the ministry of reconciliation that God initiated and has given to us, his ministers.

Young Life is a relational ministry. Even though the organization has established tremendous programs and outstanding camps, each club and camp would be empty of people if it were not for leaders building relationships with kids. Being relational is living out the incarnation among adolescents. The Young Life Area Directors I interviewed emphasize relationships over programs. This message is being taught throughout the areas interviewed.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is how man communicates with God. Jesus talked to his Father through prayer and modeled it to the disciples. Moses, David and Paul relied on prayer to sustain their ministries. They prayed to intercede on behalf of others. They too modeled prayer to their followers. Prayer is also a key spiritual discipline for each Area Director. As we see leaders pray, this shows us the importance of prayer and the significance of prayer. Joe Marks, Area Director in Newport News, Virginia, has rheumatoid arthritis, a disease that can be painful and debilitating at times. Joe testifies to the fact that when he has received specific prayer, he feels better. Joe's testimony has encouraged me to pray for him often. His faith in prayer has inspired me to believe God uses prayer to heal people and change them.

I will admit prayer can be somewhat of a mysterious process. God tells us to pray to him with praise, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. Then we

get the privilege of watching God work. I believe the essence of prayer is that we are expressing our dependence upon the Lord to meet every need we have. God gets the glory when we pray because just by praying we are telling him that we believe only he is sufficient to deal with every issue, problem or area of life. When Joe Marks prays, he asks God to heal him in a way that only He can get the glory. Teaching leaders to pray this way should be an important aspect of every leadership meeting.

### **Humility and Servanthood**

Barbara Miller Juliani says this about her father, Jack Miller in their book, *The Heart of a Servant Leader*, “Instead of using leadership as a way to establish identity, significance, and power, he [Jack] taught that the role of the Christian leader is to be the chief servant.”<sup>1</sup> Leadership is about serving others. This is God’s design for leaders. Moses, David, Jesus and Paul were all servant leaders. They were not leading people in order to exalt themselves but rather to carry out the will of God. Young Life also attempts to instill these characteristics of humility and servanthood into their leaders. The mission of Young Life is to exalt Jesus. The Area Directors I interviewed seek to lead adolescents to Jesus by serving them with an attitude of humility.

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<sup>1</sup> C. John Miller and Barbara Miller Juliani, *The Heart of a Servant Leader : Letters from Jack Miller*, 98.

### **God's Word**

If a Christian organization's leadership is void of God's Word, it has no foundation or substance. The literature review revealed that the Christian authors all pointed to the Bible as being their ultimate source for understanding leadership. Moses, David and Paul were used by God to actually write the Scriptures. David and the apostle Paul also relied upon the Scriptures that they had at the time to know and understand God's will. They could not lead without the guidance of God's Word. Nor can the Area Director or volunteer Young Life leader. It was exciting to see that all the Area Directors wanted their leaders to be immersed in the Scriptures. They believe that the Scriptures not only give guidance for leadership, but they bring about life transformation. My goal in exploring whether or not Area Directors were Biblical in their teaching and training was to see how much they relied on the Bible to teach leadership principles. Not only were they teaching and training out of the Bible, but they had an intense desire to see their leaders understand the Scriptures in such a way as to be able to teach it to others. II Timothy 2:2 is a common verse that Area Directors use to encourage one another and their leaders.

### **Training Others**

Young Life is strong in its training of volunteer leaders. The regular meetings give opportunity for the Area Directors to pour themselves into their leaders. It gives them a regular outlet to teach and train them in the Biblical principles of leadership. Moses trained Joshua, David trained his 300 men and

his son Solomon, Jesus trained the disciples, Paul trained young pastors such as Timothy and Titus. Training others is critical to the continuation of leadership. If we do not train the next generation of leaders to lead from the Scriptures then we could have a disastrous generation gap void of godly leadership.

The Area Directors were all committed to nurturing their volunteer leaders. They realized those volunteer leaders would need instruction, prayer, encouragement, and training in leadership. It is a valuable asset to the kingdom of God that Young Life intentionally trains its leaders. Most volunteer leaders in Young Life do not stay in that position their entire lives. They go on to get involved and be leaders in their churches or the business world. If Young Life Area Directors can be faithful in training volunteer leaders how to lead from the Scriptures, those volunteers will continue to be an asset to God's Kingdom even when they leave Young Life for another avenue of ministry.

### **Modeling**

Modeling a godly life is not necessarily what most people intend to do. However, it should be the leaders' heart to live lives that are an expression of the love of Christ. Living this life of love will model true Christianity to those around them. Leaders live with the challenge of being "constantly watched" by their followers. Leaders need to be aware of how they are living their lives for two main reasons. The first is that they are living their life for the glory of God. God should receive all the glory in what they say, do and think. Secondly, leaders need to be aware of the impact they are having on their followers by how they

live. Followers will imitate their leaders. They will imitate the good and the bad. When leaders struggle with failures and short comings, it is important for them to be honest. Leaders can have a profound affect on followers when they admit their problems, when they confess their own sins, and when they seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

### **Relationship with the Lord**

A common thread woven throughout the interviews was that a leader's relationship with Christ is more important than anything else. The Area Directors wanted their leaders to know that if their relationship with Christ was failing or in shambles, then they needed to step back from the ministry. A leader's first priority is to maintain and grow in his relationship with Christ. Ministry flows out of that relationship with Christ not vice versa. In the literature review, certain authors referred to the importance of leaders having a vital walk with God. John Piper says, "If you want to be a great leader of people, you have to get away from people to be with God."<sup>2</sup> Piper is not saying that we never spend time with people, but he knows how draining ministry to people can be. The leader's source for spiritual energy and sustenance is Jesus Christ. It is important that leaders be encouraged and trained leaders to make their relationship with Christ more important than anything else in their lives.

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<sup>2</sup> Piper, John. "The Marks of a Spiritual Leader."

## **Identity in Christ**

While Moses and David would not have used the phrase, “identity in Christ,” they still knew their true identity. The calling that God had placed on their life was undeniable. The New Testament gives believers a theological understanding of their true identity. We are not just fathers, shepherds, fishermen or pastors. First and foremost, we are Christ followers and we are inseparably united to Christ. It is Jesus who gives us our true identity. Knowing and believing this can keep the leader from falling into the trap that he must live up to certain worldly standards in order to gain significance and meaning in his life.

## **Worship**

Each Area included the element of worship in its leadership meetings. The Area Directors correctly saw the need and value of worshipping together. Worship should be a natural outflow of a leader’s relationship with Christ and his ministry. Worship is modeled throughout the Scriptures. David often led the people of Israel in worship. He also wrote many of the Psalms, which were songs for corporate and personal worship. Of course the worship that takes place during a Young Life leadership meeting should not take the place of worship that happens at church. Young Life is not the church; it is a parachurch ministry. It is a missional arm of the church and does not operate under the same authority or structure of a church. For these reasons Young Life requires its staff to be

involved in a local church. Area Directors strongly encourage their leaders to be involved in church as well.

### **Community**

The way Young Life is set up creates a natural environment for Christian community. Because leaders are ministering alongside one another, there is a strong sense of “being in it together.” Just as camaraderie develops among soldiers during times of war, so brothers and sisters in Christ are tightly united as they battle for the hearts of kids. Regular leadership meetings bring all the leaders together for worship, Bible study, and ministry training. This meeting breeds community among the leaders and staff. They get to know one another, they pray for one another and love one another. The experience that leaders gain while working in Young Life impacts their lives at that time but also prepares them for the future when they are no longer with Young Life.

### **Integrity and Character**

The importance of integrity and godly character surfaced regularly in the Biblical framework and the literature review but not in the interviews. I was surprised that none of the Area Directors mentioned these qualities as a teaching point with their leaders. I imagine that these issues are on Area Directors’ minds frequently. Most Areas have a high percentage of college students serving as leaders. These college leaders face tremendous pressure to compromise their integrity in the university environment. The Area Directors would have a unique



opportunity to walk through these college years with their leaders and help them navigate the dangerous waters of college life.

### **Recommendations**

After researching the topic of what Area Directors are teaching and training their volunteer leaders, I have a few recommendations. The first is that I believe that Young Life needs to develop a two-to four-year leadership curriculum to be used by Area Directors to train their volunteer leaders. At this time there is no such curriculum. Each Area Director is left to himself to create and teach leadership principles to his volunteers. Without a specific curriculum, the Area Director may be leaving out major biblical points of leadership training that his volunteers could benefit from. As we have seen from this study, the eight Area Directors interviewed are doing an admirable job training their leaders. However, they represent only a small sampling. There are over 1000 Areas in the United States and around the world. If each one of these had a leadership training curriculum that was centered on Biblical principles and incorporated the themes found in this study, then I believe it would have a profound impact on the overall quality of ministry taking place through Young Life.

We have seen in this study that each Area Director is unique and has different gifts and abilities. The current way of allowing Area Directors to develop their own leadership plan gives them a chance to express their own creativity and encourages them to study on their own. Each Area also differs in the makeup of the leaders. Some Areas have mostly college students, some young

professionals, some parents. The curriculum would be set up to help, not hinder the Area Director or take away from his or her creativity in tailoring the leadership training to fit with the makeup of his leadership team. But the curriculum could be a guide or framework to help equip the Area Director in his leadership training.

The second recommendation would be to research why the Area Directors were not concentrating on the following key biblical themes: integrity, character, holiness, calling, overcoming failure, and perseverance. These themes did not surface during the interviews, and their absence is reflected on the content chart on page 92. There did not seem to be any particular reason for the omission of these themes; however, their absence is cause for more discussion.

The third recommendation would be to study the impact of the theology of the "emergent church movement"<sup>3</sup> on Young Life staff. A few extremely popular books written by authors associated with this movement have had a widespread readership among Young Life staff and leaders: *Blue Like Jazz; Nonreligious thoughts on Christian Spirituality*, and *Searching for God Knows What*, both by Donald Miller, and *A Generous Orthodoxy*, written by Brian McLaren, a former pastor. The emergent church movement has brought great controversy among evangelicals in regards to its views of historic theology. It is on this basis that I

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<sup>3</sup> The *emerging church movement* is a controversial, twenty-first century Christian movement whose participants seek to engage postmodern people, especially the unchurched. To accomplish this, "emerging Christians" or "emergents" (not necessarily related to emergentvillage.com) embrace a missional approach to Christianity in which they reshape belief, standards, and methods to fit a postmodern mold while endeavoring to effect tangible, temporal changes that enhance the lives of postmoderns. Proponents of this movement call it a "conversation" to emphasize its developing and decentralized nature. The predominantly young participants in this movement prefer narrative presentations drawn from their own experiences and biblical narratives over propositional, Bible exposition. Emergent methodology includes frequent use of new technologies such as multimedia and the Internet. Their acceptance of diversity and reliance on open dialogue rather than the dogmatic proclamation found in historic Christianity leads emergents to diverse beliefs and moral standards. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerging\\_Church#Prominent\\_figures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerging_Church#Prominent_figures))

believe it would be important to discuss the impact its teachings may have on Young Life staff and leaders.

## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Guide**

1. Would you mind sharing your life story including your Christian experience?
2. How did you become interested in Young Life?
3. How have your experiences with Young Life shaped your understanding of the Gospel?
4. What ministry training have you had?
5. Who has been the most influential mentor in your life?
6. Is there anyone mentoring/discipling you now?
7. How would you define the Gospel?
8. What have been some key landmarks in your understanding of the Gospel?
9. Share some of your spiritual discipline habits, such as personal Bible study, prayer, etc.
10. Share your reading habits. What material do you read (books, articles, magazines, etc.)
11. How many volunteer leaders and staff do you train?
12. What are the two most important biblical truths you seek to communicate to your volunteer leaders?
13. How often do you have Leadership meetings?

14. How are your Leadership meetings structured? (Time of prayer, worship, teaching, etc.?) And how much time do you spend on each element?
15. How much time is spent planning Young Life events? How much time is spent coordinating activities and programs?
16. Who leads your leadership meetings?
17. What is the specific content in your leadership meetings? (What are you teaching and training your leaders?)
18. In your opinion what biblical principles undergird a Gospel-centered mission?

## **Appendix B**

### **Young Life's Mission**

Introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith. We accomplish our mission by...

- Praying for young people
- Going where kids are
- Building personal relationships with them
- Winning the right to be heard
- Providing experiences that are fun, adventurous and life changing
- Sharing our lives and the Good News of Jesus Christ with adolescents
- Inviting them to personally respond to this Good News
- Loving them regardless of their response
- Nurturing kids so they might grow in their love for Christ and the knowledge of God's word and become people who can share their faith with others
- Helping young people develop the skills, assets and attitudes to reach their full God-given potential
- Encouraging kids to live connected to the Body of Christ by being an active member of a local congregation
- Working with a team of like-minded individuals - volunteer leaders, committee members, donors and staff

### **Young Life's Values**

- Living according to and communicating the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ
- Carrying out our mission under the authority of Scripture and relying on the Holy Spirit to empower our ministry
- Encouraging the welfare and spiritual health of those who do this ministry, that they may minister out of a consistent and growing relationship with Christ and His followers
- Researching and developing innovative approaches to reaching uncommitted, disinterested kids around the world
- Reaching adolescents of all social, cultural, economic and ethnic backgrounds throughout the world
- Working with followers of Christ from a variety of traditions and local churches around the world
- Welcoming all those whom God calls to our mission, men and women of all races, staff and volunteers who are linked to a common purpose of introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ
- Observing the highest standards of stewardship of all the resources placed in our trust

## Appendix C

### Young Life's Statement of Faith

#### Preamble

All those who participate in the ongoing work and witness of Young Life shall be in sympathy with its central purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In order to qualify for office, members of the Board of Directors, members of the regular and volunteer staff and professors at the Young Life Institute shall subscribe to the following articles of faith:

#### Article I

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, being given by divine inspiration, are the Word of God, the final and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

#### Article II

In the Scriptures, God reveals Himself as the living and true God, Creator of all things. Perfect in love and righteous in all His ways, this one God exists eternally as a Trinity of persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

#### Article III

God made man in His image that He might have fellowship with him. Being estranged from God by his disobedience, sinful man is incapable of a right relationship to God apart from divine grace.

#### Article IV

The only Mediator between God and man is Jesus Christ our Lord, God's eternal Son, who as man fully shared and fulfilled our humanity in a life of perfect obedience.

#### Article V

By His death in our place, Jesus revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having risen bodily from the dead and ascended into heaven, He rules as Lord over all and intercedes for us as our Great High Priest.

#### Article VI

The Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of the Gospel, renews our hearts, persuading us to repent of our sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit, we are led to trust in divine mercy, whereby we are forgiven all our sins, justified by faith through the merit of Christ our Savior, adopted into God's family as His children and enabled to live in the world that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

#### Article VII

God, by His Word and Spirit, calls sinful men into the fellowship of Christ's body. Thus He creates the one holy, catholic and apostolic church, united in the bonds of love, endowed with the gifts of the Spirit and summoned by Christ to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments, to relieve human need and to strive for social justice.

#### Article VIII

God's redemptive purpose will be consummated by the return of Christ to raise the dead, judge all men and establish His glorious kingdom. Those who are apart from Christ shall be eternally separated from God's presence, but the righteous shall live and reign with Him forever.



## Appendix D

### Form Follows Function

What is the function of ministry?

*Functions are the timeless, unchanging, nonnegotiable precepts that are based on Scripture and are mandates for all churches to pursue in order to accomplish their purpose.*

Functions answer the question, **“Why are we going to do something?”**

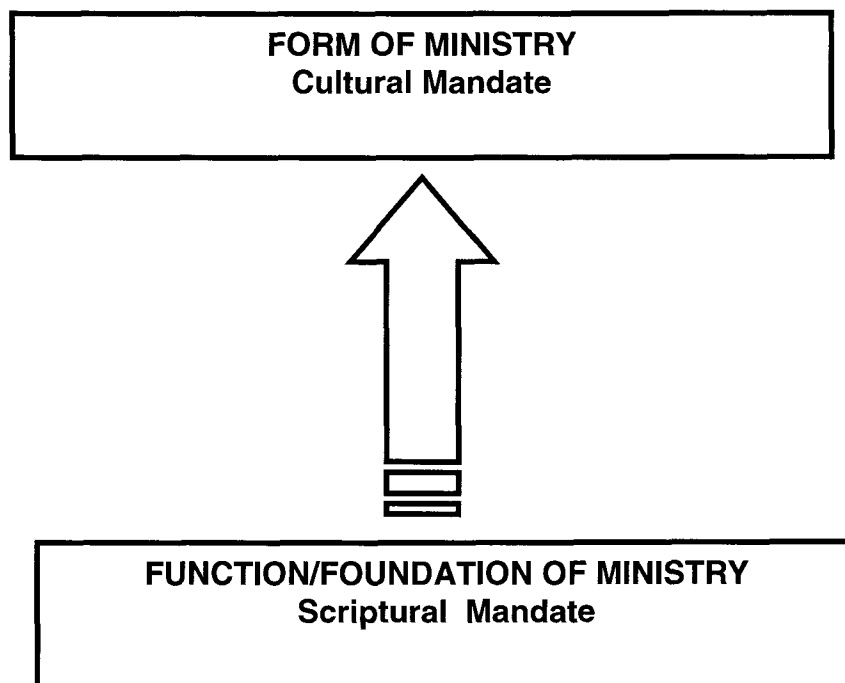
Functions are mandated by Scripture.

What is the form of a ministry?

*Forms are the temporal, changing, negotiable practices that are based on culture and are the methods that all churches are free to choose to accomplish their functions.*

Forms answer the question, **“How are we going to accomplish the FUNCTION?”**

Forms are based on culture and are not always mandated by Scripture.



**Appendix E**  
**Area Directors Interviewed**

Mike Cramer, Charlottesville, Virginia

Rich Dargenio, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Nathan Gunn, Syracuse, New York

Joe Marks, Newport News, Virginia

Josh Powell, Issaquah, Washington

Jason Rinne, Flagstaff, Arizona

Jace Thompson, Fort Worth, Texas

Tim Toy, Richmond, Virginia

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