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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENT, EVALUATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION
OF AN INTERFAITH PASTORS' PEER COACHING
GROUP IN THE GENTRY, ARKANSAS AREA

by

Raymond C. House

Adviser: Walton A. Williams

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

**TITLE: DEVELOPMENT, EVALUATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN
INTERFAITH PASTORS' PEER COACHING GROUP IN THE
GENTRY, ARKANSAS AREA**

Name of researcher: Raymond C. House

Name and degree of faculty advisor: Walton A. Williams, D.Min.

Date completed: July 2008

Problem

During my first ten years of ministry I discovered that I was in a lonely work with little peer-interaction or stimulation. Sporadic attempts to find peer- support and friendship among other pastors left me feeling only slightly encouraged. I was concerned that I was not being challenged by another peer or group of peers or held accountable to any particular goals personally or professionally.

Method

This research presents a model where pastors came together from various churches and denominations in a small town setting, and developed peer-coaching

relationships for the purpose of improving their personal and ministry goals. Peer-coaching is a relation based process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to assess current challenges. Through collaboratively learned coaching skills they apply goal setting, action steps and accountability exercises in order to help each other experience greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in their lives.

In order to determine if the participating pastors also desired a collaborative and accountable relationship with other pastors I administered a questionnaire at the beginning of the process. Another questionnaire was administered at the end of the four month experimentation time. Next I explored what the Bible said about accountability and peer relationships to determine that what we were doing was according to Scripture. I also researched any guidelines from Adventist theology of the church and Ellen White counsel to find support for interfaith collaboration.

Results

The six participants of the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group were very positive about their experience and indicated that they would like to continue similar peer-coaching accountable relationships for the sake of experiencing greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in their professional and personal lives.

Conclusion

In my opinion pastors of all Protestant denominations would benefit from developing peer-coaching relationships with other pastors in their local vicinity. Whether the pastor would be in a one-on-one peer partnering or in a peer-coaching group with several pastors, the result would be a clearer understanding of what God has called the

individual to do in their life and perish. There would be a safety net of support and accountability that would sustain continued positive, healthy growth both personally and professionally.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DEVELOPMENT, EVALUATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION
OF AN INTERFAITH PASTORS' PEER COACHING
GROUP IN THE GENTRY, ARKANSAS AREA

A Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Raymond C. House

July 2008

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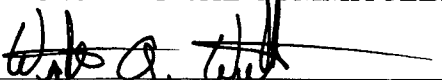
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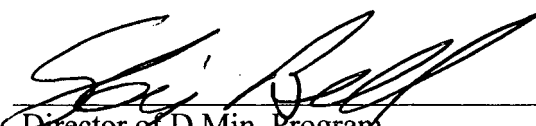
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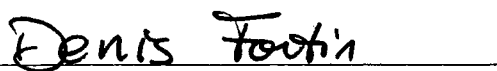
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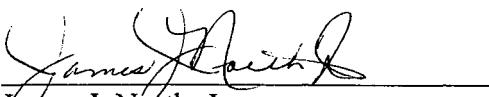
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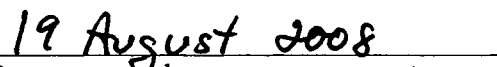
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James J. North, Jr.



Date approved

To my gracious wife Becky who has sacrificed
many hours and days apart which would
have otherwise been spent together,
but who along with me, longs
to see our ministry together
continue growing in
fruitfulness and
fulfillment

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IPPCG	Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group
PBC	Person Being Coached
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
PDPF	Purpose Driven Pastors Forum
NCD	Natural Church Development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ask any pastor if he ever wished for a friend in ministry who could regularly meet with him to grapple with the complexities of ministry, and you will likely find a positive response. Ask the same pastor if he is currently meeting with a peer in ministry who is not on his staff or in his church and you will find very few with a positive response. Sincere pastors desire to find effectiveness and fulfillment in ministry, yet all too often settle for status-quo results, because of unmet goals and frustrated attempts. Many continue for years unfocused, unproductive, and grievously of all, separated from any other minister peer with whom he or she could consult with or be accountable to.¹

Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have shown that the pastor of the local church is the single most important variable to a healthy congregation, the most important variable to a healthy denomination.² Clergy are increasingly finding ministry more complex and challenging as they face difficulties in leading their churches through the uncharted waters of this diverse age.

¹Early church leaders were expected to remain in accountable relationships—Eph 5:21, “Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (NASV). See also Heb 10:24.

²H. B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003), 62. The authors sight current studies that show the majority of pastors feel over committed, with too many tasks, too many hours, and too many conflicts within their churches.

In my twenty years of ministry, it appears that many pastors are settling into low risk modes of maintenance ministry inevitably resulting in congregations taking the natural course towards plateau, decline, and death.³ This is discouraging for the pastor and unfair to the churches that instinctively know something must be done to remain relevant and effective in the community.

Statement of the Task

Presented in this project is a model where local ministers came together from various churches and denominations in a small town setting,⁴ to develop peer-coaching relationships for the purpose of improving their personal and ministry goals. Peer coaching has been developed in the professional field, but is increasingly becoming more common in the church and wider applications of leadership practices.⁵

Peer coaching is a form of a peer group. Following is a description of a peer group:

A peer group is a group of people of approximately the same age, social status, and interests. Peer groups are also used in the helping professions such as massage therapy, nursing, psychotherapy to provide a support system for professionals. The purpose of peer groups is to allow each member to come to know themselves better so that they may better serve their clients/patients. Each person brings their issues to the group with the intention of getting support in dealing with the feelings around each issue. The group uses active listening, mirroring and skills such as focusing to

³Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 16. Some researchers predict that if present trends continue, by the year 2050, 60 percent of all existing congregations in America will close their doors.

⁴Four churches were from Gentry, Arkansas, population 2,200 and one from Siloam Springs, Arkansas, population 14,000.

⁵Alan Downs, *Secrets of an Executive Coach* (New York: AMACOM, 2002), 5. "The field of executive coaching has officially been in existence for no more than a decade, although you can be certain it has been practiced ever since the invention of modern corporation." Peer coaching is a term mainly used by educators for educators. A peer coach is a teacher who is strong in an area and is willing to help other teachers in reaching the same expertise or goals. They are willing to discuss and share practices they find effective. This is not the definition this paper is proposing.

support each person. No fixing, no advising, no setting each other straight is the basic framework of support.⁶

In this project dissertation, a peer-coaching group is a gathering of peers who agree to form coaching relationships with each other in order to hold each other accountable to their self-identified growth goals. This was done by learning and using the techniques of professional coaching where each person partners with another peer and then takes turns coaching each other during weekly meetings.

Peer coaching is being used widely in various work group settings in the secular community, yet within the limits of this dissertation project I have seen little work available that brings this reliable tool to clergy of local churches.⁷ This is a report on how an Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group was formed and how the process was implemented. The evaluation of this process includes what worked well and what could have been done differently. There are recommendations as to how this could be done in a variety of settings in the pastoral ministry for optimal results.

Justification for the Project

Clergy, more than many other professions, are prone to isolation. The nature of their work keeps them alone much of the time. For example, many ministers take several hours alone in sermon preparation.⁸ Much of the administrative details of

⁶Wikipedia, "Peer Group," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_group (accessed 8 December 2007).

⁷There are several resources to train pastors how to coach their ministry leaders, but very little is available in helping pastors find coaching opportunities for themselves. Even fewer options exist for pastors that want to develop interfaith coaching relationships.

⁸Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 27, 35, 65, 85, 109, 127, 147, 173, 217. Robinson interviews several pastors and most of them admit to spending between ten and twenty hours of sermon preparation time. A few acknowledged to regularly pouring thirty to forty hours into a single sermon.

correspondence, planning for upcoming meetings, studying to keep abreast on denominational and local issues are done in a quiet place, alone. Add to that the need to visit people in crisis spontaneously in the hospital or home. The pastor would have an elder or member who could partner up with him/her to make these important visits, yet often the timing makes it awkward or impossible to arrange, so the pastor goes alone. Even when the pastor is in public it is often in meetings or church services where the agenda and order of service are the goal, not interpersonal relationships. As a result, growing deeper in meaningful relationships with others is postponed in order to accommodate serving the agenda or service in a timely manner so everyone can get back to their busy lives.

Being male and being pastor may present a double challenge to the problem of isolation. "Only 2 out of 10 males seem to have meaningful, open, and safe relationships where both parties share a trust and commitment to mutual responsibility for one another."⁹ Most men are lonely and lack close friends. Loneliness is an issue that all pastors can relate to. "While we are making some progress in connecting the men in our churches, sometimes it has been difficult to connect the pastor."¹⁰

The Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group allows ministers to find a positive way out of the isolation of pastoral ministry. It also opens new avenues to addressing the frustration of work without results that comes from lack of peer support and

⁹Danny Wallen, "Peer Mentoring—The Missing Ingredient!" Pastors.com/Ministry Toolbox, <http://www.pastors.com/article.asp?ArtID=5717> (accessed 10 December 2007).

¹⁰Ibid. While this paper addresses a pastors group that was all male the reader should not conclude that this coaching paradigm only applies to male pastors. However, the reader should keep in mind that this was written from a male perspective with an all male group. It would be a matter of great interest to see a similar study with a female group or even a mixed female and male group. It would be advisable to have women coaching women and men coaching men for coach partners in either case.

accountability. In the fertile environment of peer coaching, growth toward results becomes a normal expectation and a sought after experience. In this study, the author received responses from seven ministers from different denominations who responded positively to the question about whether they would appreciate interacting with a group of interfaith pastors for regular encouragement and growth. They all responded in favor of meeting regularly for prayer with a peer in ministry. All of them answered positively about their desire to have a few men in ministry to help them be accountable to their own goals. Six of the seven were positive about developing goals with a colleague in ministry and were willing to share them with the group for feedback.

Unless pastors have a regular place to recharge and refocus their lives and ministry priorities, their congregations will continue to experience negative effects in vision, leadership, and accountability to biblical principles of growth. Ministers today face a morass of challenges in ministry. These are multiplied by the disproportionate risk and cost in ministry today of low salaries and lack of adequate and accessible support systems. Pastors need to find ministry invigorating, yet often it becomes stale from lack of peer interaction. Modern society is giving the pastor less respect than in years past. The message proclaimed by the pastor is less appreciated and the glare of the public eye under which he lives weighs on him; the failure of the current church in the face of its given task; and the structure of the congregation all lend themselves to isolation on the part of the pastor.¹¹ The result, mediocre churches with minimal impact for the kingdom

¹¹Jackson W. Carroll and Becky R. McMillan, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 13-16.

of God or the community of lost and hurting people, led by pastors that are isolated and stuck in circumstances seemingly beyond their control.

Coaching is an effective tool in the executive field, yet remains an untapped tool for ministers. Peer coaching needs to be made available and practical to pastors. Executive coaching has been growing in popularity and effectiveness for about ten years.¹² It is a field that endeavors to sweep away the layers of denial in the minds of leaders who have lost their edge on the job, in the organization or career. It leads them to rediscover what really makes them fervent about what they are doing. For the local pastor this eagerness is needed in order to surge forward toward more effective ministry.

Interfaith pastor relationships provide a safe environment for sharing sensitive issues. The local church is where the pastor works; it is where he must maintain a strong image as spiritual leader, preserver of truth, defender of the weak, and lover of the unlovely. He must maintain an image of stability and reliability in order for people to be willing to follow his lead. We all know that this is more than any one person can maintain for long in the lonely office of a pastor leader. While the pastors do not want to come across as fake or insincere, they must cautiously choose which people they bare their doubts, ask their questions, and pour out their struggles. A pastor peer from another church or denomination is an untapped source for a pastor to find this kind of confidant. Not only can they relate to ministry challenges and joys, they can share openly their concerns and struggles with little to no threat to their integrity in their church. In another way, it may aid the pastor in becoming more authentic in the local church by discharging critical issues in a peer relationship before they become public in the church.

¹²Downs, 5.

Peer support is vital for developing strong leadership skills. Pastors do not drift into full devotion to Christ and leading His church. A peculiar part of human makeup is that they drift. A deeper and more dynamic relationship with God comes only by the challenge and transformation of interpersonal relationships.¹³

Abraham Maslow believes that self-esteem is necessary for a person to be truly productive.¹⁴ Leaders are no different from others in their need for self-esteem and one of the best places for them to gain it is from their peers. Maslow suggests that we only get a healthy outlook on ourselves as we receive love, respect and acceptance from others. This is not something people gain in isolation by themselves. It is clearly something human nature needs to get from significant others in their lives.¹⁵ In this research, the significant others are pastors from various churches and denominations that share common goals of helping each other reach their potential through peer coaching.

Definition of Terms

It would be good to take some time to define a few terms. Throughout this project dissertation the researcher uses the word coach. The earliest use of the word coach was

¹³John Ortberg, "No More Mr. Nice Group: 5 Practices That Take You Beyond Polite 'Sharing' to the Disciplines That Change Lives," *Leadership Journal* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 35. "Small groups are the place for people to get on the scale and reveal how intentional they have been to pursue transformation into the image of Christ. William Paulson writes, 'It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner.' I think he understates it. People do not drift into full devotion to Christ. People do not drift into becoming loving, joy-filled, patient, winsome, world changers. It requires intention and effort."

¹⁴A. H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370-396. "All people in our society (with a few pathological exceptions) have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others."

¹⁵Gary Hopkins, *It Takes a Church: Every Member's Guide to Keeping Young People Safe and Saved* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 23. "Pastors, just like any other human being, need to have healthy, non-threatening relationships in order to build resilient self-esteem."

put forth in the 1500s when referencing a horse-drawn vehicle that transported people from one place to another. Years later, in the 1880s, *coach* came to be known as an athletic term, identifying the person who tutored university students in their rowing on the Cam River in Cambridge. Somehow, coach became almost exclusive to the athletic field and is the view most people think of when they hear the word coach. "Over time the word also became associated with musicians, public speakers, and actors, who rely on coaches to improve their skills, overcome obstacles, remain focused, and get to where they want to be."¹⁶

Throughout this project dissertation the term Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group (IPPCG) is used. When it is used, I am referring to the practice of peer coaching and applying it to pastors. The hope is that peer coaching among ministers will build enthusiasm and motivation toward more effective ministry, such as has been proven in the secular business world. Peer coaching alone is a relatively new term used in teaching modalities concerning students with students, but it will be assumed that the reader knows clergy are being referred to as the ones who met in a group with other clergy from various denominations for the purpose of learning and practicing peer coaching with each other.¹⁷

¹⁶Gary R. Collins, *Christian Coaching: Helping Others Turn Potential into Reality* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 15.

¹⁷An interesting correlation exists in the computer world concerning peers working together for a greater good. P2P stands for Peer to Peer. "In a P2P network, the 'peers' are computer systems which are connected to each other via the Internet. Files can be shared directly between systems on the network without the need of a central server. In other words, each computer on a P2P network becomes a file server as well as a client. The only requirements for a computer to join a peer-to-peer network are an Internet connection and P2P software. Common P2P software programs . . . connect to a P2P network . . . which allows the computer to access thousands of other systems on the network.

Once connected to the network, P2P software allows you to search for files on other people's computers." (Much like one pastor gains access to hundreds of ideas from his peer partner). TechTerms.com, "P2P (Peer To Peer)," www.techterms.com/definition/p2p (accessed 16 July 2007).

Limitations of the Dissertation

Peer coaching should not be confused with mentoring. Mentoring normally describes an experienced person and a “mentee” or “protégé” who is dependent on the mentor for instruction and guidance. The peer coaching method is where two people of equal or comparable experience agree to coach each other in areas of concern.

This project does not endeavor to create a comprehensive solution to the problem of pastoral effectiveness through peer-coaching. This research is a report on how the Interfaith Pastors’ Peer Coaching Group (IPPCG) was formed and how the process was implemented. The hope is that many ministers and leaders of clergy will find a helpful model for encouraging ministers toward greater fulfillment and fruitfulness.¹⁸

Description of Methodology

This project dissertation has as its desired end the development of a peer coaching group process that will be useful to pastors desiring to develop interfaith coaching relationships.

The method that was followed in writing this dissertation was first to review the current literature available related to the coaching paradigm as well as to study the theological implications that the Bible offers on coaching and other ministry oriented materials. The shape of ministers in the United States was studied in order to assess the possible benefit of peer coaching for pastors. Finding and implementing the contents of a Christian based peer coaching manual was also incorporated into the process of

¹⁸Spiritual advisement, in the context of chaplaincy training has been recommended for research as it relates to the peer-coaching model. For someone wanting to see wider applications of the coaching model this would be a good place to look into.

developing this project. Moreover, the ways adults learn was studied in order to know what methods might work best for church pastors.

In addition, a review of the condition of ministers in North American churches was studied in order to determine how peer coaching and peer relationships of accountability might aid them in their challenging work.

The aim of this entire project is to develop a process through which a small group of active church pastors collaborate to form peer relationships in order to help each other toward greater fruitfulness and fulfillment. The remainder of this project is to evaluate the methodology, then to create a reproducible process that could be implemented in multiple settings.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEED FOR PASTORAL PEER COACHING

Society measures the success of a business based on its growth and financial viability. Likewise, people look to the success of a church based on its ability to build up Christian principles and practices in their towns and cities. The church is God's business and according to current sources, business is looking less than robust in the most developed countries. When the church, like any other business, is no longer growing or slipping into an unviable situation people look to the pastor. The pastors of today are in greater need than ever before for tools that will help them cope with the multifaceted challenges they face. One would also look at the organizations that produce and support these pastors. They are to ensure that pastors have what they need to optimally address their lives and careers. Often, new tools and new strategies to enhance pastoral performance need to be explored and deployed.

Peer coaching for pastors arises as a promising practice to assist pastors toward vibrant lives and churches. While the church is under greater pressure to attract a retreating membership that is becoming more secularized¹ its pastors are under double

¹Gibbs, 16. After surveying the data on churchgoing trends and attitudes toward the churches in North America, Gibbs sees the "marginalization of the institutional church" and quotes other researchers predicting that 60 percent of all existing Christian congregations will disappear before the year 2050. Many of the smaller churches are finding that they are becoming financially unviable. Lyle Shaller, one of the greatest church growth supporters of our time, has even become pessimistic about the future of mainline churches "unless they make some drastic changes." Lyle Shaller, *Innovations in Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 65.

pressure as leaders of these churches to hold on to the relevant past while embracing the urgent present and reaching out to the chaotic future. Jere Patzer assesses the Seventh-day Adventist church organization, admitting that it is a “magnificent organizational machine.”² Yet he gives a hard appraisal on the ineffectiveness of this organization to keep its leaders effective in carrying out their mission. “Could the majority of our efforts be going into scratching our own backs? There’s no risk, no pain, everybody feels good, happy and contented.”³

J. Robert Clinton’s seminal research on the making of Christian leaders determined that the one key indicator which separated leaders who finished well in fulfilling the call of God in their lives and those who did not, was whether they had accountable, growth centered relationships with others in their lives. “The most important thing you can do to fulfill that call is to open your life up at a deep level and be transparent and accountable with at least one believer you know and trust.”⁴

George Barna has concluded that the institutionalized church and its pastors have become ineffective in reaching the culture with any noticeable changes over the last twenty years.⁵ In 2002 Barna wrote, “It is quite astounding that although Protestant and Catholic churches have raised and spent close to one trillion dollars on domestic ministry

²Jere Patzer, *The Road Ahead* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 3. He was the North Pacific Union Conference president at the time of this writing.

³Ibid.

⁴J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), quoted in Tony Stoltzfus, *Facilitators Manual* (prepublication manual to accompany facilitators of the Peer Coaching Workbook, 2006), 7.

⁵As a consequence of his conclusions that the church is not affecting moral or numerical change in our country, he has shifted much of his organization’s emphasis towards reaching and training children. While reading his updates, I felt as if he was giving up on the current pastors’ ability to make the drastic shifts needed to become effective leaders for change in the local churches in America.

during the past two decades, there has been no measurable increase in one of the expressed purposes of the church: to lead people to Christ and have them commit their lives to Him.”⁶ Three years later things did not get better, “Nothing is more numbing to the Church than the fact that it is mired in a rut of unfathomable depths. The various creative approaches attempted over the course of this decade have drawn much attention but produced little, if any, transformational impact.”⁷ Throughout Barna’s career, he has been consistent in maintaining that “American Christianity has largely failed since the middle of the twentieth century because Jesus’ modern-day disciples do not act like Jesus.”⁸ It is not that America is not interested in spiritual things either, there is more spiritual interest now than there has been for decades, the church simply is not consistently capturing their interest.

The condition of the North American church is a tremendous weight around the pastor’s neck; he is expected to change things for the better.⁹ Many studying the church growth scene have concluded that the churches are not going to get better until the pastors start getting better. And pastors are not going to start getting better just because they know that the church is in trouble, it is going to take a concerted effort on their part (and the part of those who employ pastors) to get out of the status-quo rut and into line

⁶George Barna, *The State of the Church* (Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 2002), 63.

⁷Ibid., 51.

⁸George Barna, *Think Like Jesus: Make the Right Choice Every Time* (Nashville, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2003), 40.

⁹Jack Bynum and Douglas Clark, “Indicators of Ministerial Resilience,” *Ministry*, August 2000, 5. Because of this pressure, whether perceived or real, it has caused over one third, 42 percent in some cases, of the full-time SDA pastors to leave the ministry. The trend among church pastors in general is that fewer young pastors are taking the pastorate which is being filled by older pastors and pastors who are exploring ministry as a second or third career.

with what God is calling them and the church to become.¹⁰ According to a recent study, pastors in the Adventist church during the 1990s were feeling inadequately trained for the challenges of leadership in the local church.¹¹ This researcher is confident that the seminary is continuing to address the issue of pastoral effectiveness as they develop a program to release more prepared ministers into the churches.

The role of pastor can be one of the most irresponsible positions in the workforce. One management consultant who turns around sick businesses and makes them well again observed, "I visit 30-40 churches a year. Most of them are dead, and they are dead because the preacher is dead."¹² I think he meant by that, that the church and the pastor lack the excitement, the enthusiasm, and the energy that comes from a sense of mission and purpose. They have no goals. They are not going anywhere.

One church leader listed seven major challenges to the pastoral ministry, listing challenge six as "The Role of Denominations with Pastors and Congregations." The leader stated:

Denominations can be a great encouragement and security for many pastors. They train them, ordain them, credential them, support their ministry, provide vehicles for insurance and retirement, and in some traditions guarantee their employment. At the same time, denominations call on pastors to conform to certain standards, be loyal to the denomination and lead their congregations into the same loyalty patterns, and not

¹⁰Ellen G. White, "Address to Ministers," *Review and Herald*, September 6, 1892, CD-ROM (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 2002), 7. Ellen White made a strong appeal to ministers to put forth effort with faith that works. "The responsibility of our own ruin will lie at our own door. The Word of God speaks to us as if everything depended upon our own efforts. We must come, we must resist the devil; we must strive to enter in at the strait gate; we must run the race with patience; we must fight the fight of faith; we must wrestle with principalities and powers; we must agonize before God in prayer, if we would stand blameless before the throne of God. We must have the faith that works, or it will be powerless."

¹¹Bynum and Clark, 5. This landmark study of SDA ministers from 1987 to 1997 indicated that over one-third of the ministers surveyed had dropped out before the ten year study. Reasons pastors gave for stress included a lack of skills in "church finances, administration, leadership skills, ethics, conflict resolution, fund raising," and others.

¹²Paul W. Powell, *Getting the LEAD Out of Leadership* (Tyler, TX: the author, 1997), 10.

to be so entrepreneurial in the practice of ministry that they become misfits. Often denominations encourage or reward a mediocrity of ministry practice rather than excellence.¹³

Pastors are being overwhelmed with all the little things that hit their “to do” list. One pastor said, “Being in ministry is like being ‘stoned with popcorn.’ . . . You know, it’s just one little thing after another until you feel buried in it.”¹⁴ Some psychologists have referred to this as compassion fatigue. Pastors are very vulnerable to the temptation to care too much and work too much.¹⁵ The average pastor needs a way to stop and regularly assess where their priorities are, how they would like to accomplish their goals and when they would like to do it. Unless this stopping point is connected to a relationship of accountability with another likable human being, their goals will more than likely slide into the “never done” list.¹⁶

Coaching correctly applied is a tool where pastors have experienced the power of “renewed enthusiasm for ministry, a larger vision for the church and its mission, and a re-kindling of imagination and hope.”¹⁷

¹³George W. Bullard Jr., “Major Challenges of Pastoral Ministry,” Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, <http://www.sustainingpastoralexcellence.org> (accessed 24 January 2008).

¹⁴Carroll, 196.

¹⁵Bob Zomermaand, “Caring for Pastors,” Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, <http://www.divinity.duke.edu/programs/spe/articles/200610/caring.html> (accessed 20 November 2007).

¹⁶Ortberg, 35. “People do not drift into full devotion to Christ. People do not drift into becoming loving, joy-filled, patient, winsome, world changers. It requires intention and effort. . . . The default mode of the human heart is to drift.” “Small groups are the place for people to get on the scale and reveal how intentional they have been to pursue transformation into the image of Christ.”

¹⁷These are comments from pastors who have experienced the Auburn Coaching Institute program, taken from their advertising brochure.

Review of Current Materials and Methodologies in the Field of Peer Coaching

Some believe the beginnings of peer coaching in educational circles can be traced to the mid 1950s in the educational field. At that point there was a great effort to train and implement educators to improve the quality of academics, but by the 1970s educators recognized that many of those well-funded attempts had failed. "Educators assumed that teachers could learn new strategies, return to a school and implement their new learning smoothly and appropriately." It wasn't until the 1980s that educators discovered that teachers in coaching relationships, "who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experiences practiced new skills and strategies . . . exhibited greater long-term retention of new strategies and more appropriate use of new teaching models over time."¹⁸

Malcolm Knowles¹⁹ states, "One of the most significant findings from adult learning research . . . is that when adults learn something naturally instead of 'being taught,' they are highly self-directing . . . What adults learn on their own initiative they learn more keenly and permanently than what they learn by being 'taught.'"²⁰

Educational institutions are fast moving ahead in their support and use of coaching

¹⁸R. G. Baker and B. Showers, "The Effects of a Coaching Strategy on Teachers Transfer of Training to Classroom Practice: A Six-Month Follow-Up Study" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, 1984), quoted in Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce, "The Evolution of Peer Coaching," *Educational Leadership* 53, no. 6 (March 1996): 12-16. Found at Robert Price's website http://www.eggplant.org/pamphlets/pdf/joyce_showers_peer_coaching.pdf

¹⁹Known by many as "the father of adult education."

²⁰Malcom Knowles, *Designs for Adult Learning: Practical Resources, Exercises, and Course Outlines from the Father of Adult Learning* (Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development, 1995), 265, quoted in Tony Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Coach* (Virginia Beach, VA: T. Stoltzfus, 2005), 10.

(especially one-to-one peers) because of studies that support its effectiveness in developing leaders.²¹

Personal and business coaching is a new practice having been introduced in the early 1990s. Thomas Leonard²² “recognized that the principles that support effective coaching are relevant to all humanity and believed they transcended any particular religious teaching.”²³ Christian coaching is even more recent and coaching pastors is just beginning to open up as a new field.²⁴ Today dozens of professional Christian coaches are available, usually for an hourly fee, for pastors from several sources.²⁵

In the area of psychology, coaching has become a growing field of study. In a paper by Anthony M. Grant, he indicates that coaching principles were being tried as far

²¹Coaching was cited as a major training tool in a proposal to the Annenberg Foundation by the Philadelphia School District for a \$4.9 million dollar grant. “Olivero, Bane, and Kopelman found that training followed by one-to-one coaching, significantly increased productivity compared to training alone.” G. Olivero, K. D. Bane, and R. E. Kopelman, “Executive Coaching as a Transfer of Training Tool: Effects on Productivity in a Public Agency,” *Public Personnel Management* 26, no. 4 (1997): 461-469, quoted in “Building Distributed Leadership in the Philadelphia School District, A Proposal to the Annenberg Foundation, August 1, 2005 Through August 1, 2010,” prepared by The Penn Center for Educational Leadership Graduate School of Education University of Pennsylvania, 25, <http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pcel/pdf/projectnarrative.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2007).

²²Thomas Leonard, “considered a major contributor to the development of personal coaching. In 1992, he founded Coach University, a leader in coach training with over 7,000 coaches operating in 38 countries.” Wikipedia, “Thomas J. Leonard,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_J._Leonard (accessed 28 April 2008).

²³Ruth Ledesma, *Coaching by the Book: Principles of Christian Coaching* (Sante Fe, NM: Ledesma Associates, 2001): 3.

²⁴John Maxwell, an effective pastor and trainer has recently begun an electronic newsletter, *The Pastor's Coach* through his *Injoy* ministry.

²⁵Kevin Miller admitted to hiring a pastor coach with great rewards. “The Power of a Personal Coach: My Experiment in Trying to Become a More Effective Christian Leader,” [Leadershipjournal.net, http://www.christianitytoday.com/leaders/newsletter/2001/cln10725.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/leaders/newsletter/2001/cln10725.html) (accessed 11 June 2008). He says, “I count my coaching time more valuable than almost any conference I’ve attended.” CoachingPastors.com by Tony Stoltzfus is another excellent resource for pastoral coaching. I used Stoltzfus’ coaching workbook for this paper. Tony Stoltzfus, *Peer Coaching: Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth Centered Peer Relationships* (prepublication PDF version of the participant notebook, 2006).

back as 1937. He claims, "The aim of executive or life coaching is sustained cognitive, emotional and behavioral changes which facilitates goal attainment and performance enhancement, either in one's work or in one's personal life."²⁶ Since then he has seen the study of coaching from a psychological and scientific perspective burgeoning. He stated: "The next five years (2003-2008) will be a critical and a fascinating time for professional coaches. The coaching industry has outgrown its existing theoretical and empirical research knowledge base."²⁷ Grant sees a new field in psychology with "evidence-based coaching" that will show "real-life human change in individuals and organizations."²⁸ More organizations and individuals are now hiring professional coaches that have caused them to ask questions that are more sophisticated as to the validity of the coaching industry and the results it promises to bring.²⁹

To benefit from a coaching relationship a professional coach is best, but a beginner coach pastor can profit greatly from using the methods of coaching in the short term. In defense of non-professionals practicing coaching techniques, it could be equated

²⁶Anthony M. Grant, "Towards a Psychology of Coaching: The Impact of Coaching on Metacognition, Mental Health and Goal Attainment" (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2001), available from http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/psychcoach/Coaching_review_AMG2001.pdf (accessed 8 July 2007); "Although worldwide there has been considerable media interest in coaching (Garman, Whiston, & Zlatoper, 2000), there is very little empirical research validating the efficacy of executive and life coaching (Kilburg, 1996), and to date there has been very little work on detailing a theoretical framework (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998). Despite the lack of validated support for coaching it is clear that the idea of employing a coach for group or individual performance enhancement is highly attractive to many individuals and organizations (Dutton, 1997)."

²⁷Anthony M. Grant, "International Coach Federation Conference Symposium on Research and Coaching," School of Psychology, Sydney, Australia, November 2003, 1, available from http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/psychcoach/ICF-USA-Research_Keynote_AMGrant_NOV_2003.pdf (accessed 8 July 2007).

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Dr. Grant saw a threefold increase of the coaching industry from 1993 to 2003. Ibid., 2.

to a novice gardener who finds a new kind of tomato seed and wants to grow this new fruit. He may not have all the knowledge and methods of cultivating tomatoes, but he can have some fruit from his labors. The same with coaching techniques, it is a growing specialized field that is becoming more sophisticated with experience and practice. The novice pastor can gain short term results by using the rudimentary practices of coaching which may in turn grow into a more mature and more effective practice.

Mentoring must not be confused with coaching. Although coaching borrows principles from mentoring, they are quite distinct fields of practice that stand alone.

Below is a list of some of the differences:

1. A mentor usually resides within the same organization as the protégé. A coach is usually from outside of the organization.³⁰

2. A mentor is usually more experienced in the same field that the protégé wants to gain wisdom and insight from. A coach can be from a different field altogether as long as the person being coached (PBC) is engaged in the process of reaching meaningful goals.³¹

3. Mentors teach by modeling. Protégés are expected to emulate their mentors.

Coaches draw from the resources of the PBC by strategic questions meant to evoke inner

³⁰A coach can be from the same organization and still be effective, yet there are some advantages to having a coach outside of ones current organization. In the case of pastors, it would seem that they may actually be more open and transparent with someone outside of their denomination, knowing that the coach has few if any ties with significant people in their denomination that might hamper open disclosure.

³¹Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 22. "One benefit of the coaching approach is that it doesn't require the coach to be a subject expert. . . . Coaches need to know how to listen, ask powerful questions, keep the client responsible and provide follow-up. Those principles are transferable to almost any human endeavor."

reflection; prioritization and evaluation of what he/she believes are the goals they need to attain.

4. Mentors advise and reflect on their own experience hoping that the protégé can apply the lessons to their own situation. Coaches advise little if anything. Their goal is to explore areas of the person's own experience and knowledge through direct questions.

5. The goal of the mentor is to form a lasting relationship that will become a beacon and model for the protégé to follow the rest of his/her life. The goal of the coach is to identify the greatest area of interest for the PBC through strategic questions in an ongoing relationship of accountability that leads to goal setting and action plans.

6. The mentor is most effective in the early stages of a person's career and often become long-term relationships. A coach helps the PBC to own their own goals and action plans.

7. The mentor seeks to impart greater wisdom and knowledge than the protégé currently possesses. The coach seeks to draw wisdom and knowledge that already exists in the life and experience of the PBC.

8. The mentor develops a relationship of trust from the protégé as teacher to student. The coach develops a relationship of interdependence with the PBC as peer to peer. As Benjamin Disraeli, nineteenth century British Prime Minister said, "The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but to reveal to him his own."

9. "Mentoring is usually done informally. . . ."³² There may not be any set agenda or expectations on either side that specific outputs will occur within specific time frameworks."³³ Coaching relationships have "clearly defined goals, activities, time limits, and mutual accountabilities."³⁴

10. "Mentoring is imparting to you what God has given me; coaching is drawing out of you what God has put in you."³⁵

Having reviewed some of the history of coaching we turn now to new practices of peer coaching. Educators, because they are working in learning settings constantly, usually come to new forms of learning development before most other disciplines. Seeing SAT scores dropping and teen problems never stopping, many have now turned to peer-to-peer support, often referred in schools as the "peer movement."³⁶ This movement is based on evidence that "peers are the most powerful influence in children's learning." Another study found that "young people turned most often to their peers to help them deal with drug and alcohol problems."³⁷

³²Some current resources indicate a broader usage of formal mentoring. In this article informal mentoring is compared to formal mentoring. Formal mentoring is "more challenging to do" and "training is required." The article states that informal mentoring is much less desired to formal. In informal mentoring the mentor doesn't want to intrude or make the protégé feel dumb. The help from informal mentoring is difficult to identify, support, or affirm. Barry Sweeny, "Is Informal or Formal Mentoring Needed?" International Mentoring Association, <http://www.mentoring-association.org/Formalinformal.html> (accessed 9 June 2007).

³³Susan Battley, *Coached to Lead: How to Achieve Extraordinary Results with an Executive Coach* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 12.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 7.

³⁶Audrey Gartner, "The Future of the Peer Movement," *Social Policy* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 2, 5.

³⁷Frank Riesmann, "Toward a Different Kind of Children's Movement: Ideas for Action," *Social Policy* 26 (Summer 1996): 38-9. This school-based research is not directly applicable for clergy. Admittedly, adolescence are prone to follow negative forms of peer-influence like drugs and immorality. The cases of positive peer-influence away from these social problems are more the exception than the

There are good applications from the peer movement for the coaching movement, especially as it relates to pastoral leadership.³⁸ Pastors as peers are probably one of the most isolated groups of professionals in the work place,³⁹ yet they hold more in common than many other professions. It seems reasonable that they should get together to cheer each other on toward excellence. Few would argue that the church has a major impact in society, but how often do the leaders of those churches, the pastors, collaborate to make even a greater impact as leaders in the community.

Peer coaching for pastors is becoming an accepted application in universities and seminaries. The Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City has opened a new institute for pastors and church leaders: The Auburn Coaching Institute. Their claim is that “coaching is a way to motivate, rejuvenate and equip leadership and is emerging as an exciting area of skill development for religious leaders.”⁴⁰ Their seminar has taken the coaching model and integrated it successfully into the church arena. Coaching fits well with their school’s mission: “At its founding almost two hundred years ago, Auburn Seminary focused on the formation of church leaders’ ‘hardy’ enough for life on the frontier. Now we are responding to the needs of a new religious frontier. Professional

rule. However, one muse that it is more natural to seek help from a peer than from someone in another profession.

³⁸As part of Duke Universities Sustaining Pastoral Excellence branch, there are a number of peer learning pastors groups in several states. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, “About SPE: SPE Peer Learning Communities,” <http://www.divinity.duke.edu/programs/spe/about/communities.html> (accessed 14 September 2007).

³⁹Bynum and Clark, 9. The authors find from their research of SDA ministers that “ministers have been ‘set apart’ somewhat both symbolically and literally. Many respondents recognize formidable barriers to candid communication and to anything more than superficial relationships with most parishioners and colleagues.”

⁴⁰Listed in their philosophy and principles, Auburn Theological Seminary, “The Auburn Coaching Institute: Coaching Philosophy and Principles,” <http://www.auburnsem.org/about/coaching.htm> (accessed 14 September 2007).

coaching and training in coaching and leadership skills supports leaders and ministries to renew and enhance their vision, actualize their mission and values, and thrive.”⁴¹ The church has definitely entered into a new frontier and these well prepared pastors are much needed pioneers to blaze new trails.

Inquiring at various Christian Coaching schools, I found a certification Coach Training that appears to be specifically oriented to the pastor. In an email response to an administrator of the www.church-coaching.com website I was assured, “Pastor-to-pastor coaching is exactly what we do. Our coach training is in order to train pastors to coach other pastors to reach their fullest potential.”⁴² This is a rare find in my searching for pastor-to-pastor coaching. As mentioned already, most coach training I have found focuses on certifying people who want to specialize in the coaching profession.

In the field of peer group learning, the philanthropic Lilly Endowment organization has created special funding for “excellence in ministry” where “peer group learning--small groups of pastors who meet regularly for several years for ongoing renewal and mutual support--forms the basis for most projects.”⁴³

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Email response from Chad Harrington, Administrative Manager of Church Coaching Solutions, <http://www.church-coaching.com> (accessed 8 June 2008). The email advertising flier states, “We partner with Bob Logan and his CoachNet organization. CCS has been licensed by CoachNet to train, equip, and certify coaches. In church planting circles, most know about Chuck Ridley's research based profile of successful church planters. Recently, Chuck Ridley and Bob Logan teamed up and created the profile of highly competent coaches.”

⁴³On their website they show support for Community Development, Education and Religion--“The Endowment's aim is to deepen and enrich the religious lives of American Christians, principally by supporting efforts to encourage, support and educate a new generation of talented pastors and to strengthen current pastors in their capacities for excellence in ministry. The Endowment seeks to help congregations be vibrant, healthy communities of faith, and encourages efforts that make available and accessible the wisdom of the Christian tradition for contemporary life. It supports seminaries, theological schools and other educational and religious institutions that share these aims. It also supports projects that strengthen the contributions which religious ideas, practices, values and institutions make to the common good of our society. In 2005, \$100 million was paid to religion grantees.” The Community Investment Network, “Lilly

The Natural Church Development revolution has caught the attention of many church leaders. When applying the “biotic principles” he recommends pastors and elders to use coaching tools for the church in implementing the necessary changes. The Natural Church Development also teaches a course for pastors to become coaches for other churches going through their methodology.⁴⁴

Coaching has an ever increasing application for various lines of work. A brief search of the internet will lead you to business coaching, leadership coaching, personal coaching, ministry coaching; coaching on just about any subject you choose, from coaching in apiary skills to zoology.

Christian leadership coaching has taken an exciting path into the business world. Buck Jacobs, founder of The C12 Group, began this for profit fee for service business that provides a round table environment for CEO’s and owners of businesses. Their goal is to bring the values of the kingdom of God into businesses. They exist to help business owners and CEO’s of companies to “teach you to best use your position as CEO, Owner or President to share the joy of serving Christ daily.”⁴⁵ Jacobs had operated his own business pursuing the Lordship of Christ and then became Florida’s state director of a commercial insurance company where he met many other likeminded business people. “Many of these business leaders desired to ‘go deeper’, by being challenged, stretched and held accountable for both business performance and ministry impact: a Christian

Endowment Inc.,” <http://www.communityinvestmentnetwork.org/single-news-item-states/article/lilly-endowment-inc> (accessed 14 September 2007).

⁴⁴Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 6.

⁴⁵C12 Group: Christian CEOs & Owners Building Great Businesses for a Greater Purpose, “C12 Overview: Christian Leadership Development,” http://www.c12group.com/pages.php?page_id=5 (accessed 12 September 2007).

business association that combines spiritual truth and wisdom with business application.”⁴⁶

In a C12 meeting, a person would spend eight hours once a month together with up to twelve other business owners, CEO’s or presidents. The time would be allocated in four parts, 25 percent on executive education, 25 percent on coaching and accountability (some of which is done on the job at the work place with the area chairman/coach), 30 percent on peer forum and sharpening, then 20 percent in devotion, prayer, and fellowship.⁴⁷

The C12 Group is a “for profit” business that sells their services to businesses executives and business owners that find value in building peer relationships based on the principles of the lordship of Christ in the Bible.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷C12 Group: Christian CEOs & Owners Building Great Businesses for a Greater Purpose, “The C12 Process: C12 Christian CEO Collaborative Forum,” http://www.c12group.com/pages.php?page_id=5 (accessed 12 September 2007).

⁴⁸The C12 Group founders initiated this as a “for profit” ministry in order to model biblical business principles as they teach and coach toward these same values. Dan Barefoot, president of the C12 Group was contacted by this author where he shared that there are currently 60 groups with over 600 members and 32 chair leaders. Each participant pays in a range from \$500 to \$900 per session. This, he says, keeps the accountability high and the take home affect of the meeting is enhanced considerably. He also shared that the area chair leaders act as businessmen who literally open a franchise of the C12 Group in their area. It costs the franchisee \$7,500 to buy their area. It is up to the franchisee to build the C12 teams. It takes at least three teams in order to make a full time career out of it.

Review of the Condition of Pastors in North America Concerning Peer Support and Accountability

Sociologist Jackson Carroll has recently completed “the most comprehensive study of ordained pastors and priests ever conducted” in the United States.⁴⁹ In this seminal work Carroll finds that attitudes of Americans toward the institutional church are in fairly good standing, but its pastors are facing vast challenges. In concluding his studies he came to four practices in which a pastor must participate in order to maintain “excellence” in ministry: (1) Agility and Reflective Leadership, (2) Trust and Personal Authority, (3) Staying Connected, and (4) Self-directed Career-Long Learner.

In the section “staying connected” he noted that isolation was a problem that “leads to burning out and dropping out.” The issue of “clergy friendships emerged as of considerable importance for sustaining ministry in challenging times. Having close friends is in itself not a guarantor of excellent pastoral leadership; however, without the support, companionship, mutual critique, and joy that friends offer, without those with whom one can be vulnerable and share deeply, it is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain the kind of excellent ministry that follows in Jesus’ path.”⁵⁰

The Christian Reformed Church admits grave concern for the increasing isolation of their pastors. Among the five top reasons given for the challenges their pastors face in

⁴⁹Andrew Careaga, “Review: God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations by Jackson W. Carroll,” Next-Wave Church & Culture, http://www.the-next-wave-ezine.info/issue89/index.cfm?id=12&ref=ARTICLES_REVIEWS_211 (accessed 14 September 2007). This Lilly Endowment research included the Pulpit & Pew research project at Duke Divinity School as well as twenty three focus groups and data from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey.

⁵⁰Carroll, 215. Isolation was also noted among Catholic priests as being a problem. “Similarly, Catholic priests who had resigned from the priesthood within five years of being ordained listed the loneliness of the priestly life as second only to celibacy among the problems facing priests today,” 190. It could be said that all of the four practices Carroll lists would best benefit the pastor in a mutual peer environment where the pastors could coach each other for accountability in these practices.

spiritual health, isolation is listed: “Many pastors face growing isolation as congregations become less denominationally and regionally focused and more congregationally oriented. As a result, their relationships with other pastors are weaker, and they lose one natural system of spiritual support and nurture—their fellow pastors.”⁵¹

A 1991 Fuller Theological Institute of Church Growth study showed “pastors are overworked, underpaid, often working in a conflicted environment, and seem to be some of the loneliest people. . . . Seventy percent of the pastors said they ‘do not have someone they consider a close friend.’”⁵² A Focus on the Family survey of 1,500 pastors questioned, found, “Over half do not meet with a prayer partner regularly, 1 out of 4 do not have a trusted friend in ministry, and only 20% have 2 or more paid staff members.”⁵³

H. B. London is sounding the alarm for pastors; he sees them at greater risk now than ever. Since his earlier book on this subject in 1993, he is now speaking more convincingly to pastors about their need to take control of their lives and their frail churches. Among the twenty hazards of ministry he lists loneliness as one of the leading culprits.⁵⁴ He suggests that the solution is not to “bury one’s feelings in busyness or to run to an exotic resort” but to “cultivate friendships.”⁵⁵ Among the “top eight areas of stress for pastors,”⁵⁶ isolation is listed.

⁵¹Christian Reformed Church in North America, “Sustaining Pastoral Excellence: Analysis,” http://www.crcna.org/pages/spe_analysis.cfm (accessed 14 January 2008).

⁵²Frank Schaefer, “Self-care Tips for the Clergy Family,” *DesperatePreacher.com*, http://www.desperatepreacher.com/pastorcare/intro_clergyfamily.htm (accessed 28 April 2008).

⁵³London and Wiseman, 20.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 172.

Larry Yeagley, a career pastor and professional chaplain, attempts to determine the cause of pastoral loneliness. He finds that faith is a work of introspection and meditation where pastors are prone to mistakenly conclude that practicing inner faith will lessen or eliminate loneliness. Consequently, pastors may become misled in their own loneliness. Illustrating the danger of people being misled by isolating themselves and only looking for answers inward, he gives an example from best selling author, Dan Riley who misleads countless readers by stating that faith "compels you to believe that you have special powers inside of you. This faith says that only you can truly heal your loneliness. All the answers to all your problems lie within you."⁵⁷

Yeagley believes that society is largely to blame for this loneliness in the general public:

If thirty-five million Americans are lonely each month, the causes cannot come only from within each person; something must be wrong with society itself. We don't have to look far to see some of the cause: widespread mobility; a high divorce rate; impersonal, crime-ridden cities; the substitution of television and home videotape viewing for face-to-face community life; bureaucratic procedures and letter-writing computers that increasingly take the place of personal business transactions. . . . Loneliness reminds us that social forces, not individual shortcomings, are the ultimate cause of widespread loneliness.⁵⁸

Addressing friendship he recommends pastors "find a support person" who "understands ministry . . . to help you focus on the meaning of ministry and remind you of its possible fulfillment." His advice is to "try to find someone of your own gender with

⁵⁷Lawrence R. Yeagley, *How to Get Beyond Loneliness* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 11. The only power that dwells inside a Christian is the Word of God and the will under the conviction of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:22). Some of the extreme coaching philosophies come from the secular humanist perspective which has falsely concluded that the only dependable source of power is within the individual. There must be a wide separation from this fallacy and the faith based belief that cries out, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Rom 7:18). This paper is fully established on the belief that humankind is only made whole through a death to self and rebirth in Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Ibid., 12.

spiritual stamina and emotional resilience. To help you most, they also need a healthy relationship with God, a stable self-regard, a willingness to listen and an ability to question self-imposed myths you have about ministry. The goals for this connection are dialogue, hope, prayer and accountability.”⁵⁹

Archibald Hart, former dean of the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Seminary says, “I don’t know of any other vocation that is more hazardous than that of a pastor.”⁶⁰ He sees pastors in danger of burnout and suggests, “He [the pastor] needs to build an adequate support system—preferably with peers—where he can turn for nurture to share his hurt, to open his soul and to unburden himself. When pastors bear one another’s burdens, they can find the healing that Christ can bring.”⁶¹

Clergy want help, but they do not know how or where to get started. Kathy Smith, an influential leader of ministers in the Christian Reformed Church, knows that many pastors want help, yet do not know where to find it. She talks with them in conferences and workshops and when they call her on the phone, they are looking for support. “Many of them feel alone and isolated in their work, and they’d like to find some kind of support group, but that’s not easy to find.”⁶²

⁵⁹Ibid., 136.

⁶⁰Archibald Hart, Professor of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1973 to present, quoted in Dennis Worden, “CareGiver Ministries,” PastorsNet, http://www.pastorsnet.com/caregiver_ministries/worden_cginformation.html (accessed 28 April 2008).

⁶¹Ibid., 181.

⁶²Kathy Smith, Director of Continuing Education, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Director of Making Connections Initiative, cited in an article by Abram Huyser-Honig, “Pastors Teaching Pastors: Peer Learning Groups Help Pastors—and Congregations—Grow,” Christian Reformed Church in North America, http://www.crcna.org/pages/jun2004_huyser_honig.cfm (accessed 12 November 2007).

Besides the personal struggles of the pastors their churches are becoming less relevant to society. Isolated pastors are creating isolated churches in a vicious cycle. "The church operates on an isolated island of subculture, wondering why it is ignored and unappreciated by the community at large."⁶³

Conclusion

A review of today's pastors leaves one with great concern for their emotional health and the health of the churches they lead. Loneliness and isolation continue to surface as part of the challenges facing today's clergy. It becomes apparent that pastors need a place and a process where they can develop friendships with other ministers. The study of the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group seeks to discover a process where ministers can find other professional ministers who want to open up to each other and help each other through the lonesome valley of ministry

The next chapter will lay a cross-section of the biblical examples of interpersonal peer relationships, how and why they were formed. We then want to see how ministers can relate these stories to the effort of forming similar relationships with other ministers.

⁶³Bill Hybels and Lynne Hybels, "Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church," in *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*, ed. Jackson W. Carroll and Becky R. McMillan (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 190. This quote from Bill and Lynne Hybels of the Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, IL, underscores what he sees as the ineffectiveness of a majority of American churches and their pastors.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARD A BIBLICAL VIEW OF PASTORAL PEER

LEARNING/COACHING

Introduction

Coaching has been gaining ground in the personal and business world since the early 1990s as a profession. The founders inadvertently made the concepts religion-neutral. The coaching principles are relevant to all interpersonal relationships and transcend any particular religious teaching; however, one will see that these principles are strongly rooted in biblical constructs.¹

Peer interpersonal relationships are the model on which God establishes his own existence within the Godhead. Looking at the first human family one observes qualities of this same interdependent relationship. God dwells in community within the Godhead and He created humanity in His image. The Bible bares witness, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’ . . . so God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:26). This interdependence was no mere convenience; it was the balance of life under which immortal beings flourished. They were designed to complete each other, much like

¹Ledesma, 13.

the Godhead enjoyed. "Before the fall, Adam and Eve possessed the perfect ability to fulfill one another's emotional needs. Because of God's gracious gift of human companionship, man was able to experience love in a way that kept him from knowing loneliness."²

The idea of an independent individual is a foreign construct in Bible times. David Cunningham writes,

God is wholly constituted by relationality. In other words, God is not (first) three independent entities who (then) decide to come into relation with one another; God is rather, 'relation without remainder.' Thus, the Three are mutually constitutive of one another. This claim, which I describe as the Trinitarian virtue of participation . . . the Three participate in one another in a profound way, undermining any attempt to understand them independently from one another. Furthermore, the Trinitarian virtue of participation can come to mark our own lives as well. It can help us begin to think about what it might mean to dwell in, and be indwelt by, the lives of others. The notion of a pure, isolated 'individual' is a highly disputable human construction. In God, there are no individuals; the Three dwell in each other so completely that we cannot divide them, one from another. And so we too are called to live lives of mutual participation, in which our relationships are not just something that we have, but are what constitute us as human beings.³

Adam is solo only for a brief time, God immediately sees a need for him to have another human relationship in order to make him complete, "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'" (Gen 2:18). "Man, in paradise itself, could not be happy without a mate, and therefore is no sooner made than matched."⁴ It can be concluded that peer relationships are the core

²Gregory Frank Brown, "A Biblical Theology of Accountability in the Pauline Epistles" (MTh thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), 10.

³David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 165, quoted in Eugene H. Rogers, "Peer Coaching among Australian Pastors" (DMiss dissertation, School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University, 2002), 27, in ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=726443411&sid=1&fmt=2&clientId=1898&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed 1 June 2007).

⁴Matthew Henry, "Ecclesiastes 4:7," *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, CD-ROM (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991).

construct of intelligent existence. According to Scripture, the very beginnings of human history see God in community with peers, the Godhead. Man is in community with peers which one observes in the most intimate human relationship, marriage, where Adam had “a helper comparable to him” (Gen 2:18). It is interesting to note that only under this arrangement of human interdependence and community was the creation pronounced “very good” (Gen 1:31).

By the time one reads the third chapter of Genesis, this balance of pure interdependence and peer-to-peer relationships is challenged. Here the reader will find a new element of disunity surfacing, the element of independence and alienation. Francis Schaeffer speaks to this break-up of peer fellowship:

The first thing we notice is that Adam and Eve immediately begin to try to pass the guilt from themselves to another, and we have, therefore, the division which is at the very heart of man’s relationship with man from this point on. The human race is divided—man against man. We do not have to wait for modern psychologists to talk about alienation. Here it is. Man alienated from his wife—the wife from her husband—as they turn against each other, especially at the points of blame and guilt. All the alienation that any poet will ever write about is here already.⁵

Peer coaching seeks to undermine this deeply engrained defect of independence that is imprinted on every human being. When the pastor feels like retreating into his study instead of addressing a conflict with a member or opting to seek an isolated place instead of enriching himself in peer-interaction with a fellow pastor, it can be traced to this original alienation. It is our nature since the fall to act on our own behalf against any significant other, including God, in order to secure our self-centeredness. However, this is the root problem that peer coaching attempts to address.

⁵Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 92, 93, quoted in Brown, 11.

Mortal man, in sum is alienated from God, himself, and his fellow man. These fundamental separations make man a paradoxical creature. . . . In sinful self-assertion man makes a volitional move out from his place in the created order and into the maelstrom of sin-induced chaos. . . . Yet in his pride, man refuses to humble himself and return to the secure embrace of God's order. This would require the dreaded accountability, exposure, and repentance. Hence, man must push on with a now-hollow assertiveness, realizing that continued rebellion is doomed to failure, yet rejecting the humiliating option of repentance and divine cleansing. This dilemma serves to heighten anxiety which in turn intensifies the façade of rebellious self-sufficiency.⁶

From these foundational passages of Genesis the reader can now venture into the Old Testament passages related to peer coaching. Scores of passages relate to the empowering influence of interdependent relationships.

Ancient Israel as a Model of Peer Coaching

Friendships in ancient Israel were not the main goal of interpersonal relationships. They did not have a clear word for interdependent relationships like the Greeks did. There are limited references to friendships: "The paucity (smallness) of Hebrew originals for the group shows that the Greek view of friendship is an alien one in the OT world."⁷ A friend in ancient Bible times was "a relationship of mutual trust and congeniality. While many biblical writers realized that friendship enriches human life, as a subject of

⁶Stephen Dale Shores, "Non-Transparency among Christians: Its Roots and Remedy" (Masters thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982), 18. The original sin could be defined as man redefining himself outside of relationships, peer or divine. "As Heppenstall points out: Original sin is not per se wrong doing, but wrong being. So there is a causal connection between the first sin of the first man and the self-centeredness of his posterity. The consequence of Adam's sin was total. Accordingly, original sin is a state of the whole self in relation to God. It is never simply a physiological or biological problem. Trying to locate sin or the transmission of sin genetically simply misses the real problem. The issue is a spiritual one and not something in a gene. Sin is not transmitted genetically from parents to children. Sin must not be reduced to something physical." Gerhard Pfandle, "Some Thoughts on Original Sin," Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 18, www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/sinoriginal-web.pdf (accessed 8 June 2007).

⁷G. Stahlin, "Friendship," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, CD-ROM (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 1267.

serious reflection the theme of friendship is not developed in the Bible—in sharp contrast to the Greek and Roman traditions.” In a rare case “Deuteronomy characterizes a friend as a person ‘who is as your own soul’ (13:6).”⁸ Even in the relationship between David and Jonathan “the Hebrew has no true term for the relationship, and even the LXX does not use *philia*”⁹ the Greek word for friendship.

Moses

Moses cried out for human companionship when he realized his human limitations while dealing with the thousands of complaints and problems of Israel, “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me” (Num 11:14). God answered his plea by instructing him to find seventy elders who he could bring into close relationship with him for the purpose of managing the people. These surely became close and appreciated human companions. Already Moses had earlier formed a peer relationship with his brother Aaron that lasted his entire ministry. God put his blessing on this peer to peer relationship, “You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do” (Exod 4:15).

The story of Job is a lesson in what not-to-do in peer to peer relationships. Whenever one uses one’s limited view of reality to judge the other, as it seems his three friends did when they let their religious views form negative judgments of him, the views become more important than the relationship. Job in this case loathes his miserable friends, “To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend, even though

⁸Sam K. Williams, “Friendship,” *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, ed. P. J. Achtemeier, CD-ROM (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1985), 322.

⁹Stahlin, 1267.

he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a brook, like the streams of the brooks that pass away" (Job 6:14). Later he calls them "miserable comforters" (Job 6:15). If only these depressing friends of Job could have listened non-judgmentally and attentively, how much more help could they have offered this troubled man.

The lesson from Job and his so called friends might be that a better way to help a friend is to listen, encourage, and support one in distress. A peer coaching relationship which sought to develop a relationship of accountability may have gone a lot further in bringing comfort and purpose to Job. An open relationship that allowed clarifying questions to help Job discover his own solutions would have gone a long way toward helping him find the purpose and calling of his life.¹⁰

David

Ancient Israel had an excellent lesson in why peer-to-peer relationships were necessary, especially for top leaders like David. The sin of David with Bathsheba is a paramount illustration of the need for peer accountability and the cost of not having such crucial "catch fall" mechanisms.¹¹ David could have created a structure where he was answerable to someone who cared for his future peace and prosperity, but he did not. The story unfolds like a nightmare from the pages of Scripture. As the story goes:

It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the

¹⁰Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 55. Professional coach Tony Stoltzfus practices what he calls, "the discipline of believing in people." This is a disciplined way of "treating others that focuses on their destiny and not their problems." Tony claims that listening is the primary way we do this. "To really listen is to say in unmistakable language, 'I believe in you.'"

¹¹In sports and construction activities various harnesses, safety latches, and other mechanisms are used to keep a person from falling to certain injury once they have lost their footing or hold.

people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child" (2 Sam 11:1-5).

David chose to live his life in isolation bound from any peer accountability, but he would pay a dear price, an unnecessary price. He should have known the value of such relationships, having experienced his alliance with Jonathan. Scripture asserts that their relationship was more than a political relationship, but one of keen interest in the others well-being:

Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. . . . Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that *was* on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt (1 Sam 18:1-4).

David faced nothing that was uncommon to fallen humanity. Humanity's spiritual heritage through Adam and Eve grants them common ground with their self destructive independence. Their unaccountable act against God passed on to David, and all humanity, the disability to reason correctly because of their self conceit. "We must remember that our hearts are naturally depraved, and we are unable of ourselves to pursue a right course."¹² Clearer still White states, "Through sin, the whole human organism is deranged, the mind is perverted, the imagination corrupted; the faculties of the soul are degraded."¹³

¹²Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 544.

¹³Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 224.

Left to themselves people inevitably get into trouble. After much anguish, David later admitted, concerning his sin with Bathsheba, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:5). David learned through mighty trials, that he could not resist evil on his own. The ancient Israelites had a clear understanding that human error was inevitable when left to themselves. "No man can of himself understand his errors" (Jer 17:9). David's son Solomon had to learn this same lesson; while in his old age he finally admitted, "Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead" (Eccl 9:3).

Kenneth Boa finds in this story of David's blunder from lack of accountability, proof of our "limitless ability to rationalize what we do and say" to our own detriment.¹⁴ He refers to the social psychologist's term "cognitive dissonance" which opens in people a moral leak, the ability to dismiss things that people know are inherently wrong. People think that because no one can see what they have done, it will all work out. "For a whole year after his fall David lived in apparent security; there was no outward evidence of God's displeasure. But the divine sentence was hanging over him."¹⁵ Boa concludes, "That being the case, we all need people who will help us protect ourselves from ourselves and the desires of our own heart."¹⁶

¹⁴Kenneth Boa, "Accountability," Bible.org, http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2784 (accessed 9 June 2008). Dr. Boa is the president of Reflection Ministries, a ministry of relational evangelism and discipleship. Boa has a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary, a Ph.D. from New York University, and a D.Phil. from the University of Oxford in England. His book *Conformed to His Image* is a thorough address to the subject of accountability in the life of a minister.

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 723.

¹⁶Boa, "Accountability."

Rob Jackson, speaks to this common oversight of unaccountable leaders when he states: “Unfortunately when the need for accountability strikes, most people do not have any significant relationships on which to stabilize. We have not invested consistently in deep friendships and our isolation often increases in times of trouble.”¹⁷ Without the intervention of God, all pastors would be wrecked on the rocks of sin. The Old Testament shows that this is done best and most often through human companions who were close to them or who had honored God as their highest goal.

Nathan the prophet was one of these God-honoring people. He could have lost his own life by exposing the sin of the king, but he held honoring God above honoring the king. Nathan practiced what Proverbs called “wounds of a friend” (Prov 27:6). Long before David’s time ancient Israel understood that God ultimately would hold them accountable for their actions or inactions, “be sure your sin will find you out.” Second Samuel 11 ends by saying, “The thing that David had done displeased the Lord.” You would think “it should have followed that the Lord sent enemies to invade him, terrors to take hold on him, and the messengers of death to arrest him. No, he sent a prophet to him—Nathan, his faithful friend and confidant, to instruct and counsel him.”¹⁸ Again, one sees God working through friends and trusted peers to bring humanity to account.

¹⁷Rob Jackson, “Foundations for Life: How to Develop Effective Accountability,” Pure Intimacy, <http://www.pureintimacy.org/gr/intimacy/redemption/a0000151.cfm> (accessed 4 June 2007). On Jackson’s website www.PureIntimacy.org a wealth of information on developing accountable relationships is available. Pure Intimacy is a registered trademark of Focus on the Family.

¹⁸Prov 27:5 states, “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” These words were spoken by Moses to the Israelites as a warning to those who might think they could shirk their obligations to their fellow Israelites by not fighting on the other side of the Jordan. Num 32:23; Henry, “Ecclesiastes 4:7.”

The story of David clearly shows God's intention. He would rather have people form bonds of accountability, like David had with Nathan.¹⁹ It would have been much less traumatic if he had relied on that relationship before his moral collapse. God would like to spare all His leaders from the consequences of their natural bent toward sin. Boa correctly asserts, "Wise leaders don't wait for a crisis to establish accountability. Accountability relationships cannot be imposed; they must be invited. The onus is on leaders to establish structures and relationships that harness their sin and unleash their potential. Leaders must seek out godly people of mature character and give them permission to ask us the tough questions. This requires risk on our part."²⁰

Proverbs

Proverbs is pregnant with instruction concerning the benefit of peer relationships. It is interesting to note that the tone of voice from Scripture changes to a more relational setting when one reads the wisdom literature. Derek Kidner writes in his introduction to Proverbs:

In the Wisdom books the tone of voice and even the speakers have changed. The blunt 'Thou shalt' or 'shalt not' of the Law, and the urgent 'Thus saith the Lord' of the Prophets, are joined now by the cooler comments of the teacher and the often anguished questions of the learner. Where the bulk of the Old Testament calls us simply to obey and to believe, this part of it . . . summons us to think hard as well as humbly: to keep our eyes open, to use our conscience and our common sense, and not to shirk the most disturbing questions.²¹

¹⁹It would be foolish to assume with certainty that Nathan was a coach to King David in the sense that this paper asserts, however, the establishment of accountable relationships, which is one of the principles of coaching, is clearly outlined here in this story.

²⁰Boa, "Accountability."

²¹Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 11.

It is as if God is assuming the role of teacher; the human pupils are the learners. The application of what people learn is done relationally though, “as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17).

Kidner resonates with this relational element of Proverbs when commenting on Prov 27:19, “As water reflects a face, so a man’s heart reflects the man.” He says, “One of the possible interpretations could be ‘just as a mirror confronts you with your public shape,’ so your fellow man confronts you with the shape in which thoughts and habits like your own have grouped themselves into a character.”²²

In Proverbs, the learners gain wisdom often as a response to the feedback of others in their lives. The following passages refer to the need to receive instruction, counsel and constructive criticism from someone else, maybe even a peer.

Prov 9:9	Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.
Prov 10:17	He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, But he who refuses correction goes astray.
Prov 11:14	Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.
Prov 12:15	The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.
Prov 15:22	Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.
Prov 20:5	Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out.
Prov 27:5, 6	Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.
Prov 27:9	Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man’s friend gives delight by hearty counsel.
Prov 28:23	He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward Than he who flatters with the tongue.

²²Kidner, quoted in Rogers, 39.

Wounds are never desired, but when they come from the genuine counsel of a trusted friend, they are welcome. The directives of Proverbs are meant to be understood in the context of interpersonal and interdependent relationships. Whether it is in the form of a correction (10:17) or a rebuke (28:23), a delight of friendship (27:9), or the wounds of a friend (27:6), they are all made acceptable through mutual relationships that involve face-to-face interaction.

Four times the Book of Proverbs impresses on the reader the importance of getting advice from others in regard to one's plans.²³ This advice may not be what the inquirer wants to hear, but if given from a person who has their best interest in mind, it builds faith. The word "faithful" in Prov 27:6, comes from the Hebrew *ne'emanim*, from the root *'aman*, "to support," "to be firm," or "to be true and faithful." The "amen" with which believers conclude their prayers comes from this root. The kindly, well-meant rebuke of a friend is said to be of this character. It would do well for ministers to respond to a friend's correction or rebuke with an "amen," one might then begin to experience the biblical context of mutual support and accountability.

These ancient Proverbs are germane to the practice of peer coaching. Responsible people are interested in accountability toward maturity of character as the goal and this is best done in open intentional relationships. In these relationships the individual influences the other for better or for worse. "A person who learns from discipline is an example to others of the way to a meaningful life, whereas those who refuse to learn from

²³Sid S. Buzzell, "Prov 10:17; 11:14; 15:22; 20:18; 24:6," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1:927, 929, 938, 958; "Prov 27," *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 3:1040.

discipline cause others to go astray. One's conduct affects not only oneself but others as well, either favorably or unfavorably."²⁴

It takes the guidance of mutually concerned partners in order to gain good character. The word "guidance" is used in Prov 11:14 which is "a nautical term used of steering a ship." This steering is the "counsel of advisers" (15:22; 20:18; 24:6). Walvoord goes on to say, "A wise person is open to others' opinions and counsel. Without such counsel, he may make serious mistakes."²⁵

Peer relationships, per se, are not explicitly named in Proverbs, but one cannot apply the meaning of these verses outside of interpersonal accountable relationships. Again, Walvoord says, "A discerning person can help another bring to the surface his true thoughts, intentions, or motives. Often a wise counselor can help a person examine his true motives-thoughts he may not fully understand otherwise."²⁶ "Success (15:22), victory (11:14), and the path of life (10:17) are granted to the man who is willing to listen to outside counsel. However frustration, pitfalls, and loss of direction abound for the man who refuses the wisdom of others."²⁷

Perhaps one of the main guiding Scriptures for peer coaching is found in Prov 20:5, which states, "Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." The *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary* states:

Wise persons bring to the surface what others have in mind, even when there are attempts at concealment. The image is of a well into which one descends in order to get life-giving water. Often in ancient cities there is a long stairway carved through

²⁴Ibid., 927.

²⁵Ibid., 938.

²⁶Ibid., 948.

²⁷Rogers, 40.

rock in order to get down to the protected well at the base of the city mound. No little effort was required to go down, get the water, and carry it back up to the surface for use.²⁸

While giving advice is not the purpose of peer coaching, drawing wisdom from the individual being coached is. This is a form of discovering wisdom for oneself with the prompting of a person who has your best interest in mind. A good coach is willing to ask the hard questions in order to “draw out” the wisdom from the “deep waters” of the person being coached.

Ecclesiastes

A familiar passage relating to accountability in peer relationships is Eccl 4:9-12:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

These verses are preceded by a picture of a pitiful man who is “all alone” (v. 8a). This man is all alone by choice, he “minds none but himself, cares for nobody, but would, if he could, be placed alone in the midst of the earth; *there is not a second*, nor does he desire there should be: one mouth he thinks enough in a house, and grudges every thing that goes beside him. See how this covetous muckworm is here described.”²⁹

The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* appropriately describes this man as “a pathetic picture of loneliness, with little incentive to encourage one in his

²⁸Richard Clifford Keck and Leonard E. Weems, “Prov 20:5,” *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 5:185.

²⁹Henry, “Ecclesiastes 4:7.”

endeavors.”³⁰ “Sociableness is the cure of this evil,” says Henry.³¹ In contrast to the pitiful lonely man is the man with companionship, a peer if you will. This man has swallowed his self-deceived individualism and put value in the presence of a companion. The man with a peer receives the rewards of greater effectiveness in labor, support when he falls down, warmth when he is cold, and exponential strength against outside opposing powers.

Two in a battle are always better off than one alone. Pastors would do well to see themselves in a battle; perhaps this would embolden them to pair off like Solomon advised and save them the tragedy of loss:

If an enemy find a man alone, he is likely to prevail against him; with his own single strength he cannot make his part good, but, if he have a second, he may do well enough: two shall withstand him. “You shall help me against my enemy, and I will help you against yours;” according to the agreement between Joab and Abishai (2 Sam 10:11), and so both are conquerors; whereas, acting separately, both would have been conquered; as was said of the ancient Britons, when the Romans invaded them, *Dum singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur—While they fight in detached parties, they sacrifice the general cause.* In our spiritual warfare we may be helpful to one another as well as in our spiritual work; next to the comfort of communion with God, is that of the communion of saints.³²

There is a progression toward community and companionship that Solomon proposes in these verses. “Solomon started with the number *one* (Eccl 4:8), then moved to *two* (v. 9), and then closed with *three* (v. 12). This is typical of Hebrew literature (Prov 6:16; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, etc.). One cord could be broken easily; two cords would require more strength; but three cords woven together could not be easily broken. If two travelers

³⁰“Eccl 4:8,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 3:1078.

³¹Henry. “A monastic life then was surely never intended for a state of perfection, nor should those be reckoned the greatest lovers of God who cannot find in their hearts to love any one else.”

³²Henry, “Ecclesiastes 4:7.”

are better than one, then three would fare even better. Solomon had more than numbers in mind; he was also thinking of the unity involved in three cords woven together—what a beautiful picture of friendship!”³³

Jesus' Ministry as a Model of Peer Coaching

The principles of coaching are well outlined in the Bible; their use has been seen several places in the Old Testament. The principles then were God ordained in order assist people to achieve peak performance. The ministry of Jesus Christ as depicted in the four Gospels of the New Testament confirms the continued use of coaching principles.

Jesus might be classified as an executive or leadership coach in today's vernacular.³⁴ An executive coaching relationship is “a confidential, one-on-one partnership between a management-level client and a qualified coach with relevant performance enhancement expertise.”³⁵

Jesus could be described as the believer's coach. Better than any modern coach He fulfilled the criteria of having “relevant performance enhancement expertise.” Jesus as the believer's head coach, according to Scripture, became the second Adam. He recovered the ground that the first Adam (who handed humanity performance defeating expertise) lost and now offers Himself as proof positive that all may regain solid purposeful lives on track with God's will. “To bring humanity into Christ, to bring the

³³Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, CDROM (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books: 1990).

³⁴Jesus should never be lowered to the level of a peer on par with humanity. He told the disciples “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am” John 13:13. Jesus is Lord and yet He was a model coach in the sense that He was constantly modeling ways to draw responses from the people he interacted with in order to get them to take responsibility for their own conclusions.

³⁵Battley, 1.

fallen race into oneness with divinity, is the work of redemption. Christ took human nature that men might be one with Him as He is one with the Father, that God may love man as He loves His only-begotten Son, that men may be partakers of the divine nature, and be complete in Him.”³⁶

You could say the disciples were “management-level clients” which Jesus hand picked for his coaching relationships. Even though the disciples had little prior knowledge of Jesus, He took them into his confidence. They followed Him because they could see that he had skills that could bring meaning and purpose for their lives. All of this was not apparent at first, but Bible readers know the rest of the story and they all, with the exception of Judas, became highly focused, responsible leaders. I believe the disciples’ success was due largely in part to Jesus’ coaching them and asking perceptive, non-judgmental questions that led them to analyze their own beliefs and corresponding responses.

A significant application of the coaching principle was used when Jesus sent out his disciples two-by-two when they performed their ministry. If pastors could arrange their ministry to have a partner it would come much closer to the model that Jesus advocated. Much of the isolation and loneliness that pastors suffer from today could be alleviated with this simple coaching principle alone. It could be further noted that when the disciple ministering pairs returned from their duties they had a large group time, much like the large group time of the IPPCG. In these sessions with Jesus one could

³⁶Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*, 3 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986), 1:251. Heb 4:15, 16 assures us, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

easily imagine them sharing and collaborating their experiences for greater effectiveness and support of each other.

Jesus had a vision for what success looked like; he could see the person's future, if they would make the right choices.

For all that we might become through the right use of our talents God holds us responsible. We shall be judged according to what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God. Even if we do not lose our souls, we shall realize in eternity the result of our unused talents. For all the knowledge and ability that we might have gained and did not, there will be an eternal loss.³⁷

Jesus saw destiny in people's lives. He practiced transformational coaching by concentrating on what people could become from who they were: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

To see potential in the person being coached is a key component to effective coaching. A coach has to look beyond what the person is doing to see what they are becoming. "When we believe that who people are becoming is more important than what they are doing, we stop telling and start coaching naturally."³⁸ Jesus had a knack for this and modeled it often.

Jesus was the most accountable man, in relation to the Father God, that ever lived. To ask accountability questions one must be accountable. Jesus conducted his life so responsibly that even his unbelieving countrymen commented, "He hath done all things

³⁷Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1900), 363.

³⁸Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 67.

well” (Mark 7:37). The Bible assures the person of faith, “We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15, 16).

Jesus looked for coachable people—people grounded in reality. “He carefully selected his client base with only coachable people, and warned all prospects that following his program was not for the faint of heart.”³⁹ “Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, ‘Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head’” (Matt 8:19, 20).

In order for anyone to gain from a coaching experience he/she must be willing to grow, “Successful coaching requires that your motivation be grounded in reality, not wishful thinking.”⁴⁰

On the other hand, the Pharisees were not coachable. Jesus constantly accused the Pharisees for their unaccountable and empty religion. Even with good coaching questions they would not respond, because they were preoccupied with form over substance. They chose to continue going through the motions without entertaining the coaching questions that could have got them back on track with a successful faith: “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward

³⁹Jesus saw in all of humanity the possibility of greatness, “God looked upon humanity, not as vile and worthless; He looked upon it in Christ, saw it as it might become through redeeming love.” White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 118; James S. Vuocolo, “The Top 10 Reasons Jesus Was the Perfect Life-Coach,” Coachville Coach Training Resource Center, <http://topten.org/content/tt.CF13.htm> (accessed 20 May 2007).

⁴⁰Battley, 23.

part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?" (Luke 11:39, 40).

Jesus coached people to manifest their beliefs; they must be willing to set goals. If one stayed as Jesus' PBC (person being coached) he would either move forward or get out of the group. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev 3:15, 16). "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (Mark 11:22, 23). "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). Jesus expected people to act on the desires God had put in their hearts.

Jesus Believed in the People He Coached— He Genuinely Loved Them

Jesus was able to see into the souls of His listeners. He developed an ability to share compassion. "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'" (Luke 7:13). Jesus sought to take people from where they were and move them to where they were created to be. This He did by believing in them as if they were already successful. Stoltzfus asserts, "Coaches are many things, but the essence of coaching is believing in people. Nothing is more empowering, nothing causes us to reach and accomplish greater things than having people in our lives that love us for who we are and believe unconditionally in what we can become."⁴¹ "God takes men as they are, with

⁴¹Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 7.

the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him.”⁴²

This uncanny ability of Jesus to look into the motivating center of a persons life was inferred when He said, “There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Matt 10:26). In a similar way the author of Hebrews alludes to this ability of God to see to the core of a person: “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13).⁴³

Jesus asked excellent questions—the primary role of a coach. Of the multitude of questions asked of Jesus he only directly responded to three or four of them. One insightful author Richard Rohr, realized,

Jesus’ questions are to re-position you, make you own your unconscious biases, break you out of your dualistic mind, challenge your image of God or the world, or present new creative possibilities. He himself does not usually wait for or expect specific answers. He hopes to call forth an answering person. He wants to be in relationship with a person, with the idea as it informs the person, and with the process of transformation itself. Instead, Jesus asks questions, good questions, unnerving questions, re-aligning questions, transforming questions. He leads us into liminal, and therefore transformative space, much more than taking us into any moral high ground of immediate certitude or ego superiority. He subverts up front the cultural or theological assumptions that we are eventually going to have to face anyway. He leaves us betwixt and between, where God and grace can get at us, and where we are not at all in control. It probably does not work for a large majority of people, at least in my experience. They merely ignore you or fight you. Maybe this is why we have paid so little attention to Jesus’ questions and emphasized instead his seeming answers. They give us more a feeling of success and closure.⁴⁴

⁴²Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1940), 294.

⁴³The Matt 10:26 text was stated in reference to servants not being above their masters or a disciples above their teachers. Jesus certainly was a master and teacher, yet the practice of perceiving that there is more to a persons motivating force than what meets the eye, there is something hidden that needs to be brought to the surface.

⁴⁴Richard Rohr, Foreword to *The Questions of Jesus*, by John Dear. <http://www.johndear.org/> (accessed 7 October 2007); John Dear, *The Questions of Jesus: Challenging Ourselves to Discover Life's Great Answers* (New York: Image Books, 2004).

“What are you looking for?” (John 1:38). This is what a coach asks a PBC on their first session. Again he poses a question in the story of the Good Samaritan: “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor?” (Luke 10:3). Jesus uses a question so that those he was coaching could come to their own conclusions. A key principle of coaching is that conclusions reached by the individual are acted on, when simply hearing a discourse can merely cause a person to contemplate. Jesus was teaching these principles throughout his ministry on earth. For example, “Jesus hammered his disciples with a series of questions, including some with obvious answers: ‘When I fed the five thousand, how much was left over?’” (Mark 8:15). He asked the same question about the feeding of the four thousand. Both questions were posed to get their buy in on the fact that faith is powerful when acted on. Jesus used many questions as tools to get a response from his hearers, “If the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?” (Matt 5:13). “Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lamp-stand?” (Mark 4:21). “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye?” (Luke 6:41).⁴⁵

Jesus was modeling coaching principles to his disciples all the time. When the woman touched the hem of His robe in a crowd he asked, “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45). “He asks so that she’ll answer. And he wants her to answer because she must learn to ‘own’ her actions. Furthermore, she must realize that Jesus knows and approves. And still further, she needs to learn that it is her faith that has saved her rather than some

⁴⁵Conrad Gempf, *Jesus Asked: What He Wanted to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 39.

automatic magical power.”⁴⁶ One can see how valuable questions are in helping the other person take full responsibility and apply the information that is best for them at the time. If Jesus had simply taught her these lessons, more than likely, they would have been forgotten and certainly less effective in her life of faith.⁴⁷

Foster Cline and Jim Fay, in their ground-breaking book on parenting through love and logic, taught parents that their kids will “learn responsibility and the logic of life by solving their own problems.”⁴⁸ Cline and Fay then go on to describe their philosophy that parents should act as loving consultants, instead of commanders giving orders. The love and logic parents do more through asking questions than by laying down the law. The love and logic approach emphasizes engaging kids and challenging them to think. It also emphasizes the child gaining personal responsibility for her actions. Throughout the book he reminds the reader, “The best solution to any problem lies within the skin of the person who owns the problem.” When you put this into a peer coaching sentence it would sound more like this, “Your own insight is much more powerful than my advice.”⁴⁹ It seems that Jesus was first and foremost in teaching this principle.

⁴⁶Ibid., 48.

⁴⁷White, *The Desire of Ages*, 343. In this scene of the woman touching the hem of His garment, we find He counters his question of who touched him with another question, “Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.” “The Saviour could distinguish the touch of faith from the casual contact of the careless throng. Such trust should not be passed without comment.” Questions were often Christ’s method of causing His followers to reach deeper into the truths of His intent and purpose. His disciples had to come to their own conclusions, just like the woman who touched his robe. The woman had already come to personal faith before she touched him, but Jesus wanted to have his followers understand what this personal faith was all about. The best way He found to do that was to ask questions. It was only after the series of questions that he finally offers a comment, “Jesus gently said, ‘Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.’”

⁴⁸Foster Cline and Jim Fay, *Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1990), 20.

⁴⁹Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 10.

The Early Church as a Model of Peer Coaching

Working chronologically through the book of Acts, the reader finds Paul emphasizing togetherness as an overarching standard of operation for church workers. From start to finish the reader sees that he was involved in peer relationships, interdependently relying on “one another” to work at peak performance. Even as early as his conversion he is found spending several days with his newly acquired and God assigned peers in Damascus. Again in Jerusalem where reportedly “he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple” (Acts 9:19, 26, 27). He was able to warm up to Barnabas, Peter, and James until they sent him to his hometown in Tarsus. There Barnabas became his peer partner during the year he worked in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26).

On his second journey Paul partnered with Silas and then drafted Timothy to join them. Dr. Luke evidently joined up with them at Troas where all four later went to Philippi as a group. Even when Paul was sent to Athens alone he was waiting for companionship asking “for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible.” The same pattern was followed when Paul went to Corinth, Silas and Timothy eventually joined him (Acts 15:40; 16:10; 16:12-18; 17:15; 18:5).

Paul was very much supportive of peer relationships and friendship in ministry, a fact that is confirmed by all but two of the opening salutations where he lists other companions with him in his work.

Finally, by Paul’s third mission it was reported that he had disciples with him. Timothy and Erastus were with him there and “ministered to him.” Gaius and Aristarchus were called “travel companions.” Seven men were named as companions on his trip to

Macedonia. Paul even referred to the elders at Ephesus as “my companions” (Acts 19:9, 22, 29; 20:4, 34).

A brief reading of these accounts through the book of Acts gives one a clear picture into the life of a preeminent early church leader “who [intentionally] spent much of his Christian life and work in the company of other Christians.”⁵⁰

There were several reasons why Paul worked in partnership with others; they ranged from fellowship; to companionship; even protection; and encouragement; to organizational meetings; delivering famine relief; and material needs (Acts 9:19, 26-28; 18:18; 19:28; 20:34; 27:1-2; 28:15; 9:30; 17:15; 20:2-4; 28:15; 15:2; 11:30; 20:4; 18:1-3).

Paul’s practice of partnering in peer relationships centered in his theology of the fall of man and his need for accountability. In writing to the church in Rome, Paul sets up a theological basis for Christian leaders forming peer relationships. It is largely inspired from his understanding of the origin and power of sin. When Adam chose to move out from under his trust and obedience to God, he established a lifestyle of self-centeredness and self-reliance. Humanity became spiritually dead because of his sin (Rom 5:12) and stood outside of God with a perverted misapplied assurance in our own abilities (Eph 2:1, 5). Indeed Paul makes it clear that humankind is self-deceived and continually seeks to defend itself to its own ruin (Rom 1:28-32). Because of this ruined spiritual perception Paul recommends that believers “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2).⁵¹

⁵⁰George W. Murray, “Paul’s Corporate Evangelism in the Book of Acts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (April-June 1998): 193.

⁵¹Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 451. She speaks to this self-deceived predicament we all find ourselves saying: “Through sin the whole human organism is deranged, the mind is perverted, the imagination corrupted. Sin has degraded the faculties of the soul.

The encouragement of other peers, Paul saw as a great need, in order to keep an open mind and pursue a better way. He said, "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established," that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. The practice of sharing and encouraging others brought stability and encouragement to Paul. Paul uses the words "one another" (Rom 1:11) forty times to express the interpersonal relationships that Christians should consider normal behavior toward each other.

At the end of his life Paul looked for the encouragement of his fellow-workers, "Paul had a deep understanding of friendship and their value to the spiritual life. He constantly associated with an intimate circle of friends; and as he faced death at Nero's hand, he urged Timothy to 'make every effort to come to me soon; for' . . . only Luke is with me" (2 Tim 4:9, 11).⁵² The fact that Paul needed more than one friend with him at this critical time in his life underscores the truth of Solomon's three braided cord illustration.

The author of Hebrews instructed the church: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:24, 25). Assembling together was exclusive to the church of the Apostles, the church that embraced the faith of Jesus and His disciples. Yet, the principle for accountability and fellowship among people of faith, even ministers of other denominations, could be applied (2 Thess 3:6, 15).

Temptations from without find answering chord within the heart, and the feet turn imperceptibly toward evil."

⁵²Brown, 56.

Paul expressed this idea to Timothy where he implores him to pursue Christian virtues “with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:22) John Wesley would have fully endorsed this practice with his peer group Oxford movement and institutionalized “class meetings.” Later the interdenominational Brethren movement spread worldwide with the same compulsion to form Christian bonds with people of all faiths. These fellowship groups were of greatest importance to keeping their faith alive and growing. Christians need to understand that they can truly assist each other in facing many common temptations and to encourage growth.⁵³

The word “admonish” has the idea of “putting in the mind” the correct response. One of the dictionary descriptions of admonish is “to give friendly earnest advice or encouragement to” (Rom 15:14).⁵⁴ Paul advises the Thessalonians to “admonish” believers who may not practice or see things like others do, but to treat them as “brothers” (2 Thess 2:16).⁵⁵

It may be that Christ has meant to have ministers meeting together from the start of the church. Was it not Christ who said to the disciples, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you”? C. S. Lewis insightfully sees this as if Christ was saying “to every group of Christian friends ‘You have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another.’ The Friendship is not a reward for our discrimination and good taste in

⁵³“The movement found its motivation in a perceived abandonment of many of the basic truths of Christianity by the established Church, and from the beginning, the emphasis was on meeting together only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, without reference to denominational differences. Early meetings included Christians from various denominations.” Wikipedia, “Plymouth Brethren,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plymouth_Brethren (accessed 10 June 2007).

⁵⁴*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (1993), s.v. “Admonish.”

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

finding one another out.”⁵⁶ That is to say, Christ actually arranges our friends in the universal church, not because of us, but for Himself, by Himself and from Himself. “They are . . . derived from Him, and then, in a good friendship, increased by Him through the friendship itself, so that it is His instrument for creating as well as revealing.”⁵⁷

Definition of an Interfaith Pastors’ Peer Coaching Group

Interfaith pastors are pastors of various denominations or communities of faith that work in any given community and provide leadership of spiritual needs for the church in which they are employed.

Peers are professionals of equal experience, knowledge, and skill who have similar ambitions, trials, and needs.

Coaching in this setting is where two pastors agree to a relationship that practices the discipline of asking questions about authentic goal sharing, clarifying, and accountability toward attaining their goals. This has also been defined as “co-coaching.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶Clive Staples Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 126.

⁵⁷Brian A. Williams, *The Potter’s Rib: Mentoring for Pastoral Formation* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 89.

⁵⁸Marty Nemko, “Co-Coaching: ‘I’ll Coach You if You’ll Coach Me,’” martynemko’s website, http://www.martynemko.com/articles/co-coaching-quotill-coach-you-if-youll-coach-mequot_id1510 (accessed 9 June 2008). According to the website, Marty Nemko has been recognized by US News & World Report as “career coach extraordinaire.” He is a Ph.D. in education at the University of California at Berkley; Wikipedia, “Co-Coaching,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Co-coaching> (accessed 8 January 2008). “Co-coaching is the structured practice of mutual exchange of coaching support among peers. This can take the form of a range of practices. One form involves each individual taking turns to be coach in half hour sessions.”

Group is the gathering of pairs of coaching pastors who want to learn the skills of coaching, each one bearing the responsibility to learn and share together. No one is the expert; each individual discovers his need, which in turn drives their desire for greater accountability in the learning process.

Developing Relationships with People of Other Faiths

Before defining interfaith coaching relationships among pastors further, it is important to notice the New Testament concept of relationships with people outside of our faith experience or denomination. The early church was one movement that sprung out of Judaism with the express mission to “carry the gospel to the world.” It was God’s plan “that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency.”⁵⁹

In Christ’s choosing of the twelve disciples, “the first step was taken in the organization of the church.”⁶⁰ From this humble beginning, His plan was to finally break down the “middle wall of partition” between Israel and the other nations, with the truth that “the Gentiles should be fellow heirs” with the Jews and “partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 2:14; 3:6). Jesus modeled reaching other groups outside of His faith group by ministering to the Roman centurion at Capernaum, also when He went with the good news to the people of Sychar (Samaritains), and healing the Canaanite woman’s daughter. The purpose of God to reach all people and all belief systems was seen in Christ’s ministry:

⁵⁹Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, Conflict of the Ages Series 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 9.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God's kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour's love. But not until later did they realize in all its fullness that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:26, 27).⁶¹

The New Testament is not promoting exclusive relationships; it does however give guidelines for excluding someone from a relationship to the church temporarily. Open sexual sins, deliberately teaching false doctrine, and unruly leaders were dealt with and even cut off from the fellowship of the church, but this was always with the hopes that the disciplined person would reconsider his ways and return to the fellowship.

The early church did not tolerate open sin or the deliberate promotion of false doctrine. People practicing these things were to be censured and even shunned, but this was always for the sake of winning them back to a relationship with Christ and the church. When it came to people following individual teachers instead of revealed and accepted truth, Paul plead with the people, "that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor 5:1-13; 1 Cor 1:10).

Seventh-day Adventism has held unity of doctrine as a high standard from its earliest origins. However this doctrinal unity includes an aggressive mission to reach the world with the everlasting good news of Christ and His immanent return. Doctrinal unity and mission to the world must complement each other as equally valid goals. Raul

⁶¹Ibid., 19.

Dederen asserts that the Seventh-day Adventist Church “does not exist for its own sake, but rather to accomplish the commission that was given to it by its Lord.”⁶²

Speaking of this shared goal of the universal church he asserts:

According to the same Scriptures, it is evident that the local church does not live in isolation or in independence from other local churches. No church government, and therefore authority, that fails to recognize the reality and unity of the universal church is biblical. . . . This is clearly reflected in the way the word *ekklesia* is used in the New Testament. . . . The use of *ekklesia* clearly underlies this, and the New Testament ‘body’ metaphor reaffirms it (1 Cor 10:16, 17; 12:12, 27; Eph 4:1-6). Christ does not have many bodies, but one, and that one body must manifest itself in the unity and closeness of the whole church, local and universal.⁶³

There is a sense in which Adventists must think of the Seventh-day Adventist church as working among the universal church where God is still working, albeit “winking” at the times of ignorance concerning certain doctrinal differences that other churches seem to be overlooking. It is plausible to assume that the leaders of the universal church “are responsible to God just in proportion to the talents entrusted to them.”⁶⁴

The Purpose of the Interfaith Pastors’ Peer Coaching Group

Pastors coaching pastors beyond denominational borders then, is the experience of the Interfaith Pastors’ Peer Coaching Group (IPPCG). It is a place where pastors experience authentic growth-centered relationships; from the start, everyone in the group

⁶²Raoul Dederen, “The Church: Authority and Unity,” *Ministry Supplement*, May 1995, 2.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ellen White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 562. On this same page she makes a strong plea for Adventist ministers to “labor for ministers” [of other denominations], “work for honest ministers who have been educated to misinterpret the Word of Life,” and “not to get into controversy with them.” In this same work she declares a blessing to be gained for those who do this work, “Wonderful are the results we shall see if we enter into the work imbued with the Spirit of Christ.”

knows that transformation is the goal. Fellowship, camaraderie, and shoptalk naturally come to the table when pastors get together, but growth-centered friendship is the main focus that peer coaching is designed for.⁶⁵

The IPPCG provides the missing link that brings a pastor from isolation and ministry overload to personal transformation that ends in a purpose and a plan. With a pastor friend from another denomination as a coach, the pastor or PBC (Person Being Coached) knows he has someone on his side that is unbiased, someone who aligns with them for reasons other than the ulterior interest of church members or governing authorities. Openness and transparency can be more easily expressed in this environment. The anonymity of an interfaith coaching relationship eliminates many worries that might be present with someone in the church of the PBC. In this coaching environment the pastors are away from the noise of their immediate church, and transported into a safe growth environment with other pastors. This creates a be motivating atmosphere for them as they see greater growth potential for themselves without the pressure (real or imagined) of anyone else.

The interfaith element in these groups gives an air of accountability that tends toward greater effectiveness. People of different faiths do not naturally seek each other out, but when they do come together they create a “non-neutral environment” which elevates them to a greater state of alertness. Often the comfort of being in a homogeneous

⁶⁵We are not promoting ecumenism in the sense of joining a world coalition to create one church under which all pastors follow. The IPPCG does however carry some of the same results of the ecumenical movement. “Ecumenism as interfaith dialogue between representatives of diverse faiths, does not necessarily intend reconciling their adherents into full, organic unity with one another but simply to promote better relations. It promotes toleration, mutual respect and cooperation, whether among Christian denominations, or between Christianity and other faiths.” Wikipedia, “Ecumenism,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism> (accessed 9 June 2007).

group brings group expectations down to an expected norm which, in turn, creates a laidback atmosphere. Thoughts and actions are sometimes not carefully considered or seriously dealt with.⁶⁶ In the case of this project the heterogeneity of the group kept the interest of its members at a high point of interest and engagement.⁶⁷

Coaching methods are applied in the IPPCG to enable each pastor to come alongside another pastor to help both move forward. At its core, coaching is the practice of helping a person look ahead by using questions for clarification and rethinking their priorities in order to experience greater competence and fulfillment in the area they desire to grow. As Gary Collins points out:

Coaching is not counseling. It is not for those who need therapy to overcome disruptive painful influences from the past; coaches help people build vision and move toward the future. Coaching is not reactive looking back; it's proactive looking ahead. It is not about healing; it's about growing. It focuses less on overcoming weaknesses and more on building skills and strengths.⁶⁸

A key element to the effectiveness of coaching is the ability of the coach and the PBC to get at the root problem that needs to be addressed. Fruitfulness and growth stop happening as a natural result of living in a sinful world. Through effective coaching a minister can identify where they are stuck as a person and a pastor and begin to lay down practical steps that lead them toward growth again. Coaching is not as concerned with

⁶⁶Steve Case, former Youth Ministry Professor at Andrews University Theological Seminary of Seventh-day Adventists, coined the term "non-neutral environment" to describe the setting of a youth meeting where the people were thrown off guard slightly by some unexpected element that caused them to engage more intentionally to what was being taught.

⁶⁷Christopher P. Neck, "From Groupthink to Teamthink: Toward the Creation of Constructive Thought Patterns in Self-Managing Work Teams," *Human Relations* 47, no. 8 (1994): 929-952. "Groups have been subject to a number of weaknesses and problems that interfere with their effectiveness. One notable destructive group tendency has been labeled 'groupthink' a defective decision-making process afflicting highly cohesive and conforming groups." Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1972), 9.

⁶⁸Collins, 16.

getting unstuck from one's history of life's difficulties, as it is to receive concrete direction toward anticipated success.

The IPPCG is not a self-help discovery of inner enlightenment experience. When coaches speak of peer coaching and achieving new goals, they are not saying that they are the managers of their own destiny in the sense that the Sadducees of old saw it.

They [the Sadducees] held that man was free to control his own life and to shape the events of the world; that his destiny was in his own hands. They denied that the Spirit of God works through human efforts or natural means. Yet they still held that, through the proper employment of his natural powers, man could become elevated and enlightened; that by rigorous and austere exactions his life could be purified.⁶⁹

God is at the core of Christian coaching, not the person. God is the guide to what believers believe, "What we believe influences who we are and that in turn impacts everything we do."⁷⁰

Pastors are a unique peer group in society in any denomination. Whether they meet together as a group or not, pastors have the same social status, same basic job description and similar interests and concerns.⁷¹ Pastors face specific challenges that are unique from other professions. Therefore, a coaching group for pastors is a natural progression for those wanting to experience steady growth in their life and ministry.

Coaching is problem-specific, goal oriented and success motivated. It is contractual, measured and particular. "The coach leaves each person being coached, more

⁶⁹White, *The Desire of Ages*, 604.

⁷⁰Collins, 20.

⁷¹A peer group is a naturally separated group in society as stated in Chapter 1. "A peer group is a group of people of approximately the same age, social status, and interests. . . . The purpose of peer groups is to allow each member to come to know themselves better so that they may better serve their clients/patients. Each person brings their issues to the group with the intention of getting support in dealing with the feelings around each issue. The group uses active listening, mirroring and skill such as 'focusing' to support each person. 'No fixing, no advising, no setting each other straight' is the basic framework of support." Wikipedia, "Peer Group," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_group (accessed 8 December 2007).

competent, more fulfilled, and self-confident than he or she would have been otherwise.”⁷² Flaherty thinks of coaching as assisting the protégé for long-term excellence, self-correction and self-generation.⁷³

The Need for the Formation of Pastors’ Peer Coaching Groups

Professionals that intentionally meet together for the purpose of personal growth are using the most accessible and free resource available to them. Growth without human relationships is an oxymoron. Growth always happens in relationships with other human beings. Pastors are no different. Healthy relationships are the hub on which strong leaders are built. Gary Hopkins claims that Abraham Maslow suggested that self-esteem was necessary for a person to be truly productive. He said that people get self-esteem from the love, respect, and acceptance that they get from others.⁷⁴ Pastors, just like any other human being, need to have healthy, non-threatening relationships with peers in order to build resilient confidence. To experiment with pastors in peer relationships was the root premise of this study.

Coaching is catching on in much of the professional sector, and gaining response in the church. Pastors, as the leaders of the life changing aspects of the gospel, need the vital benefit of biblical coaching principles in order to carry their work forward effectively. A leading practitioner of Christian coaching has stated, “Currently, coaching

⁷²Collins, 21.

⁷³James Flaherty, *Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others* (Oxford: Butterworth – Heinemann, 1999), 6-7.

⁷⁴Hopkins, 23. “You don’t teach yourself to have high self-esteem nor is self-esteem taught to you. That’s not how you get it. As Maslow suggested, we get it from others.”

is hot everywhere except in the church. People are turning to nutritional coaches, fitness coaches, financial coaches, public speaking coaches, and what have become known as 'life coaches'—who help others find focus and direction for their lives and careers."⁷⁵

Focus is probably the single greatest need for leaders today and pastors happen to be in one of the most unfocused professions. Their unique profession has them act as "producers of culture" in our society, "primary agents in constructing and forming their congregation's culture."⁷⁶ A pastor's coaching group provides a time and place to focus an unfocused place, the church. The dynamic coaching environment is not experienced in most other settings of the pastor's life.

Growth and skill building seminars or denominational meetings are attended with the hopes that the pastor will become more focused and productive in leading the church toward its mission. These meetings are usually experienced in a large room with more people than any one person could effectively interact with in a way that would result in personal long term growth. In meetings like this the pastor may become convinced and even convicted that change needs to take place in an area of his life or ministry based on what he hears or experiences; but when he returns to his home and church, there is little or no relational mechanism for debriefing in place where he can assess the information, process his action plans and prioritize his goals.

Peer coaching groups allow the pastor to keep growing. It provides a stopping place in the middle of his busy life, to write down with a colleague in ministry, some statements of accountability that will help him flesh out his convictions. It is often

⁷⁵Collins, 15.

⁷⁶Carroll, 2.

observed that people will have varying levels of success in applying information to create transformation on their own. The peer accountability in these groups puts muscle on the bone of conviction so that consistent growth takes place. Bill Hybels has said, "Most leaders over time flatten out. Few leaders keep growing their whole life."⁷⁷ In order to remedy this, a pastor can voluntarily join a pastors coaching group and allow another pastor to coach him toward growth in areas that will bring greater fruitfulness and fulfillment.⁷⁸

Pastors need more opportunities to develop coaching skills. This author has not found many materials for peer coaching in the pastors' context and even less for pastors coaching cross-denominationally. There is a moderate selection for the general Christian layperson, but not particularly for the pastor. There seems to be an evident need for more pastor related resources in this new and developing field.⁷⁹

Churches Need Visionary Leadership

The problem with most of our churches is that they have pastors leading them who are good consensus builders and managers, but not visionary and bold leaders. Patzer sees the Seventh-day Adventist church as a solid organization, yet even he sees that "we're not as great as we could be We have to begin to dream dreams and see

⁷⁷Bill Hybels, "360 Degree Leadership," John Mark Ministries, <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8448.htm> (accessed 16 June 2007). Notes by Mark Conner taken at a conference in Melbourne, February 2001.

⁷⁸The apostle Paul appealed to Christians "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col 3:23, 24).

⁷⁹In a phone conversation with Tony Stoltzfus who wrote the notebook *Peer Coaching*, which I used in this project, he commented that he would be interested to see how his methods and teaching worked among pastors. The notebook, as most coaching materials produced for the church, was designed for a professional or a pastor to teach lay people coaching skills to use in their life and ministry. Patzer, 57.

visions.” But clergy don’t naturally turn to other professionals for help. They like to maintain an image of a “problem-free life.”⁸⁰

Peer pastor coaching groups is one way pastors can inconspicuously develop stimulating environments where they can recapture the passion that got them started in the first place. “Coaching is a support structure for change. . . . When what we do is recognized, cheered and affirmed, we perform at a higher level. Support, encouragement, and accountability form a support structure the coach deploys to help the client get things done.”⁸¹ Pastors in peer coaching groups can provide this for themselves.

People Need Pastors with Integrity

Now more than in previous generations, pastors are faced with challenges to their moral integrity.⁸² The persistent and pernicious work of the devil has increasingly made the work of developing lives of moral and spiritual integrity more difficult. “Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous; never before were young men and young women confronted by perils so great as confront them today.”⁸³

⁸⁰Keli Regenstein, “Clergy Dissatisfaction: Denominational Hierarchy as a Salient Factor,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 59, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2005): 79-81.

⁸¹Stoltzfus, *Peer Coaching* participant notebook, 13.

⁸²“Those in ministry ‘are equally likely to have their marriage end in divorce’ as the general church populace. Ministers have the second highest divorce rate among all professions. 77% of pastor’s wives are dissatisfied with marriage. 20% of pastors say they view pornography at least once a month. 33% of pastors confess to “inappropriate” sexual behavior with someone in the church. 20% of pastors admit having an affair while in the ministry.” All of these quotes appear to be taken from verifiable sources. Save America Ministries, www.Saveus.org (accessed 18 April 2007).

⁸³Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 289.

To finish well, is to have lived well. Many pastors are not living well. It is a shame that many Christian leaders do not finish well. They begin with great passion and vision as servants of Christ, but so often end disillusioned, dejected and defeated. Peer coaching groups for pastors provide a place for God's leaders to stand strong to the end. "In a coaching relationship, we're not meeting just to talk; we have an agenda, clear expectations and concrete goals we're shooting for. Coaching is a growth-centered relationship. There is a definite, up-front expectation that if an action step is decided on, it is going to get done! Establishing and maintaining this standard is a big part of what makes coaching work."⁸⁴ And leaders that will continue to set priorities for integrity on all fronts will most likely end well.

In this chapter I have looked at biblical models of peer relationships as they relate to various coaching environments. This has not been an exhaustive work, but a cross-section to show the abundance of Bible examples where individuals came into intentional interpersonal relationships with peers for the purpose of growth. In the following chapter I will show an example of how a local community of pastors developed a coaching group for the purpose of personal and professional growth.

⁸⁴Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 15. Commenting on Peter's ladder of Christian virtues (2 Pet 1:5-7), Ellen White says, "In the Christian life we are to work upon the plan of addition. If we are faithful in working on this plan, God works for us on the plan of multiplication." Here God's prophet is reflecting heaven's optimism about the potential for change and growth in human beings.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING AN INTERFAITH PASTORS' PEER COACHING GROUP

Development of the concepts behind the IPPCG has matured over a period of several years. The concept for the IPPCG was inspired from a sense of dissatisfaction I had when I realized the lack of quality peer interaction with my colleagues in ministry over the last twenty years.¹ It was determined that without a process that engenders structured peer interaction with other ministers, there will continue to be this relational disconnect in ministry. Ministers, like other professionals, need interpersonal peer stimulus that focuses on defining, determining, and reaching their God given goals.

Early Attempts at Forming Pastor-to-Pastor Peer Groups

While working on this Doctor of Ministry dissertation, I made a preliminary attempt at creating a relation based pastors peer group in Huntsville, Alabama. This first effort was

¹The extent of peer interaction for pastors of the Adventist church is minimal in most situations I have been exposed to in three conferences over the last twenty three years. In the three conferences I have served, pastors are usually called to a quarterly meeting by the ministerial secretary. At these meetings instruction is given on various facets of the ministers' work, reports from the conference officers are given; also materials and strategies are shared for carrying out their work in general areas of concern. There is usually no intentionally structured time for interactions between pastors accept what naturally occurs during the conference paid luncheon. For outgoing extroverted pastors this meal time is usually a time of jovial interaction, for some it is just a time to eat with other pastors sitting nearby. In some Seventh-day Adventist conferences the ministerial director will arrange for the ministers in an area to meet monthly or by-monthly for fellowship and prayer; some have even encouraged this by paying for the meal. This latter model lends itself more to the needed minister to minister peer interaction. Even this falls short of any methodology that deliberately attempts at gathering pastors in peer relationships for the purpose of growth towards greater fulfillment and fruitfulness.

with Adventist pastors from the African American churches, who were the only Adventist pastors available within a thirty minute drive. The premise at that group was to meet twice a month for six months for the purpose of growth in personal and ministerial skills. The growth aspect of the group was based on the reading and discussion of portions from a book the group all agreed upon and that they all felt was addressing an area we wanted to focus on. Each time the group met a different pastor was assigned to share a chapter review. In addition to the book review, time was allocated for prayer and sharing ministry concerns, as well as tips and encouragement about ministry. It was a time to rethink ministry goals based on the feedback and group learning experienced from meeting together. It was also a time of building friendship in a profession that has often been noted to be one of the loneliest professions.² It was rich and rewarding for the four and sometimes more pastors that were involved. The author felt that he grew from these meetings and drew strength that lightened the harsh realities sometimes sustained in ministry by knowing he had a group of peers who encountered similar experiences.

My second attempt at forming an Adventist pastors' growth group was after I had moved from Alabama to Arkansas. Parting company with this first peer pastor group was difficult since it met a real personal need. The satisfaction of the first experiment in Alabama and the need to finish an experiment for this dissertation led to redeveloping what I call in this paper the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group. This group was made up of Adventist pastors from within a thirty-mile radius, but for some reason this group lost its cohesiveness

²Yeagley, 16. "I've noticed loneliness in the lives of clergy. They experience isolation from parishioners who expect superhuman feats of sacrificial service. The demands made on their time isolate them from their families." He also cites Herbert Benson, *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief* (New York: Scribner Publishing, 1996), 162. "By and large, these religious leaders, representing a variety of denominations and creeds, had this in common: they were overworked and underpaid, their jobs were very stressful, and they often had no one to turn to for their own counseling or support."

and commitment after about four months. Following is an explanation of this first group in Arkansas.

The first group in Arkansas was like the group in Alabama; the group agreed to meet for six months every other week with a book review, prayer, and sharing time. The purpose remained the same, a desire to grow in fulfillment toward personal and professional goals with the interpersonal support of minister peers. An additional exercise was added to this experience in order to focus more on the fruitfulness and fulfillment aspect of our meetings. After agreeing to be part of the group, each pastor was asked to write his personal and ministry mission statement. They were encouraged to share their statements with the group for feedback and discussion. This added exercise gave the participants an opportunity to write out their own thoughts and make them available to their minister friends. From these basic practices, the name for this group became the Purpose Driven Pastors Forum (PDPF). My hope was that having the pastors deliberately writing down a personal and professional mission statement would help create a greater peer interaction between them. Consequently, several of the pastors (probably half of the participants) never wrote out their personal and ministry mission statements. Maybe because of this and lack of focus on what the process was all about, the group began to dwindle and finally terminated for lack of attendance.

The second attempt in Arkansas was with an interdenominational group of pastors. This group was the basis of this paper; it evolved into the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group. The model for this group was different than the previous two groups in at least two distinct ways. One is that it involved pastors of other denominations. The previous group, with strictly Adventist pastors, discontinued for lack of time, commitment, or interest. Seeking out pastors of other denominations had an immediate advantage in that the

individuals did not assume they knew what was going to take place and what the outcomes were going to be. The second difference, in this mixed denomination group, was that coaching was set out as the main method of building peer relationships. These coaching relationships were designed to deliberately lead the pastor to determine growth areas for greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in their personal and professional lives.³

One additional change from the PDPF to the IPPCG was that I paired off each participant in groups of two, thus utilizing the peer coaching principles. I included myself as a partner with another pastor as the other four men had. Use of the coaching methodology insisted that each person have a coaching partner for optimal coaching success. Initially there were five pastors of other denominations and four Adventist pastors. In the end it was three Adventists paired with three pastors of three different denominations with a total of four denominations represented.⁴ The group decided that they did not want to choose their own partner, I as initiator of the group purposely paired them off. I deliberately matched each Adventist pastor with a pastor of a different denomination, thinking that this would give the study a more accurate understanding of the interfaith dynamics. This plan gave us three interfaith pastors paired with an Adventist pastor for a total of six men.

³My personal opinion is that a homogenous group is less creative and progressive because of false assumptions or predetermined conclusions. Whenever a group of pastors from the same denomination, education, gender and culture get together there are certain ideologies and views that are automatically assumed. The phenomenon of "group think" begins to set in and the creativity, that comes from the input of different religious cultures and perspectives, wanes. It is almost like an unseen glass ceiling keeps the group from thinking beyond the assumptions each carries with him, be they correct or not.

This idea came more out of necessity than out of inspiration. When I attempted to call the Adventist pastors back together there was little interest or motivation to form an Adventist pastors peer group a second time. The only alternative to getting a pastors group together for the purpose of this dissertation was to invite pastors from area churches, both Adventist and other denominations.

⁴The denominations represented were Seventh-day Adventist, Assembly of God, Baptist, and Church of Christ.

It should be noted, in both of these previous groups, the one in Alabama and the first one in Arkansas, the PDPF, there was no coaching element incorporated. Peer learning and collaboration on topics that were of general interest to the group of ministers was the initial aim of the first two groups, coaching was not even a consideration and only vaguely understood.⁵ The only coaching terminology this author had been exposed to up to this point in ministry was the coach training for implementation of the Natural Church Development (NCD) initiatives through the North American Division Evangelism Institute at Andrews University in Michigan.⁶

Before the IPPCG was launched I wanted to get an idea of how the boards or supervisors who had some authority over the pastor felt about their pastor getting involved in an interfaith peer coaching experience. Below is a review of the survey and process that was followed.

1. Governing Leaders of Churches' (Conference and Local) Response to the Survey on the Condition of Pastors' Fulfillment and Fruitfulness in Ministry

A survey was designed to ascertain the level of receptivity that conference or congregational leaders of the pastors involved in the IPPCG might have. The title of the

⁵The main change from the Alabama experiment and the first Arkansas experiment was that the Purpose Driven Pastors Forum incorporated a life mission and purpose statement exercise in hopes of gaining a more intentional growth oriented element for the pastors. This idea came from two other Doctor of Ministry projects that I had read about from other schools. In both of these projects, I the facilitator, involved the pastors in participating in defining their purpose and writing out a vision or mission statement.

⁶Natural Church Development (NCD) came to the Adventist church as a method of organizing the church for optimal health towards church growth in mid-1990. This author received the advanced training for NCD coaching at that time. The seeds for this dissertation were planted back then. They promoted the idea of pastors having a phone coach, with whom they could collaborate and gain advice towards implementing the NCD principles. I never thought at that time that this coaching concept could be applied to any area of life where growth was needed.

Questionnaire was, "Your opinion of the pastors' experience in N.W. Arkansas concerning interfaith pastor to pastor relationships." The questions had to do with whether they would support their pastor(s) being involved in an interfaith fellowship where coaching, goal setting, and peer support were shared between the pastors of the group. The survey allowed for three levels of response: "yes, somewhat, or no." A quick review of the completed questionnaires tells that there was strong support in all cases. None of those surveyed marked "no," they all marked "yes" or "somewhat" in support of the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Groups. This would seem to grant strong support for developing this idea on a broader level.

Two leaders (the president and ministerial director) from the Arkansas-Louisiana conference of SDAs responded positively to the survey concerning interfaith pastor-to-pastor relationships (see appendix 1). The regional leader of the Assemblies of God pastors responded positively as well as the local governing lay leaders of the First Baptist Church and the First Christian Church.

Below is a list of the questions on this questionnaire, with background purpose statements, given to governing leaders of the pastors in the IPPCG:

The responses to this questionnaire will be evaluated in more detail in chapter five of this paper.

TABLE 1

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS SENT TO THE GOVERNING
LEADERS OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE IPPCG

Question on questionnaire	Purpose of question
1. Do the pastors of this conference interact regularly with pastors of other faiths for peer collaboration and/or fellowship?	This was to see if anything like the IPPCG was taking place within any of their denominations. Currently, I have found no such organization.
2. Would pastors benefit from spending time discussing their goals with another pastor, with whom they had developed the tools and commitment to ask helpful questions for greater clarity and effectiveness?	For someone unfamiliar with the coaching paradigm, many of these questions were meant to describe some of the practices of coaching without actually describing coaching. I thought that putting the questions in practical terms of exercises that most pastors would benefit from would disarm the reader and gain their support. In retrospect, a simple statement about what peer coaching would have been helpful for a person to gain a clearer vision about what I was trying to accomplish.
3. Would pastors be enriched by evaluating their personal and professional goals with a pastor partner who was committed to their wellbeing?	Sharing professional goals for evaluation is something I have personally desired. It is somewhat akin to the passage in Romans 10:7-9 that says, "The word is near you even in your mouth. . . . If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, you will be saved." If a pastor can verbalize what he believes the Lord has put in his heart to do, it brings clarity. With the help of a peer partner, the evaluation process gains even more focus.)
4. Would a pastor benefit from having this friend ask him for accountability toward goals he (the individual pastor) has set for himself?	Again, this is a coaching method that is given without actually saying coaching. I wanted to reader to not get encumbered with new jargon before they had clear examples of what I was going to be doing with the pastors.
5. When pastors have so many "irons in the fire" would it be helpful for them to have a fellow pastor ask questions to help them toward sorting out their priorities?	Asking questions is another coaching skill invaluable to a person who needs to sort out an overwhelming multitude of concerns.
6. Would it be helpful for pastors to have a pastor friend in full time ministry from another denomination (for confidentiality and transparency) with whom they could share openly about their struggles?	This question was asked to delve into the thinking of denominational leaders on what level they felt their pastors could participate in interfaith relationships.
7. Would pastors benefit from a fellow ministry confidant to pray with and for concerning their challenges?	It was assumed that prayer was a vital practice that brought the pastors fruitfulness and fulfillment.

Table 1: *Continued.*

<p>8. Would you encourage pastors meeting with pastors of other denominations for the purpose of learning and implementing the principles of peer coaching and accountability toward fulfilling life goals?</p>	<p>This is the first time the word "coaching" was used in the questionnaire. I felt that enough examples had been given in the previous questions to now label them with the term coaching. This question was asked to get a response either positive or negative or mixed on the interfaith interactions of their pastors.</p>
<p>9. Concerning fruitfulness and fulfillment toward reaching personal and ministry goals, where would you guess the average full time pastor in your conference would be on a scale of one to five, five being the highest fulfillment?</p>	<p>From the research I had done, there seemed to be a multitude of challenges facing the church pastor; unsatisfied with fruitfulness and fulfillment is an area I believe many pastors are suffering without a plan to bring change.</p>
<p>10. Do you think many of the pastors in your denomination would join a peer coaching pastors group like the one described in this questionnaire?</p>	<p>The point of this question seems obvious; I wanted to know what they thought about their pastors being a part of an IPPCG.</p>
<p>11. Would you encourage your pastor to join an Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group that did the things listed in this questionnaire?</p>	<p>I wanted to know if they were interested enough to advertise to their other pastor friends.</p>

2. Effect of Pastors' Encouraging Each Other to Determine Their Growth Areas and Working toward Mastery

The goal of coaching is to experience change and transformation. Radical changes in a person's life do not happen by accident, they happen when one decides to do something purposeful in order to bring about the change hoped for. The IPPCG was designed to give pastors a growth environment where they could concentrate on what their deepest passions are and develop skills to help each other step up to an action plan and try to fulfill one or more of their God given desires.

Before getting into the results of the first questionnaire, it would be well to define mastery, since it was one of the objectives of this project. Excellence is another word for mastery. Jackson Carroll states, in the most comprehensive study on the state of pastors in North America and Canada, that ministry excellence (mastery) is different than business

excellence. He argues that the secular business model has a difficult and awkward application in the church. The unique parameters of ministry in the church are very different from those in the secular marketplace. The business model has at its foundation "market values defined as growth, hard work, strength, efficiency, and avoidance of weakness or vulnerability."⁷ To try and push these values on the church and its pastors is to skew the actual goals of the church, which is to build a grace, oriented community.

Carroll further asserts that the church, from its very foundation, has as its icon of success (mastery) a Savior who lived in obscurity, saw very little observable results, and ended up being crucified. Ministry excellence in this case was not based on His ability to work His way to the top of the corporate ladder through strategic planning, financial acumen, and negotiating skills. The Kingdom of God has at its core a call to the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. This is a difficult group to build productive, bottom line oriented success out of. In pursuit of holiness believers are required to admit the reality of human sinfulness. Our own motives and efforts in ministry are often "a strange mixture of sin and grace, skill and frailty."⁸ Love is to permeate everything a follower of Jesus does in the corporation called the church, where the weakest member is to be preferred over the strong. One would be hard pressed to try and build a successful business in the marketplace under these terms.

Seeking mastery and excellence for pastors is "much more spontaneous, unpredictable, and unrefined"⁹ than any technique or methodology could produce. Carroll admits that excellence for a pastor is better thought of in context with a particular church and

⁷Carroll, 194.

⁸Ibid., 197.

⁹Brian Williams, 69.

a particular pastor at a particular time. So the questions then become, "What does it mean for this pastor and this congregation to be faithful to the gospel in this context?"¹⁰ There are normative pictures of excellence in scripture and denominational tradition, but these are inadequate to form the practices of ministry today. All must understand and adapt the principles, yes, but to put the constraints and methods on a particular pastor and church could not bring about the expected mastery or excellence. God is not interested in building up methods, He is interested in building up men and women and that is a constant work in progress, ever changing, ever reevaluating.

With this broader understanding of "mastery" in ministry, I would now like to look into the effect the IPPCG had on the pastors who encouraged each other and worked toward mastery of their goals.

Two questionnaires were employed to help me determine the affect that the IPPCG had on the pastors setting self-determined growth goals. The first questionnaire was administered at the first meeting in which the ministers attended. The objective of this first questionnaire was to determine the groups' level of interest in interacting with pastors of other faiths. It was also designed to discover whether they thought it would be helpful for them to clarify and set growth goals, share life struggles, develop accountability steps, and learn coaching skills. The second questionnaire was administered at the last meeting after the four months of group meetings. The purpose of this second one was to see if the expectations presented in questionnaire one were met. The results of this second questionnaire will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five. In this chapter the second questionnaire is

¹⁰This is a strong argument in favor of the coaching model that places the responsibility for necessary changes on the one being coached. That person knows best what challenges they are facing and what God is leading them to change.

reviewed only for the purpose of showing how the IPPCG affected the pastors in mastering their growth goals.

In table 2 are the questions given to the participants of the IPPCG at the first meeting. Listed in the first column are the questions followed by the responses in the next three.

From the responses to this questionnaire one can see that there were no negative responses (fifty "yes" marks and only thirteen "somewhat" with zero "no's"). Even from a cursory review one can easily conclude that there was a great deal of interest from these seven pastors. They were evidently anticipating having some felt need(s) met by participating with other pastors in this structured peer environment.

This first questionnaire was created with several assumptions and hypotheses in mind. The main hypothesis was that ministers would be energized to achieve personal growth goals by developing peer relationships using coaching techniques with an interfaith group of pastors doing the same thing. The first assumption was that the ministers attending the group sessions were attending because they had some felt need for peer interaction with other ministers.¹¹ Both the hypothesis and first assumption seem to have been affirmed with questionnaire 1.

¹¹It was my experience of loneliness in ministry and lack of accountability that led me to create this project. I was assuming that other ministers carried the same sort of feelings.

TABLE 2

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS GIVEN AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE IPPCG
FOR PARTICIPANTS OF THE IPPCG AND THEIR RESPONSES

Questionnaire #1	Yes	Somewhat	No
1. Would you appreciate interacting with a group of interfaith pastors that you could go to regularly for encouragement and growth?	7	0	0
2. When you feel spiritually spent, would another pastor in ministry be helpful in discussing the direction of your goals and vision?	5	2	0
3. Would it be enriching for you to evaluate your personal and professional growth areas and to have a pastor friend coach you toward goals you have set for yourself?	3	4	0
4. When you have so many "irons in the fire" would it be helpful to have a fellow pastor coach you toward sorting out your priorities?	3	4	0
5. Would it be encouraging to have a few close colleagues in ministry who would share openly about their struggles and ask you to do the same?	6	1	0
6. Would you benefit from a fellow ministry confidant(s) to pray for you through your struggles?	7	0	0
7. Would you value meeting with a few spiritually mature men in ministry who could help you remain accountable?	7	0	0
8. If a few pastoral colleagues met to develop their ministry goals, would you be interested to share your own goals for feedback?	6	1	0
9. Would you be willing to share ideas gleaned from materials the group has agreed to read concerning goal setting and peer coaching?	6	1	0

Table 2: *Continued.*

10. What would be your preference for meeting times and place?	(a) Alternating from place to place	(b) Stay at one central location	The group chose one location (A golf club restaurant)
	(a) Meeting during lunch	(b) Meeting w/o lunch	The group met during lunch
	(a) Once a week for one hour	(b) Once every other week for two hours	The group met every other week for two hours
	(a) 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.	(b) 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.	The group met from noon to 2 p.m.

Another assumption was that ministers would naturally feel a need for mutual support in ministry from another minister. All seven pastors wanted regular interaction for “encouragement and growth” (question 1). Six of the seven marked yes to anticipating encouragement “from close colleagues in ministry who would share openly about their struggles and ask you to do the same” (question 5).

From my personal experience, I inherently knew that little peer-to-peer support was created by denominational leaders to address the multitude of challenges facing the local church pastor.¹² Many of the fine-tuned problems that arise in a pastor’s personal or congregational life are too delicate to share with parishioners; so another minister would be a more attractive option. If this peer support was from a minister of another denomination it actually would seem to bring an added safety feature to a pastor needing a person to share sensitive information.

Assuming that most pastors are encumbered with an ever growing and ever changing set of ministry and personal objectives, it was taken for granted that these ministers would want to have someone and somewhere that they could clarify and focus on the most

¹²This is not meant as a criticism of conference leadership; it is only an observation that I experienced.

important objectives.¹³ Six marked “yes” and one “somewhat” when asked if they wanted to meet with other pastors to “develop their ministry goals” and were willing to “share your own goals for feedback” (question 8).

Attaining the big goals in life sometimes eludes pastors; many pastors suffer under the tyranny of little objectives (self-imposed or other-imposed) in hopes that they will someday get to the big ones without the distractions of all the little ones. These pastors attested to this fact in their responses, openly admitting to a desire to discuss the direction and goals of their ministry, to evaluate their growth areas with another pastor and to seek encouragement from another pastor in a relationship of accountability. Attaining the big goals of life must be a nagging desire in the heart of every minister interested in growing in fruitfulness and fulfillment.

Prayer support was assumed to be a priority for ministers; by nature of their position, one would conclude that prayer would be essential to the pastors. The questionnaire highlights one question in regard to prayer in the context of pastors supporting pastors through prayer. All seven marked “yes” to seeing benefit from having a colleague to pray for them through struggles (question 6). Ministers can pray for and with parishioners and lay leaders in ministry at their churches, but there is something special about praying with a peer in ministry who knows the deep struggles of the heart of a pastor.

¹³Carroll, 214. Lillian Daniel, a United Church of Christ pastor tells of two clergy friendships she formed. She felt that friendships within her congregation were limited. She needed a place where she could address the major focus of her life—ministry. Things like frustration from church work and staff conflicts, these were not safe or appropriate to vent about to parishioners. The two lady pastors she forged friendships with became a source of deep and satisfying encouragement. “We disagree politically and theologically. We have radically different understandings of our calls. Yet nothing could have prepared me . . . for the way in which God has used our friendship for both holy encouragement and prophetic correction.”

Accountability in ministry is often a practice that goes untended until too late. Of late, the issue has become more important in the minds of many concerned pastors, due to the prevalence of high profile ministers being found with integrity or morality issues out of line in some area of life. It was assumed that ministers would want to set up defenses of accountability in order to avoid a breakdown in moral integrity.¹⁴ It was also assumed that most of the ministers, based on national averages, did not currently have an accountability partner in whom they could be transparent with. All seven pastors in the IPPCG wanted a spiritually mature pastor with whom they could remain accountable (question 7).

Of the nine questions on this questionnaire two dealt directly with the coaching idea. In both questions the response was lower than any of the other questions. Three marked "yes" to both questions and four marked "somewhat" to both of them. This tells me that there was some hesitancy or lack of understanding about the practice of coaching from these pastors. There was still no lack of interest in pursuing coaching relationships; it was simply responded to more ambiguously than the other questions.¹⁵

3. The Effect of Pastoral Peer Coaching on the Pastor and the Church

Based on this short term study, there are sufficient examples to conclude that pastoral peer coaching affects the pastor positively. It would seem that since peer coaching affects the

¹⁴Dr. Walt Williams of the In Ministry program at Andrews University Theological Seminary, while attending an international mentoring conference at the Denver Seminary, was struck with the need of an accountability partner for the first time in his ministry. References were made at that conference by Howard Hendrix from a study he and John Maxwell had done of ministers who had ruined their ministry through moral breakdowns. Of the one thousand fallen ministers surveyed none of them had an accountability partner.

¹⁵Ambiguity to the coaching term and how it applies to ministry would probably get a similar response to most pastors, given the relative newness of the practice especially in the church. My own ignorance only two years ago is an illustration of the point.

pastor positively, that the churches the pastors work for would be affected positively as well.¹⁶ Below are a few observations.

The church, like any organization, will always benefit from its leader becoming more focused and intentional about his or her life and work. The heavy emphasis on pastoral leadership in the book of Hebrews declared that the members should “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Heb 13:17). This should be a matter of contemplation for the pastor, to be a leader worthy of others to submit to create a high level of responsibility and accountability to those being led.¹⁷ Unless a leader is consistently evaluating his condition as one “who must give account” and receives feedback from others interested in his success and the advance of the kingdom of God, then they are not only in danger of missing their potential, but leading the church astray as well.

Pastors who take the initiative to coach with other pastors are aligning themselves to gain greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry. These pastors are predictably going to be pastors that are trying to move their church forward. Seeking God for clarity in the areas of their life that need alignment is the first place for the minister to seek direction, but using another person in their profession to help move their leadership role as pastor to a new level is vitally important. As goes the pastor, so goes the church. When the pastor is clear in seeing

¹⁶The effect of peer pastor coaching on the church was not the particular focus of this project, however, there are some conclusions we will speculate about on the effect coaching has on the church.

¹⁷Bill Hybels, “The Art of Self Leadership: Your Toughest Management Challenge is Always Yourself,” *Leadership* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 86. In this article about self leadership, he gives a list of eleven questions a pastor should ask himself: “Is my calling sure? Is my vision clear? Is my passion hot? Is my character submitted to Christ? Is my pride subdued? Are my fears at bay? Are interior issues undermining my leadership? Are my ears open to the Spirit’s whisper? Is my pace sustainable? Are my gifts developing? Is my heart for God increasing?”

what he/she is called to do and is developing plans to fulfill the vision, the church must surely respond to this positive effect. The Bible uses the term "like people, like priest" to illustrate the effect of people following leaders who are leading in the wrong direction. Jesus used the term "the blind leaders of the blind" to describe the erroneous path of the religious leaders in His day and the resulting blind following of the people that led them both "into the ditch." Alert pastors who seek the help of another pastor in a coaching relationship would be the least likely candidates to have this charge leveled at their ministries.¹⁸

Friendship and camaraderie is a considerable benefit that the IPPCG gives the pastor; someone who can help him/her evaluate, prioritize, and act on new information. Ben Franklin is noted for having said, "He that teaches himself hath a fool for a master."¹⁹ With all the information that pastors have to sort through, it behooves them to have a peer to help evaluate the validity and importance of it.

Between each large group meeting in the IPPCG pastors met with their partner. These partner sessions were coaching sessions where each pastor took a turn at asking questions from the eight sessions in the workbook. The sessions each had questions for the coaches to ask of each other in their coach partner meetings. The chapters were: Your Most Important Leadership Decision, The Coaching Approach, Cultivating Authenticity, The Covenant Life, Change Goals, Action Steps, Coaching Your Peer, Energy for Change. As the pastors asked the questions they learned more about each other and helped each other define the goal and

¹⁸Ben Franklin, quoted in Hopkins, 34. Dr. Hopkins has been involved in several studies that look into the need for interpersonal relationships within the church. He concludes, "Social support, or love, is health giving. For social support to be effective, it must be embedded in emotion-based attachment. Beth S. Rosenthal, "Non-School Correlates of Dropout: An Integrative Review of the Literature," *Children and Youth Services Review* 20, no. 5 (1998): 413-434. Sincere, honest relationships promote good health" (Hos 4:9; Matt 15:14).

¹⁹Geoff Tibballs, *The Mammoth Book of Zingers, Quips, and One-Liners* (New York: Carroll & Graff Publishers, 2004), 177.

action steps needed to reach it. In addition, a list of holiness questions were available for each pastor to choose from. They would tell their coach partner which questions they wanted to be held accountable to (see appendix 2).

When the pastors of the IPPCG accepted a peer coach partner they, by design, accepted a paradigm that is “forward-looking and action-oriented” to provide a means to bring “the focus necessary to take their dreams and make them realities.”²⁰ This aspect of looking ahead and focusing in itself creates a positive effect on the church – mainly, the pastor is becoming more purposeful and focused on what he sees God leading him to do.

Pastors are bombarded with new suggestions and ideas for ministry from a multitude of sources: their conference leadership, demands from laypeople, church support organizations through mail and media, church growth marketers on the phone, and internet. Para-church organizations are constantly advertising to get the attention of pastors wanting them to experience and learn about their new product.²¹ When a pastor sends off for materials or attends one of these programs he/she often comes back all fired up with someone’s ideas and strategies to carry out his work more effectively. The pastors want desperately to hone their skills and find tools to help them reach their priorities. However, there is a vital gap that occurs between the seminar and the church where the pastor is supposed to implement the new ideas he has just collected. She has never had a chance to compare what she has learned with her core values; she has not processed the information to see if what she has learned is in agreement with her ministry purpose and vision. If this pastor already had another pastor

²⁰Robert E. Logan, Sherilyn Carlton, and Tara Miller, *Coaching 101: Discover the Power of Coaching* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003), 18.

²¹A few examples would be *Ministry Magazine PREACH seminars*, Focus on the Family with James Dobson, John Maxwell with the Injoy Group ministries, Rick Warren and Pastors.com church growth, Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Association, on pastor leadership seminars just to name a few.

in a coaching relationship, she would have a person ready to walk her through the mental hoops needed to evaluate the information she had been exposed to and then be able to determine if she needed to shelve the ideas or develop growth goals and implementation steps toward fulfilling them. With coaching relationships in place pastors can have a readily accessible process available to clarify what they believe God is telling them to do with the new information.

For example, if pastors had attended a recent seminar, read a book, or listened to a lecture, they would first meet with their peer-coach from the IPPCG. Their coach partner might then ask them to share: "What things do you want to do or accomplish in your lifetime?" The second part of the question would be the clincher, "Which three of these things do you most need or want to start on soon?" After they relay their lifetime goals to their peer-partner, the peer-partner would then refer to the "Coaching Questions" in the back of the Peer Coaching notebook, and ask direct questions like: "What has God said to you about this?" They could ask, "By following this new information would you be true to your own values?"²² In this way the person being coached may realize that they will need to prioritize their new priorities based on their new conclusions. At that point the coach could then help them focus with questions like, "What will you do with this new information?" Or, "Make an action step out of that, what do you want to do?"²³

²²I created these questions for the sake of illustration. Coaching questions need to be strategic, but any question that gets the person reflecting on what they believe God wants them to do and will help them prioritize their action plan, will be a question leading in the right direction.

²³These are questions I made-up based on the principles of coaching.

4. The Need for Peer Feedback to Improve Pastoral Performance

The overwhelming majority of responses to the final questionnaire led me to conclude that the pastors of the IPPCG felt like they grew “personally and professionally toward greater fruitfulness and fulfillment” (question 1), that they used their “pastor partner to keep” them “accountable to” their goals” (question 3), and that the “support and encouragement” of their partner (question 6) were helpful in making them feel more productive and fulfilled. These results were largely from the fact that the IPPCG structure engaged them to talk about things that they were passionate about.²⁴

People learn by talking; talking is much more organized and directed when someone who cares is listening. The listening skills that a coach learns are the key to getting a person to talk out their concerns, hopes, and dreams. Listening skills combined with good questions are a combination that makes the peer coaching structure work so well.²⁵

Talking it out is promoted in the Bible. It is somewhat akin to the passage in Rom 10:7-9 that says, “The word is near you even in your mouth . . . if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, you will be saved.” If a pastor can verbalize to another what he believes the Lord has put in his heart to do, it brings clarity. With the help of a peer partner, the evaluation process gains even more focus when the PBC can see what his priorities are and set action steps in place to attain the God-given goal.

In every profession there are people facing decisions that are going to affect the future of their life and the lives of the people they lead. It is distressing to think that leaders make

²⁴Logan, Carlton, and Miller, 19. “At its core, coaching is really quite simple. You don’t have to be an expert—anyone can learn to coach. In fact, you’re probably already functioning as a coach in many ways. We all play the role of a coach sometimes; we just don’t always recognize it as coaching.”

²⁵Stoltzfus, *Peer Coaching: Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth Centered Peer Relationships*, 51.

these life-changing, all-important decisions without the benefit of another concerned, non-biased person. Without the feedback of a friend, who has their best interest in mind, our self-obsession with doing things our own narrow way will inevitably get in the way. Williams portrays a gruesome picture of the fate of individuals who make decisions when they are disengaged from a meaningful relationship with significant other people, left only to depend on their self: "The self has become so large that we can no longer see past our selves. . . . Emotionally and spiritually starved, we are only offered our selves for nourishment. But in the end we can never cannibalistically consume enough of the self to be satisfied, because the self alone is not satisfying."²⁶

No single person can discover all of the ramifications of a decision for himself/herself. Adding one person to a discussion creates multiple lines of communication, a great benefit in evaluating priorities. When an individual allows another person to hear their thoughts and plans in a coaching relationship, they in essence create six streams of discovery that would not be available alone. "Whenever two people meet, there are really six people present. There is each man as he sees himself (two), each man as the other person sees him (two) and each man as he really is (two)."²⁷ In the case of the IPPCG the other person would be his peer partner, the person to share important thoughts and plans with. He becomes the pastor's clearing house for processing important information that can determine the next steps toward fruitfulness and fulfillment.

In another study a pastor-coach who had coached several pastors over a five year period listed "personal leadership" as the second most important area that pastors needed

²⁶Brian Williams, 68.

²⁷Battley, 105.

peer coaching for greater fruitfulness. "Pastors are faced with a number of challenges related to leading and managing their own lives. Their schedules are quite flexible and non-routine but they are faced with the demands of parishioners that often require immediate attention. The ability to plan, reflect, organize and live pro-actively is an area of growth for many pastors."²⁸

All of the pastors in the IPPCG gave a strong affirmation that they felt like "the exercise of sharing your ministry goals and growth areas benefited your sense of fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry" (question 9) at the end of the four month coaching experience. Having a pastor as a peer coach gives the PBC a built in fail safe mechanism that will keep him engaged in evaluating and implementing important points in the planning process. Planning is a frightening endeavor; planning assumes that you will NOT do certain things and in a sense restrict the options available to you. There is a real resistance to putting things down on paper, because people somehow think that they will not be able to change things. To have a consistent time to meet in a pastor coach relationship allows the PBC an opportunity to change plans, reevaluate them, or discontinue them altogether. This is a freeing thought and could enhance more and better plans as time progresses.

If the desire of God is that the members of the church continue discipleship growth in order to fulfill Christ's command to "bear much fruit," then to form interfaith peer coaching relationships among pastors of various denominations would be a consistent way to model discipleship to the church. The Great Commission enjoins Christian leaders to make disciples

²⁸Rogers, 130, 131. Eugene Rogers stated that "maintaining spiritual vitality" was his number one area of concern for the pastors he coached.

of all people groups.²⁹ Discipleship is never a one time experience from which professionals graduate and move on to more important things. Discipleship like sanctification is the lifestyle of the Christian, a lifetime commitment to growing into the “fullness and stature of Christ” (John 15:8). The strength and influence of the church is dependant on the leaders (starting with the pastor) commitment to lifetime discipleship. Interfaith peer coaching is a way discipleship is progressing in the church; pastors have an opportunity to be on the front line of the discovery and implementation of growth principles available through interfaith coaching. Carroll states, “Excellent ministry is difficult, if not impossible, if a person cuts her or himself off from close friendships both within and outside of the congregation.”³⁰

5. A Model for Interfaith Pastors’ Peer Coaching Groups

After studying the dynamics of peer relationships and the positive affect it could have on leaders, I was emboldened to try out these theories in a real life setting. Having attempted two different times to create pastor peer groups, this third attempt had more information and experience with which to evaluate and fine tune the process. While searching for a book or program that would be a natural fit for peer pastor relationships, I found a near perfect match when I stumbled into Tony Stoltzfus’ book, *Leadership Coaching*. In the two previous pastor groups that I formed, our main focus was the review of Richard Foster’s, *Celebration of Discipline* and John Maxwell’s *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Books are good, but most have limited group learning tools and exercises that enable learning new skills. Pastors are

²⁹“Matt 28:19,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichols (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 5:557. “Christianity effectively destroys all barriers of race, nationality, society, economics, and social custom. Christianity depends for success on its disentanglement from all national peculiarities, forms of government, social institutions, and everything of a purely local character.”

³⁰Carroll, 213.

often information gluttons, but emaciated when it comes to practical application. This proved true with the pastor groups and these two books, the group spent a lot of time theorizing and discussing the content of the books, but no measurable action was made toward practicing what each was learning. My desire for the IPPCG was to create a vehicle (a workbook with a step by step process to learn coaching skills that included action plans) that would lead the group from information to application on the key practices of peer coaching.

After reading Stoltzfus' book on coaching, I called him by telephone and found that he had another resource in the form of a workbook.³¹ This workbook became a mine of pertinent information with the needed information and methodology for teaching and experiencing peer-to-peer coaching. Although not designed specifically for pastor peer groups, his notebook, "Peer Coaching, Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth-Centered Peer Relationships" became an immediately applicable resource for the IPPCG. Stoltzfus' notebook was originally designed to teach and enable lay people in the church to learn peer coaching skills to help them become more fruitful and fulfilled in lay ministry.

When I explained to Stoltzfus my efforts with the IPPCG he was willing to allow me to use his material and reorient it as needed to fit the needs of the IPPCG. It was necessary to reword some of the exercises and examples in order for the pastor to orient what he was learning directly to the ministers' paradigm as a professional, and so much the lay persons world. An example was the addition of fifty-five New Testament Scriptures defining the role and responsibilities of a pastor. This is discussed further at the end of this section. Another

³¹The phone conversation with Tony was very productive and stimulating. It was a turning point in my research to know that someone had seen the same opportunities that I had only toyed with in the area of peer coaching. He gave me permission to use his workbook as a beta test evaluation process. He wanted to know how it would apply to pastor specifically, because he had written and developed this notebook for lay people.

example would be in session one where the participant is lead to refer to “a recent decision made by others at your work.”³² Here I simply had the pastor insert the word “church” in place of work, since church is where pastors do their work. Most of the changes were small incidental changes like this. The notebook was easily adapted to the world of the pastor. Some of the examples and stories could be changed to fit the pastor’s paradigm more specifically.

As facilitator, I included myself as a learner in the coaching experiment along with the other participants. When the IPPCG was initiated I did not set myself up to be “the teacher” with all the answers and the members of the group as “the students” needing to be taught. The pastors became learners together in a group experiment in peer coaching and Stoltzfus’ workbook was the medium that was used to experiment with.

It was no small task to gather ten pastors from various church denominations for the purpose of learning and applying peer-coaching skills. To start with I created a handbill that explained everything about the IPPCG. This was given to each pastor visited. Three of the non-Adventist pastors were invited to lunch individually so I could explain in more detail what the IPPCG was all about. A list of ten potential ministers was made and contacted by personal visit. Having been elected ministerial association chairman for the year, I took it upon myself to first visit the pastors of Gentry. Next, a pastor and close neighbor to the Gentry SDA Church, from the First Christian church of Siloam Springs, AR was entertained. He was specifically invited to lunch in order to introduce him to the IPPCG concept. The others were visited at their churches as a drop by visit. Two ministers were not available, but a brochure was left with their secretaries. It is interesting to note that the men that finally

³²Stoltzfus, *Peer Coaching*, participant notebook, 15.

came through were the ones I personally invited to lunch in order to discuss the IPPCG concept.

Below is a sample of the handbill that was created for the purpose of advertising the IPPCG to the area ministers: This is a tri-fold 8 1/2 x 11-page brochure. The front would be on the far right, the back would be in the center and the first panel would appear on the inside flap of the brochure. Concepts of this brochure were taken from Tony Stoltzfus' brochure developed to advertise his Peer Coaching flyer:

Who Peer Pastor Coaching is for

Participants in the Interfaith Pastors Peer Coaching Group receive a Peer Coaching Workbook with handouts and exercises for each training session, outlines and coverants for the peer appointments and coaching guides to help pastors coach others effectively. The Peer Coaching Workbook is a practical guide to coaching skills that you'll refer to repeatedly.



In the Interfaith Pastors Peer Coaching Group you will clarify what you want and find ways to reach your goals in life. It is not about advice-giving (mentoring), or healing underlying wounds (counseling). Coaching supports you in the present moment and gives you the tools to coach a friend over time.

Coaching is particularly well suited to pastors because it pushes them to develop their own solutions and hear God for themselves instead of depending on others for guidance.

Who Peer Pastor Coaching is for

Pastors who desire to bring greater focus, feedback and friendship into their lives are the people this is for.

Pastors are in crisis today, and churches are closing.

- For every new church that is begun, two others close.
- 80% of pastors feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors.
- 80% of all pastors believe pastoral ministry is having a negative effect on their families.
- 70% of all pastors state that they have no close/truly intimate friendships.
- 80% of pastors surveyed spend less than fifteen minutes a day in prayer and
- 70% admit to spending time in the Word only when preparing for sermons.

Opening Session & Orientation

12:00 Noon - Wednesday, January 24

Meet for lunch at the Thunderbird Golf Course Flib Creek Restaurant

13800 Tumberry Lane
Sioux Springs, AR 72781

More info? Call Ray House

Phone: (478) 253-9119

Examine
the power
of a
determined
and
committed
interfaith
pastors
coaching group



Interfaith Pastors
of
Coaching Group

Figure 1: Advertising handbill for the IPPCG given to area pastors to inform them of the Peer-coaching concept and the need for it.

Fig. 2 below shows the inside of the brochure. The only changes from Tony's brochure were with changing the name from Peer Coaching to Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group. The back panel for the IPPCG brochure was totally redone to include statistics pertinent to pastors in crisis today. This was added in order to attract pastors who were concerned about issues that they could relate to:

Be Transformed

The depth of the transformation we experience in Christian community is proportional to the quality of our relationships. When our lives are watered with people who really know us, that we open up to and who get involved in walking with us through life's challenges, we grow the best. When we lack support, accountability and companions who invest in us on the way, we wither. It's when Christianity gets personal that it becomes transformational.

Forming accountable, growth-centered friendships is one of the best ways to grow. If you want more life transformation, the Interfaith Pastors Peer Coaching group can help you go deeper.

What is Peer Coaching?

Peer coaching is a relational structure where two or three pastors become friends by meeting regularly for a clear purpose: to help each other grow. But it's more than just sitting down over coffee. Think of peer coaching as a relational greenhouse: a special environment optimized for healthy accountability and life transformation. Its unique set of change tools consistently help people grow faster than they can on their own. Peer coaching helps pastors look after and develop each other, like Jesus and Paul instructed us to do.



What Makes it Work?

Peer coaching works because it helps people take responsibility for their own growth. Each person first chooses an important growth goal that they want to reach. Then peers use basic coaching skills to help each other turn goals into practical action steps that get done. At each step on the way, your peer provides encouragement, a sounding board, and the healthy accountability you need to reach for excellence in your Christian walk.

Peer coaching is about asking questions and taking responsibility for your own life, not about giving advice and telling others what they ought to do. The unique characteristic of the coaching approach is what makes it so effective at building healthy accountability. Forcing each other this way turns uncooled ministry into a fulfilling calling. In effect, it creates better leaders as well as creating deep friendships that last.

Peer coaching is about asking questions and taking responsibility for your own life, not about giving advice and telling others what they ought to do. The unique characteristic of the coaching approach is what makes it so effective at building healthy accountability. Forcing each other this way turns uncooled ministry into a fulfilling calling. In effect, it creates better leaders as well as creating deep friendships that last.

The Training Process

Everyone would love to have an authentic, accountable friendship with a peer. The challenge is overcoming the awkwardness of getting started, and sticking with it long enough for the relational investment to pay off. The Peer Coaching process provides a structure to help pastors do just that. It's an eight-week relational experience you can do in one hour a week.

In each session you'll hear about a key peer coaching skill (like asking powerful questions or developing SMART goals), watch it demonstrated, discuss it, then

practice it with your peer. The structure is designed to ensure you get the most out of each session. You'll also have time to design a personal growth plan, and your actions will be held accountable to your support group.

Getting it Done

At each hour of the eight-week training, you'll have time to discuss your own growth goals, and you'll have time to discuss the growth goals of your peer. You'll also have time to discuss your own growth plan, and you'll have time to discuss the growth plan of your peer. You'll also have time to discuss your own growth plan, and you'll have time to discuss the growth plan of your peer.

Multiplying the Movement

The peer coaching structure is designed to be multiplied. You'll be encouraged to start your own group, and you'll be encouraged to help others start their own groups. You'll be encouraged to help others start their own groups, and you'll be encouraged to help others start their own groups.



Most leaders plateau over time and flatten out. Few leaders keep growing their whole life. The difference is 'self leadership'.
- Bill Hybels

Figure 2: The inside side of the same advertising brochure.

After having contacted and personally inviting eight of the ten pastors³³ a time and place was decided for our initial meeting. This brochure was sent out after having visited the Dawn Hill Golf Course. The owner was gracious and willing to host this twice a month meeting in his restaurant. He made available a side room where the group could enjoy the needed privacy. Below is an example of the postcard that was sent to all the ten pastors:

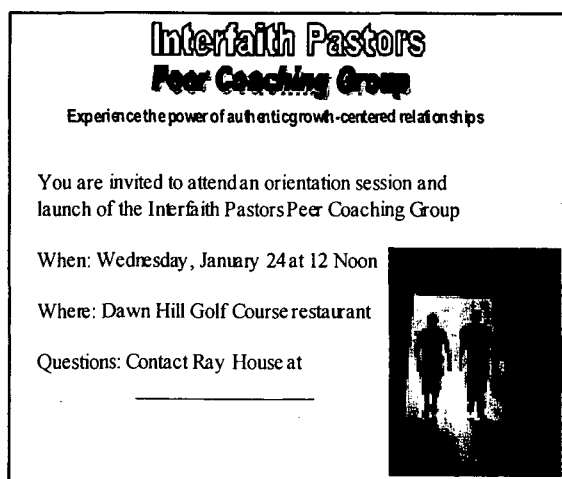


Figure 3: Invitation postcard.

The lunch was paid for by the individual participants. This was congruent with the same approach of the coaching paradigm, where the individual is in charge of his own destiny, they take the initiative and they initiate the steps they believe will help them attain their goals. I considered paying for everyone's lunch on this first meeting, but later decided that if they were going to do this for themselves, they needed to own it from the start and not have to think they had to appease someone for inviting them to lunch.

³³The other two pastors were not available at the time of my drop-by visit, the brochure was left with their secretaries to give to them. I made phone contact before our first luncheon and they turned down the opportunity.

Commitment Form

Peer Coach Training walks you through the process of developing a committed, accountable relationship with a peer that you choose for the purpose of growing in Christ. You'll start off with getting to know each other and learning the basics of peer coaching, and gradually build toward an ongoing peer relationship where you meet weekly for support and accountability for your own growth goals.

Expectations

Every large group session in the program involves you and your peer working together. Since your peer's experience depends on you (if you drop out or don't show your peer is stuck without a partner), it is important that you make a serious commitment before you agree to begin. Please think through whether you can reasonably commit the time and energy both for the training and to maintain an ongoing peer relationship afterward.

Here's exactly what you are committing to:

Peer Coach Training:

- Group sessions
Orientation + 8 weekly sessions
(The original commitment form gave as an option a workshop + 5 weekly sessions.)
- Independent study: 30 to 45 minutes per week during launch training
- Purchasing a Peer Coaching workbook (Tony charged us \$8 for reproducing copies of his notebook)

Your Ongoing Peer Coaching Relationship

- Consistently meeting weekly or bi-weekly with your peer for 45 minute sessions
- Choosing a personal growth goal you want to work on with your peer, and taking action on it each week
- Supporting your peer in his or her growth goal

I Agree...

"I understand what is expected of me and I'm ready to join the peer coaching process wholeheartedly. I'll commit to all the training sessions (except for illnesses and emergencies), keep up with the action steps and establish an ongoing peer coaching relationship after I've finished the launch training."

Name _____ Date _____

Figure 4: Commitment form for all participants of the IPPCG.

Eight pastors attended the launch luncheon. After explaining the IPPCG concept, basically reviewing the content of the brochure and answering questions, I then gave them each a copy of the commitment form. This was taken directly from Stoltzfus' Peer Coaching notebook. There was no need to change anything. Two of the pastors decided to not join the group, although they showed a keen interest in the concept. Above is a copy of the Peer Coaching Commitment Form.

At the end of the launch day luncheon the group agreed on a time to meet bi-weekly. That put our next meeting on February 7, two weeks away, same place and time. At the next meeting I reviewed the first session, then invited the group to divide into coaching pairs.

Stoltzfus' workbook is organized into eight sessions based on the most current adult learning techniques; he majors on changing life patterns with minor emphasis in cognitive learning; there is a good deal of hands on learning. In table 3 is a list of the eight sessions and a brief description of what was covered in the session:

Each of the eight sessions has an outline that moves logically into four distinct sections: (1) The topic and points to learn for that session, (2) a peer exercise—actively applying what was taught, (3) an article review from the previous week, and (4) directions for the next peer appointment. Tony Stoltzfus wrote a facilitators workbook that had all the times and guideline notes to run each session successfully. This facilitator used this extensively in preparation for each session.³⁴

³⁴See appendix 5 for an outline from Session 3.

TABLE 3

SUMMARY OF THE EIGHT SESSIONS FROM THE PEER COACHING NOTEBOOK
BY TONY STOLTZFUS.

Orientation and Commitment Form	(This was discussed above in figure 6).
Session 1: Your Most Important Leadership Decision	(This was the first scheduled bi-weekly meeting. The workbooks were distributed, peer coaching was defined and a holiness question was chosen by each participant. ³⁵ A 5 minute demonstration of accountability was done by the facilitator. Here I asked for a volunteer, my peer partner and I asked him what his holiness question was and what his goal was and what action he had taken on it previously. I ended the interview with asking him to set at least one new action step for the following week. The point was to show what coaching looked like, a coach draws out of the PBC what God has given them, and they need to hear themselves say. The community aspect of relational leadership was brought out from Acts 2 as well.
Session 2: The Coaching Approach	This week the facilitator divided each participant into peer pairs, each Adventist pastor had a different denominational pastor. This session was to instill the main purpose of coaching – to listen and direct important questions and not to tell or advise the PBC.
Session 3: Cultivating Authenticity	Authenticity was defined and demonstrated. (This session is detailed in an example session later in this chapter.)
Session 4: The Covenant Life	The group reviewed what healthy accountability looks like and how to create and ask accountability questions. Many great tools are in the workbook

³⁵See appendix 2 for the Holiness Questions from Tony Stoltzfus' Peer Coaching workbook.

Table 3: *Continued.*

<p>Session 5: Aiming for the Mark—Change Goals</p>	<p>Here was introduced the S.M.A.R.T. change goal model – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant & Time-specific. The main point of this session was to help the coach set SMART goals and coach his partner in doing the same</p>
<p>Session 6: Turning Goals into Action Steps</p>	<p>Setting action steps and coaching his partner to get a goal moving was the point of this session. A list of accountability questions was introduced (see Appendix 2)</p>
<p>Session 7: Coaching Your Peer</p>	<p>This one was on coaching to solve problems. The challenge, to learn to help your partner solve his own problem without telling him what to do. The Five Options technique was reviewed and practiced.</p>
<p>Session 8: Energy for Change</p>	<p>The group celebrated the progress each person and coach pair had made. Helping your partner stay motivated and energized about their change goals was the focus. Accountability, encouragement and affirmation were keys to success.</p>

As mentioned above, the IPPCG met for four months beginning in February of 2007 and concluding in May. We met every other week covering one of the eight sessions each time. The large group meetings were for the purpose of learning the coaching method and experimenting with it in group sessions for feedback, and active learning. Meeting every other week in the group sessions allowed for the pastor coaching partners to meet the following week; this helped give the participants time to take what they learned in class and try it out before they forgot what they had learned. Learning happens much better when a person can take information to implementation within a week's time. Some of the coach pairs missed appointments with each other, but all were encouraged by the interaction they did receive (questionnaire two bears evidence to this). Although record was not taken of the individual coach pair sessions, I would say only one of the three pairs missed a significant

number of the coach pair meetings. It would be fair to say that at least 75 percent of the coach pair sessions were kept.

An additional tool was given to the participants at the first session of the IPPCG. A list of fifty-one New Testament scriptures focused on the ministers' role was shared with the pastors at the first session in order to reinforce the biblical role of pastor. The New Testament is our primary source for information on the work of a pastor.³⁶ From these texts the pastors were encouraged to mark the ones that particularly spoke to them.

These texts were offered as additional information. The hope was that these scriptures would give each pastor a refresher and review of their role and a possible starting point for them to determine where they sensed God pointing them to establish growth goals and action steps (see appendix 3).

To inform and remind the participants, the facilitator wrote email reminders before each bi-weekly meeting. This served the purpose of restating the previous session and reminding them of the article that was assigned to read as well as remind the peer pairs to follow through with their coaching meeting and action plans and accountability questions.

6. Advantages of Interfaith Peer Coaching

Professionals that intentionally meet together with another peer for the purpose of coaching each other toward personal growth are using one of the most powerful tools available to humankind. Not only is it readily available anywhere there are people, but it is a free resource. Of course relationships are not free in the sense that it costs time, energy, and mutual trust to create and maintain. Big companies are paying big salaries for executive

³⁶See appendix 3 for a full list of these fifty-one New Testament texts on the role of a pastor.

coaches; professionals can hire personal coaches for personalized training in just about any field imaginable, yet one of the most untapped and unlimited opportunities remains available to anyone willing to make the effort—a peer coach.³⁷

Having an interfaith peer relationship could actually be more valuable than a relationship with a peer from one's own denomination. Three reasons come to mind from my experience and insight, I have concluded:

1. Each person comes to the table with different experiences and perspectives by nature of their denominational roots, which can add depth and wisdom to most discussions.
2. There is a greater sense of anonymity with someone from a different denomination so practicing authenticity and transparency will naturally become less threatening. Job security fears from ones employer are further removed.
3. A pastor from another denomination will be more aware and alert to learning about the others experience and perspective because it is different than their own. The tendency of same denomination pastors, from the same area and same conference is that they are prone to assume a quasi corporate knowledge and experience that may not always be accurate. A homogenous group will err on the side of assuming they know certain truths for fear of looking different or acting out of character to the assumed standards, beliefs, or guidelines.

³⁷Rey Carr, "About Peer Coaching," Peer Resources, <http://www.peer.ca/coach.html> (accessed 22 August 2007). "Peer coaching is a more unique form of coaching. A peer coach is typically a colleague, co-worker, or friend who participates in what might be called reciprocal coaching: you take some time to coach me; then I will take some time to coach you. Unlike executive coaching or other forms of professional coaching, peer coaching takes place between people who expect to coach each other. Peer coaches, therefore, normally share similar professional or job responsibilities. They use exactly the same skills used by business and personal coaches, but they often do not charge for their services, although an exchange of compensation may take place."

Concerning the advantage of pastors from different denominations covenanting to a group process; this experiment with the IPPCG has demonstrated to me that a mixed group is more likely to hold to its agreements more strongly than a group of same denomination pastors. My first attempt of forming a peer group of pastors in Arkansas was discontinued after three months because of lack of participation. This group, the Purpose Driven Pastors Forum (PDPF) was gathered in much the same way as the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group (IPPCG) with personal invitations, clear expectations, and a signed covenant (see appendix 4). Yet the PDPF did not complete its task and the IPPCG did.

The interfaith element of the IPPCG may bring concerns to some. Some may think that interacting with pastors of other faiths on a journey to improve their personal and ministry skills would lead to apostasy or compromise. The SDA church has never felt this way as a whole. Holding conversations and interaction with leaders of other faiths has long been a practice of the Seventh-day Adventist church, for at least four decades. The General Conference has recently expanded "its witness to include conversations with representatives of other world religions."³⁸ Paulsen states, "This is a development that, I believe, pastors and members around the world will find interesting---and that some may think is long overdue!"³⁹ However, he is careful to add a note of caution, "We do not seek union of any sort—we have not joined the ecumenical movement and will not. Our mission is one that cannot be diluted or restricted by ecumenical alliances."⁴⁰

³⁸Jan Paulsen, "Telling the World Who We Are," *Adventist World-NAD*, June 2007, 8.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid. Throughout this article the General Conference President reminds us that "All our conversations with whatever group are driven by mission." The fact that we are a fast growing church (15 million members and 25 to 30 million identifying themselves with us) in the world field has naturally put us in a place where we

Adventists are not the only denomination that holds the ecumenical movement at arms length:

A majority of Evangelical churches, including most Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, non-denominational Christians, and Evangelical Christian denominations like the Christian and Missionary Alliance church, do not participate in the ecumenical movements. The doctrine of separation is adopted by some Evangelical churches towards churches and denominations that have joined ecumenical activities. Many Pentecostals, such as Assemblies of God, shun ecumenism, but some organizations, including some Pentecostal churches, do participate in ecumenism.⁴¹

Nonetheless, as our church grows and the world community shrinks, exposure to more religious groups will become a fact and we will have an ever-broadening interaction with people of other faiths. This convergence of experience and perspective should be something that we embrace. The scriptural observation that “iron sharpens iron” does not only apply to individuals of the same faith testing truth with truth; the principle could very well be applied to pastors of varying faiths forthrightly discussing concerns of life and ministry. In so doing, growth, understanding and discovery can take place. It may mean that greater growth occurs even more readily than in a static relationship of same faith relationships.

In regard to interfaith relationships, Ellen White has much to say in support of working with and for ministers of other denominations. She saw this as a regular part of an Adventist minister’s “solemn responsibilities” one where he should “seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations.”⁴² This should be part of our first work when arriving at a new church: “When our laborers enter a new field, they should seek to become acquainted

must engage in conversation in order to gain clarity and seek understanding from the multifaceted implications of our faith among other religions.

⁴¹Wikipedia, “Ecumenism.”

⁴²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:78.

with the pastors of the several churches in the place.”⁴³ We are to choose a relationship of cooperation with them, “In becoming acquainted with them we should dwell mostly upon topics in which all feel an interest, and which will not lead directly and pointedly to the subjects of disagreement.”⁴⁴ In another place she goes so far as to accuse Adventist ministers of shunning ministers of other denominations, “mistakes have been made in not seeking to reach ministers and the higher classes with the truth. People not of our faith (other denominations) have been shunned altogether too much.” With such urging one might wonder why Adventist ministers are not strongly urged and even requested to enter into relationships with ministers of other denominations. At one time she advised Adventists to raise funds “to educate men and women to labor for these higher classes”⁴⁵ like ministers of other denominations.

There are however, some guidelines for interfaith relationships. “People not of our faith have been shunned altogether too much. While we should not associate with them to receive their mold, there are honest ones everywhere for whom we should labor cautiously, wisely, and intelligently, full of love for their souls.”⁴⁶ Concerning wise and intelligent interaction she referred to Jesus as the role model. “He disturbed as little as possible their accustomed train of thought, by abrupt actions or prescribed rules. He honored man with His confidence, and thus placed him on his honor.”⁴⁷ Again she reiterates, “He gains access to the heart by securing sympathy and confidence, making all feel that His identification with their

⁴³White, *Evangelism*, 143.

⁴⁴White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:581.

⁴⁵Ibid., 5:580.

⁴⁶Ibid., 5:580, 581.

⁴⁷Ibid., *Evangelism*, 140.

nature and interest is complete.”⁴⁸ The overarching idea is to meet them “where they are.” “Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them so far as possible.”⁴⁹

The purpose of a peer coaching relationship is not to change anyone’s practice or belief. The role of a coach is to uncover answers within the PBC through listening, asking perceptive questions and requesting if they want to make action steps based on their own conclusions.⁵⁰ “You are there to facilitate and guide, but not to set the agenda. The client (PBC) must take responsibility for the work if real change is to happen. The coach doesn’t supply the motivation or the skill; he simply helps the athlete (PBC) find more of both within himself.”⁵¹

In addition to the three advantages of interfaith peer coaching groups listed above, the IPPCG has the advantage in that it is readily available to any two or more pastors that seek coaching assistance. There is no need for pastors to seek permission or to wait for the next coaching opportunity their denomination might offer; The IPPCG is accessible for any two pastors or group of pastors who want to take the initiative and get together. It doesn’t take much to gather a few pastors, launch the peer pastor group, learn the coaching skills, then begin experiencing the benefits of peer coaching in their personal and ministry lives.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basel, Switzerland: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 121.

⁵⁰Logan, Carlton, and Miller, 57. This does not mean that spirituality, and commitment to the Lord Jesus are of no concern. Robert Logan gives guidelines in his book for the coach to have “sensitivity to the Spirit.” For example, Sherilyn was coaching John and said to him, “This may seem like a strange question, but where does God fit into all of this?” This led into a conversation about redirecting John’s spiritual focus.

⁵¹Downs, 20.

Besides these incentives, the benefits of coaching can be appreciated almost immediately. The first exposure a person has to the coaching principles will immediately get him/her started experiencing the advantages of setting goals and permitting another person to be their accountability partner. By applying the coaching principles partners in ministry can begin to experience the benefit of determining their priorities, setting action steps that they are fully responsible for, and finding goal attainment one step at a time. It all boils down to the sincerity and desire of the individuals to see their destiny as God has ordained them to grow and excel in life and ministry.

7. Resources for Pastors on Starting Peer Coaching Groups

One of the most user friendly and uncomplicated approaches to peer coaching that I have found is *Coaching 101, Discover the Power of Coaching*, by Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton. Logan comes from a conservative Baptist pastoral experience. He was involved in raising new churches and growing established churches learning and experimenting with the coaching skills that are brought out in this book. The "Your Turn" section at the end of each chapter is helpful in putting to practice the knowledge shared. I have used this book as a follow-up guide for a second round of coaching meetings with the same pastors of the IPPCG.

For those wanting to get into the broader application of leadership coaching Tony Stoltzfus' book by that same name, *Leadership Coaching, The Disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Christian Coach* is where a leader would want to start. Tony has done a comprehensive job of illustrating the wide-ranging applications of coaching for Christian leaders. He gives ample Bible illustrations, plenty of practical applications, and all the tools one needs to be established fully into the mindset of Christian coaching.

More specific to the practice of peer coaching is Stoltfuz' workbook "Peer Coaching, Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth-Centered Relationships." This is the workbook that brought the IPPCG to fruition. Without this notebook the IPPCG would have been a hodgepodge of resources and ideas that would have needed to be painstakingly sifted through and refitted in order to help a group of pastors really experience the power of peer coaching. If a group of pastors were to commit to a four-month period of time, meeting bi-weekly for eight sessions using this notebook, they will have learned, experienced, and grown to appreciate the power of peer coaching. Because of this notebook and the subsequent experience, I am convinced that peer coaching is the way to consistent growth and deeper friendship for pastors.

Ruth Ledesma offers another practical guide to learning coaching skills from a biblical perspective in her book, *Coaching by the Book, Principles of Christian Coaching*. This is a refreshing and solid perspective on the coaching idea from a professional counselor and a woman. She uses the Bible skillfully to teach the coaching practice. Again, like any good coach, she gives the novice coach a section at the end of each chapter "Coaching Moments" and "Coaching Challenges" in order to progress in learning the coaching skills. These application parts at the end of each chapter are the most God focused and spiritually oriented of all the books I have read to date.

For women in ministry the coaching paradigm is a good fit. In much of the research for this paper women were significant contributors to the coaching model. I would suggest starting with Ruth Ledesma's book, cited above, which gives an excellent woman's Christian perspective. Sherilyn Carlton also co-authored the excellent book, *Coaching 101: Discover the Power of Coaching*. There are several women related illustrations in there. Susan Battley

wrote *Coached to Lead: How to Achieve Extraordinary Results with an Executive Coach*.

This woman has put together a very sensible approach for women to begin coaching in the professional business world. She speaks from a perspective of a psychologist and professional business woman. One that I have not read, but looks helpful by Pam Bartlett, *Women Connected - A Session-by-Session Coaching Guide for Women's Groups*. You might consider Wendy Miller's, *Learning to Listen: A Guide for Spiritual Friends*, for some basics in the area of interpersonal relationships.

If a pastor would want a very simple outline approach at experiencing peer coaching, take a look at Marty Nemko's website. Co-coaching is a new term that has merit for further experimentation. "Co-coaching is the structured practice of mutual exchange of coaching support among peers. This can take the form of a range of practices. One form involves each individual taking turns to be coach in half hour sessions."⁵²

Below is a suggested co-coaching outline:

"The following model works in many situations, career-related and otherwise:

In the first half hour one person is the coach the other is the client. In the second half hour, you switch roles.

1. Agree that everything said in the session is strictly confidential: 'What goes on here stays here.'
2. Say something like, "Tell me the problem you'd like to work on."
3. 'Would you like me to just listen, ask questions for clarification, or to get you to think more deeply about the problem, or make suggestions?'
4. Listen carefully.
5. "What have you tried or considered already? Any other options you see?" Write all the options. If you'd like to add an option, ask, "Would you mind if I added one?"

⁵²Nemko, "Co-Coaching: I'll Coach You if You'll Coach Me."

6. 'What do you see as the pros and cons of each?'
7. "So, what do you think you want to do?"
8. 'Do you feel we've adequately addressed your problem for now?'
9. "Next week, would you like me to ask you whether your solution worked?" If so, write it down, so you remember to ask. Also, that makes the client feel accountable.

If the half hour isn't up yet, ask, 'Is there another problem you'd like to take a look at?'

At the half-hour mark, trade roles."⁵³

Several denominations offer peer groups for pastors that create opportunities for collaboration and mutual support for each other. An example is the Christian Reformed Church's Peer Learning Group program in Canada. With a grant from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence award, they are able to meet around various issues pertinent to pastors.

In their monthly meetings, members of two Hamilton, ON groups alert one another to the Holy Spirit's work. Pastors in a third Ontario group are sharpening their preaching skills. And pastors in Edmonton, AB bounce ideas off each other about how to include everyone from toddlers to senior citizens in worship. In all the groups, the meeting of minds sparks deeper learning and more urgent calls to action than individual study could.⁵⁴

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has developed Peer Learning Groups available to any of their ministers desiring such an experience. Again, this is not coaching in the sense of the interfaith groups that this paper outlines, but offers to interested pastors a way to get together with other pastors to help each other grow. In their own words:

Peer learning groups meet monthly to provide opportunities for worship, spiritual growth, study, discussion of ministry-related issues and fellowship. Currently, there are 71 peer-learning groups of 10-14 members. Special interest is given to ministers in their first seven years of ministry, ministers in rural settings and ministers in multi-staff congregations.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Abram Huyser-Honig, "Pastors Pastoring Pastors," Christian Reformed Church in North America, http://www.crcna.org/pages/apr2004_huyser_honig.cfm (accessed 20 January 2008).

Each group is led by a convener who was trained during the Fellowship's General Assembly. The convener and group members determine the focus of each month's gathering. The Fellowship provides the groups with suggested resources related to promoting pastoral excellence and congregational health.⁵⁵

The Lilly Endowment for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence was initiated from the realization that "many [pastors] feel a sense of isolation" Craig Dykstra, Endowment vice president for religion also concluded, "Over time, this results in diminished opportunities to engage in some of the crucial activities that led them to ministry in the first place— intellectual and spiritual searching and discovery, pursuit of scholarship and writing, fellowship with colleagues, strong relationships with loved ones and with God."⁵⁶

The Lilly Endowment seems to be on the look-out for church organizations that are serious about providing growth incubators, like peer coaching groups, which will help pastors become more fruitful and fulfilled as leaders of healthy churches. For some aspiring church or non-profit organization, pursuing a Lilly Endowment to sponsor Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Groups may prove beneficial.

In its request for proposals the Endowment noted that 'we would be particularly interested in supporting programs that are shaped by pastoral experience and designed with and by pastors and that we planned to encourage efforts to create environments for ongoing biblical study, theological reflection and spiritual renewal, as well as the development of sustained friendships and mutual support among pastors.'

The Lilly Endowment report actually makes peer groups their focus: "Peer group learning"—that is, small groups of pastors who meet regularly for several years for ongoing renewal and mutual support—form the basis for most projects. Many programs include a mentoring or coaching component. Most projects involve some form of sustained study or training, but they employ a variety of educational settings and methods.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Steve Graham, "Peer Learning Group," Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, <http://www.thefellowship.info/About-Us/Who-We-Are/Network/Peer-Learning-Groups> (accessed 10 June 2008).

⁵⁶Craig Dykstra, "Lilly Endowment Awards 47 Grants to 'Sustain Pastoral Excellence,'" Lily Endowment Inc., <http://www.lillyendowment.org/pdf/SPE2002Winners.pdf> (accessed 2 February 2008).

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 3, 4.

Currently pastors in the North Carolina area are benefiting from the Lilly Endowment directly in the field of coaching. Eddie Hammett said,

I've been privileged to serve as one of the lead coaches for our Sustaining Pastoral Excellence project for the last 3 years. Whether coaching a group of leading edge pastors (the more seasoned pastors), new generation pastors (less experienced) or coaching other persons in ministry, I have concluded that coaching is a powerful tool for today's clergy. More important, the pastors have determined that coaching is a powerful tool for them and their congregations.⁵⁸

It is noteworthy to mention Hammett's observations on coaching pastors for more than 800 hours of coaching pastors/staff of churches from a variety of denominations and church sizes.

Pastoral benefits of having a coach:

1. Provides a safe and sacred place and confidential relationship
2. Provides an objective relationship to explore leadership and strategy options
3. Encourages and supports clergy to walk into new learning curves in personal and/or professional lives
4. Engages the clergy in a dedicated block of time to process and work through barriers, challenges, celebrations and visions of the future
5. Provides a feedback system for honest evaluation and growth
6. Provides time and space for spiritual discernment of how and where God is moving in one's life and ministry
7. Slows the pace of life down, for the coaching experience, just enough to find focus, encouragement and reflection that leads to next steps for busy pastors.⁵⁹

The Lake Hickory initiative on Sustaining Pastoral Excellence outlines five "learning experiences" they recommend for pastors entering their program. Learning experience two is "Peer Learning Communities." They explain:

Peer learning communities are not a new concept. Various forms of pastoral support groups, study groups, prayer groups, dialogue groups, and groups with other purposes have existed for years, if not centuries. What makes peer learning communities unique are several characteristics. First, they are formed by pastors and their peers, rather than by

⁵⁸Eddie Hammett, "Leader's Column with Eddie Hammett," Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, http://bullardjournal.blogs.com/sustaining_pastoral_excel/2007/10/leaders-column-.html (accessed 10 June 2008).

⁵⁹Ibid.

denominations or other entities pulling together a group of pastors and suggesting that they relate to one another around a certain agenda.

Second, they take responsibility for their own learning. They are not dependent on outside direction to develop a learning agenda. Third, task comes out of relationship as participants bond as friends and in spiritual relationship with one another. They then develop the task-oriented agendas they desire to address.

Fourth, they invite respected congregational practitioners, consultants, or coaches into their community for brief visits. Fifth, they gather face-to-face, by teleconference, in chat rooms, by e-mail forum, by videoconferencing, and other means available to them.⁶⁰

In conclusion, there are pieces of the IPPCG methodology that are being used in various parts of the church in the United States and Canada—peer learning groups, professional coaches, etc., yet, most denomination sponsored coaching opportunities are limited to only certain denominations. Pastor's seeking these available coaching experiences will need to rely on travel in intervals with months between modules or "phone only coaching" to access existing coaching experiences. The IPPCG appeals to pastors in local areas who might seek coaching help, regardless of denomination, in an easily accessible place, their local city.

In chapter five we will evaluate the IPPCG based on questionnaire #2 administered at the end of the eight-session exercise.

⁶⁰Lake Hickory Resources, "Learning Experiences That Support Pastoral Excellence," Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, http://bullardjournal.blogspot.com/sustaining_pastoral_excel/2004/02/learning_experi.html (accessed 10 June 2008).

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF PASTOR PEER LEARNING/COACHING GROUPS

With a desire to learn and practice coaching skills with pastors of various denominations within the Gentry, Arkansas area, I set out to research and develop a training module to equip full-time ministers to facilitate peer coaching relationships. The group would meet twice a month in a program of study, experimentation, and professional assessment. The study content would focus primarily on peer coaching in the context of pastoral ministry. The project director's goals were threefold:

1. To craft a selected bibliography of current authoritative literature on the subjects of peer coaching, motivation for fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry and accountability issues.
2. To create a teaching module that both incorporates the elements of peer coaching and actually develops the practice of peer coaching skills among busy full time pastors.
3. To solicit recruits for the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group sessions and implement the project.

The initial ministry goal was to assess whether peer coaching would encourage greater fruitfulness and fulfillment for full time church pastors in a local community. A comprehensive base of information was collected from a selected bibliography on pastoral leadership, coaching, accountability, and the condition of the church in America.

Due to the wealth of sources, a careful consideration was required in selecting material for this training module. The researcher sought to present a balance between secular and religious (including biblical) authorities in the fields of study in order to compare and contrast their approaches and conclusions. He discovered an abundant variety of materials on the subject of coaching in the secular field, but a somewhat limited range of resources for the church, especially in context with the church pastor.

The second goal was to create a teaching module from the research, considering both the time constraints of the pastors who volunteered and the researcher's need to adequately present the material. The main training source for the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group came from a peer-coaching syllabus that was originally designed for church volunteers.¹ Although it was created for lay leaders in the local church, it was easily adapted for use in this multi-denominational pastors group. The researcher determined that eight sessions were needed in order to learn and experiment with the peer coaching method. This could reasonably be balanced with the demands of the pastors in eight separate meetings over a period of four months. Various methods of learning were employed at these sessions: lecture and discussion, case studies, role play, and peer to peer coaching exercises. The peer partner coaching sessions were to be done outside of the eight meetings, intended to meet during the week between sessions. This created a rather demanding schedule where each pastor was involved in a meeting every week: peer partner coaching one week and the larger coaching group meeting the next for four months.

¹Stoltzfus, *Peer Coaching*, participant notebook.

The third goal of this project was to solicit and recruit pastors in full time ministry for the IPPCG sessions and implement the project, all of which was discussed in chapter four of this paper.

Evaluating these three goals is the purpose of this chapter. The initial goal of this project was to assess the effectiveness of peer-coaching as a means of helping the full-time pastor experience greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in life and ministry. Two questionnaires were designed in order to determine the fruitfulness and fulfillment factor. The first one determined that the pastors of the IPPCG were indeed interested in improving these two areas of their lives. These details were covered in chapter four.

The second questionnaire was given at the end of the eight group sessions for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the IPPCG.² A comparison of the two questionnaires was the basis of the analysis of the effectiveness of the IPPCG. Questionnaire #2 was very similar to the one administered at the beginning of the group sessions. The three possible responses were “yes,” “somewhat,” or “no.” Formatting of the questions was the same and the questions covered the same areas of interest as the first one, with the exception that they were in the past tense. All participants (a total of six pastors) filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was entitled Questionnaire #2. Following are the questions and their responses:

²The eight sessions ran from February to May 2007.

TABLE 4

QUESTIONNAIRE #2 AND PARTICIPANT RESPONSES
TO THE IPPLCG EXPERIENCE

Questionnaire #2	Yes	Somewhat	No
1. Do you feel that this group helped you grow personally and professionally toward greater fruitfulness and fulfillment?	5	1	0
2. Circle the sessions you remember attending the IPPLCG?	Two pastors missed two sessions, and one missed three sessions		
3. Did you use your pastor partner to keep you accountable to your goals?	5	0	1
4. Was your ministry partner helpful in encouraging you to prioritize your personal and ministry goals?	5	1	0
5. Were you able to share openly in the group about your personal growth areas?	3	3	0
6. Do you believe your ministry partner's support and encouragement were helpful in raising your level of fruitfulness and fulfillment?	4	2	0
7. Was attending the group meetings strengthening to you in overcoming struggles and temptations?	1	4	1
8. Did you share your growth goals with the group for feedback?	3		3
9. Do you feel that the exercise of sharing your ministry goals and growth areas benefited your sense of fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry?	6	0	0
10. Did you enjoy sharing ideas from the materials that this group read about coaching, peer learning and goal setting?	4	2	0
11. Do you feel you would like to continue in a peer-learning/coaching environment?	5	1	0
12. Would you benefit from continuing in this IPPLCG?	5	1	0

The pastors were unanimous in their opinion that the IPPCG brought more fruitfulness and fulfillment to their life and ministry. The most positive response with all "yes" was Question 9, "Do you feel that the exercise of sharing your ministry goals and growth areas benefited your sense of fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry."

Concerning fruitfulness and fulfillment through the encouragement of their peer-partner, each pastor felt it raised their level of fruitfulness and fulfillment. Question 6 asked, "Do you believe your ministry partner's support and encouragement were helpful in raising your level of fruitfulness and fulfillment?" Four of the respondents felt positive and none felt negative about the support they received, two were only "somewhat" affected. At the last session one pastor mentioned excitedly about how the peer-interaction with his coach-partner had spawned the development of a morning devotional reading. As a consequence of the peer-interaction he experienced, he began to send his devotional thoughts via email to several parishioners and friends. The accountability step he came up with was to have a devotional every morning. The accountability of sending the email devotional made a big difference in fulfilling his ministry experience.

All but five marked "yes" to the feeling of personal and professional growth. Question 1 read, "Do you feel that this group helped you grow personally and professionally toward greater fruitfulness and fulfillment?" These findings coincide with current research in the scientific community where a growing body of empirical evidence is coming in to establish life coaching as a successful practice for enhanced goal attainment and self-fulfillment. Only one pastor responded "somewhat" to his experience with the IPPCG in the area of personal and professional growth. An example would be

this researcher; he found greater growth professionally when he made the writing of this doctor of ministry project a focus for his peer-partner to coach him on.³

In the area of accountability all but one pastor used their peer-partner to remind them to be accountable to their goals. Question 3 asked, "Did you use your pastor partner to keep you accountable to your goals."⁴ Five of the six marked "yes." Question 4 was closely related to the previous one, "Was your ministry partner helpful in encouraging you to prioritize your personal and ministry goals." Again, five of the six pastors marked "yes" in finding their coach partner helpful for prioritizing their personal and ministry goals. This gives strong indication that this group of clergy was encouraged by peer-coaching in the area of personal and ministry goal prioritization, and accountability issues.⁵

In a less positive light, only half of these same pastors were compelled to share their growth goals in the large group. Question 8 asked, "Did you share your growth goals with the group for feedback". Only fifty percent marked "yes" about this, the other fifty percent marked "no." In a similar way Question 5 asked, "Were you able to share

³Grant, "International Coach Federation Conference Symposium on Research and Coaching." In this address, Grant speaks excitedly about the new opportunities that coaching will bring to the practitioner of coaching based on the growing proof that life coaching is effective in generating "real-life human change in individuals and organizations." Anthony Grant, "The Impact of Life Coaching on Goal Attainment, Metacognition and Mental Health," *Social Behavior & Personality* 31 (2003): 253-263. The pastor I chose had already received his degree in Doctor of Ministry. His coaching was particularly helpful with the added benefit of knowing how to work out the challenges of writing a dissertation while leading a church(es) fulltime.

⁴It should be noted here that the kind of accountability they were referring to was not in the area of personal struggles or temptations. Question seven attests to the fact that four respondents were only somewhat affected to gain strength from temptation because of the IPPCG.

⁵The large group sessions were designed to share feedback from the coach pair meetings so that the group could learn together important things that might be missed otherwise. Having been a novice coach myself we were learning coaching skills together. With more experience, coaching skills could have been modeled for greater effectiveness to the coach pairs, nevertheless, the interaction was helpful even without the experience of a professional coach.

openly in the group about your personal growth areas.” Again, there was a split in opinions; half of them marked “somewhat” while the other half marked “yes.”

These unenthusiastic or even conflicted views on sharing things of a personal nature openly in a group could reflect the reticence of some pastors who would rather play it safe in the area of accountability. If this same reticence for sharing personally with other groups holds true, then these findings underscore the need for pastors to seek more opportunities where they can gain the benefit of accountability to their God given growth goals. An additional acknowledgement that the IPPCG created a positive environment as indicated when five marked “yes” to Question 11, “Do you feel you would like to continue in a peer-learning/coaching environment,” only one marking “somewhat.”⁶

When the participants were asked about the material and their experience in the group, they indicated a strong interest in the subject of peer coaching and a desire to improve their personal and pastoral skills toward greater fruitfulness and fulfillment using these newfound skills. All participants communicated an interest in the peer coaching model for pastors and pursued applying it with favorable results during the four months of this IPPCG project.

In order to receive confirmation to the questionnaire responses a voice-recorded interview was done at the end of the last session after everyone had filled out their questionnaire. A few comments were made that are worthy of note.

⁶This also may be a reflection on the moderator’s oversight of not encouraging all the pastors to share their growth goals with the group. It may have been helpful to coach them towards determining why they were reticent in sharing in this area; The IPPCG was started again after the summer of 2007 with a less formal approach. We took the book *Coaching 101* by Robert Logan, Sherry Carlton, and Tara Miller and began discussing each chapter over lunch once a month. The book is well organized for implementation of the concepts at the end of each chapter. The group agreed to follow this plan and meet the last Tuesday of every month. After the Christmas rush of December we decided not to meet, but on the third Tuesday of

One pastor said, "In some ways it [the IPPCG experience] was too short to really tell in the long haul how this was effective; it only began to scratch the surface." The researcher followed up with the question, "Would a longer time frame have been better?" To that the same pastor responded, "Not really, it did everything it could for what we did. This was a good starting point." The researcher then asked, "Did you use your pastor partner for accountability toward your goals?" One responded, "I felt I used my partner more than he did me and I appreciated what I got out of it." Another said, "It helped clarify and get a better sense about what goals exactly I needed to set for myself and steps I needed to take in order to achieve those goals. The tyranny of the urgent seems to always get me going in too many directions, but this helped me direct my priorities." When it came to using the coaching methodology one pastor commented, "I'm sure I could use more practice."

An additional question, or group of questions, should have been included on the last questionnaire in order to inquire whether high energy goals were considered in their peer-coaching relationships. On reflecting over the experience with the pastors in the IPPCG, this researcher never got the assurance that many of them were working on high energy goals. IPPCG process did not seem to uncover their highest motivating issue—the area where they had the greatest desire for change.⁷ It may have helped them determine this by discovering the place where they were stuck or experienced the greatest drain on their ministry.

January 2008 only another pastor and I showed up. Various reasons were given for loss of interest, most of which had to do with scheduling conflicts.

⁷Logan, Carlton, and Miller, 41. In this chapter Logan describes several questions that are designed to get the PBC to uncover their deepest passion, the thing that energizes them the most. Once the energizing point is discovered and named, the coaching relationship has a greater focus, a direction. When this is not done, the coaching experience will likely not make a noticeable impact on the PBC.

Often when a leader knows where she is stuck she can develop strategies toward getting unstuck. Without uncovering the priorities of life and ministry and then determining the area where greater fulfillment and fruitfulness could begin, the peer-coaching process seems to offer little more than a general feeling of well-being. One executive coach instructed aspiring coaches to “get to ownership” with the PBC “the minute you meet.” He insisted that the PBC admit the problem and take full responsibility for it. He concluded that a person “seeking general personal improvement doesn’t benefit from coaching and, in fact, can be disserved by it.”⁸

The IPPCG may have been more helpful to pastors if they could have identified their greatest problem area in life or ministry before goal setting or action steps were applied. Many pastors, by the multifaceted nature of their vocation, suffer from lack of focus, or more accurately, too many foci. One professor of pastors explained an experience he had with this problem when he reflected, “On a blank page of newsprint, the Reverend Howard Rice kept scrawling down the roles that ministers are expected to play within congregations. He honed it down to eight: evangelist, sacramental-person, preacher, teacher, counselor, agent of social change, manager, and in Rices words, ‘pointer to God.’” He then added, “We just keep adding and adding and adding and adding . . . and we never subtract.”⁹ When this persists the pastor inevitably puts aside his God given hopes and dreams in order to service the urgent and immediate demands of life and ministry. “Pastors gradually settle down and lose interest in being change agents

⁸Downs, 16.

⁹CityVoices.com, “Stress and Distress: Pastors Too Often Forget to Minister to Themselves,” <http://scupe.org/urbanchurchresources/cityvoices/cvarchives/0309nl.htm> (accessed 24 February 2008).

in the church.”¹⁰ These reactions ultimately only maintain status quo for the organization. Herein is the reason why many pastors see little fulfillment or fruitfulness in ministry. A frighteningly growing number of churches in North America are succumbing to the results of under-led churches. Laurence J. Peter is reported to have said, “Bureaucracy defends the status quo long past the time when the quo has lost its status.”¹¹ In order to circumvent this ever present danger, steps need to be put in place for a pastor to evaluate and maintain excellence in the areas where they are called to serve.

Evaluating the IPPCG is a preliminary process at best, with more time a clearer picture of how the IPPCG impacts the lives of pastors could be established. As it was, only four months were allocated for the hands-on learning and implementing of the peer-coaching process. Long term results often rely on long term relationships. More time should have been factored into the IPPCG; even an expansion from four months to six months could have made a significant difference. This would have created a greater commitment on the part of the participants, but it could have paid off in more profound help and long-term relationships with their pastor coach-partner. Change in most areas of life comes slowly; relationships, which are necessary for effective coaching, take time. Even after four months there was enough feedback and information in this study to conclude that these pastors saw the need for the IPPCG and were actually feeling progress toward more fruitfulness and fulfillment. In the end, even five of the six indicated they would like to continue in a coaching relationship in the future.

¹⁰Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 207, quoted in C. John Miller, *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 19.

¹¹Wikipedia, “Status quo,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Status_quo (accessed 14 April 2008).

A researcher in Australia surveyed sixty-five pastors who had been in a peer coaching relationship for at least six months. He concluded that a longer time was necessary to make any significant difference in the pastors' experience. Two or more years were recommended. "A number of pastors were coached for two or more years. It became clear that the longer the coaching relationship was in place, the more comprehensive and impressive the impact was. Some even said that the first year of coaching was just enough to establish trust and to begin to work on the most significant issues."¹²

It is arguable that a trained professional coach may bring about desired changes for the PBC in less time and with greater effectiveness than a novice peer-coach pastor. The pastor peers learn how to coach "on the fly," as they practice with each other. It may take months, or even years for one to become proficient in the coaching techniques. A trained professional coach, on the other hand, would have the advantage of having the experience and insight of years of training. For example, one professional coach instructs her clients to list their top ten values in descending order of importance, then has them rate each one with a value of one to ten. After only three short months she finds that people are surprised at how many positive changes they have made.¹³ A pastor will need to evaluate the level of coaching he desires before beginning something like the IPPCG. If he desire the stimulus of peer coaching and fellowship with other pastors in the proximity of their church, then an IPPCG plan may be satisfying. Otherwise, if they need

¹²Ibid., 108.

¹³Logan, Carlton, and Miller, 86.

immediate goal clarification or refocusing with an experienced coach for immediate change, then a professional coach would be recommended.

Finding the right coach partner is more important than was first evident. In this study the researcher called together pastors willing to interact in the IPPCG and arbitrarily teamed them up into coaching pairs.¹⁴ This had the advantage in that each of the three Adventist pastors was paired with pastors of other denominations. The drawback may be that they were not paired with the optimal partner for their particular needs.

It is advisable to pick a coach partner that is a little stronger, one that can “push you to pick up your pace.”¹⁵ In the IPPCG there was no method available where the individual could discern whether another pastor was stronger in one area or another. A simple questionnaire determining strengths and growth areas of each participant could have helped the participants make more informed choices for peer-partners. This could have equipped the coach partners with a more informed method of selecting a partner that was strong in an area they felt a need to grow. On the other hand, the premise of coaching is that a good coach does not necessarily need to know much about the field in which the PBC wants to grow. The coach needs only to know how to draw from the PBC the God-given hopes and goals that they feel a need to address.

¹⁴Assigning each pastor a peer partner was done at their request. The option was given, to select your own partner or to have me assign them a partner.

¹⁵Scott Eblin, *The Next Level: What Insiders Know About Executive Success* (Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 2006), 41.

In the final interview with the IPPCG, the author asked, "Was February to May a good amount of time?" Another pastor said, "I missed several of the meetings, but was able to catch up at our one-on-one meeting."¹⁶ The pastor partners seemed to bring a healthy link to pastors who missed the large group sessions by bringing them up-to-date on what was going on in the large group.

Tardiness was a problem during the eight group sessions. Having the meeting start at noon for the sake of socializing the first thirty minutes while eating our lunches was not being taken advantage of by some. Verbally addressing the tardiness issue did not seem to change tardiness at future meetings. It made little difference when this researcher would mention the importance of promptness and encourage the group to be on time. It is surmised that the pastors were under the impression that the first thirty minutes of group time was for group members that wanted extra socializing time, so they would come thirty minutes late. This is understandable, getting the task at hand completed in a business driven mindset leaves little room for socializing. It may be that these pastors were thinking that this socializing part was not of significant value for them to invest the time. As it was, nearly half of them came late to the meetings. This researcher felt that this socializing time was important enough to keep for the two or three that came on time, in spite of the tardiness of others.

From my observations some participants did not address high-energy goals. In retrospect, it would probably be a more productive experience for each pastor if they had been instructed early on about the importance of determining high-energy goals, goals

¹⁶This was a reference to the partner pairs where one Adventist pastor was partnered with a pastor from another denomination.

that mean a lot to them personally. It seems that several of the pastors only set safe goals, instead of faith goals. People rarely set difficult goals that would really take them out of their comfort level. However, it is these faith goals that are usually where the fruit grows, that God honors in a big way. Business coach, Battley, calls these faith goals "top-value goals."¹⁷ Another coach specialist asserts, "You have to be emotionally engaged to excel."¹⁸ In order to set goals that really get under your skin and excite you, it has to be something that deeply involves your work, your people or yourself. The director feels that the clarity and power of this essential ingredient was somehow not caught early on in this group's goal setting process.

Developing greater social ties may have enhanced the overall effectiveness of the IPPCG. Whenever a group can form greater familiarity with each other on the common, everyday level that comes from social interaction, they are prone to go deeper and become more transparent and trusting within the group. This author believes that one or more social events with the pastors and their wives would have enhanced the IPPCG experience. With a growing familiarity the group meetings could have become more open, which in turn could have spawned greater investment in the peer-coaching process. Planning a social event within the first month or two of the program for this purpose could have been easily done. If this would have been written up on the sign-up overview, it could have easily been done.¹⁹

¹⁷Battley, 126.

¹⁸Ibid., 8.

¹⁹B. Murray recommends bringing mentor mentee pairs together for social events, even suggesting an informal pizza party. He would keep a roster of social events throughout the allotted time and urge the group members to attend. B. Murray, "How to Set Up a Peer-Mentoring Program," www.apa.org/monitor/dec98/peer.html (accessed 14 April 2008). John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a*

The manner and method of forming the IPPCG may have negatively affected the level of “buy-in” with the pastors. Someone said “you never get a second chance to make first impressions” and this may have been a weakness in this project. When this researcher invited the participants, he intentionally informed them that this was a project for the completion of a doctor of ministry program. It could be assumed that some of the pastors joined the IPPCG not wanting to discourage the researcher, not primarily out of interest for their own benefit. People will join a group or attend a function for various reasons.

To form a more intrinsically motivated group with greater “buy-in,” the researcher could have shared the advertising flyer and given a phone call or personal visit to the prospective attendees with no overt reference to the dissertation project. This may have allowed the participants to come to the IPPCG for their own self-directed need and not the project director’s need.

Another factor that could have affected the buy-in of the participants could be related to formal learning verses independent learning. This researcher believes that a teacher–student relationship was inadvertently developed in the course of the group meetings. Having been only recently introduced to the peer-coaching ideas, the participants looked to the project director for instruction. This unnecessarily created a formal setting almost like a classroom which could have stymied energy that would have otherwise been directed to intrinsic learning. The unexpected teacher/student role and classroom learning style may have inhibited the deeper learning that comes from self-directed research.

Man's Soul (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2001), 175, suggests, “We need men to whom we can bare our souls, but it isn’t going to happen with a group of guys you don’t trust.”

In a review of this experience, I noted that some of the participants were likely not completing their reading assignments. At the beginning of each session there would be a review of the prescribed article, but it seemed that the material was not recalled to memory very strongly by some of the participants. Whether the articles did not seem pertinent to their situation or they were not interested in the process enough to read them is not determined. This did bring down the tenor of the meetings somewhat.

There could have been a greater emphasis on sharing highlights from the holiness questions. Accountability questions or "holiness questions," as the manual called them, were expected to be asked of each other during the peer-coaching sessions. For privacy reasons, sharing about the peer-pairs accountability questions was not a part of the scheduled large group time. However, sharing some of this information with the large group, without getting into the personal issues that may have come up between the peer-pairs, may have enhanced the mood of the large group time. The accountability questions were meant to help the peers open up and dig deeper into the areas that peer-coaching was developed to address.²⁰ This researcher is uncertain that the accountability questions were used with consistency; yet five of the six participants marked "yes" when asked, "Did you use your pastor partner to keep you accountable to your goals?"

Each group session included a time for the pastors to share a progress report on their action steps. Often one or more of the pairs would say, "We weren't able to meet this time." This created a loose accountability with the group that may have added to a

²⁰Rogers, 114. He concluded, "Coaches that made the broadest impact were able to resist the temptation to talk about the ministry environment only and were willing to explore highly personal areas with their coaches."

lower effectiveness of the IPPCG goal of creating greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in pastors.

Much of the professional coaching today is done by phone. Had we not been required to attend a meeting every week (either in the large group or with the coach partner) there might have been a greater buy-in with the group. Phone interviews are effective and could have been a much welcomed rest from the travel and time necessary to make a face-to-face appointment every week. Other forms of coaching like email, blogs or internet video conferencing could have been a welcomed alternative.

In conclusion, the overall evaluation of the IPPCG is positive. The final questionnaire shows that these pastors had a good level of support for the program, a helpful experience and feeling of greater effectiveness in their life and ministry. Following is a brief summary of the researcher's evaluation and recommendations for the IPPCG:

1. The participants of the IPPCG anticipated a need for more peer interaction with other pastors in the area of personal and ministry growth.

2. The IPPCG offered an attractive opportunity for the pastors that was appreciated and helpful. Eighty percent of them felt that they grew personally and professionally, were able to prioritize personal and ministry goals, use their peer-partner for accountability toward fulfilling those goals, and benefited from sharing with the large group concerning these things.

3. Because of the need for building greater trust and relationship comfort, a longer period of time for group sessions would be helpful in building stronger peer-relationships with more attention to social activities.

4. An improved peer-coach-partner matching process, where each participant would be able to discern what each one's strengths and growth areas were, may have added to the experience.

5. More attention should have been given to determining the highest motivating issue facing each participant before the goals and action steps were applied. This could have spurred the pastors to greater attainments.

6. Greater care in the formation of the group with a clearer buy-in from each individual is advisable.

7. Sharing highlights from the accountability questions would have enhanced the large group participation in the process of peer-coaching. Authenticity engenders greater understanding and more willingness to attempt individual change.

8. Something should be done to assure that the group does not develop a teacher/student relationship in the large group meetings in order to encourage more self-directed learning from the participants.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this project has been to discover whether or not peer-coaching helps pastors become more fruitful and fulfilled in life and ministry. The resounding results from this study are definitely positive. Peer-coaching is an important practice that can help pastors experience greater success and achievement in their life and ministry. The relation-based process this project has called the Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group has proven to be an important part in the matrix of health-increasing practices that the twenty-first century pastor needs to consider. As current learning methodologies, like peer-coaching, become better known, pastors will discover that collaborative learning is the way of the future. Peter Senge says, "Collaboration is vital to sustain what we call profound or really deep change, because without it, organizations are just overwhelmed by the forces of the status quo."¹

Peer-coaching, as presented in this paper, is about goal clarification, developing peer-support, and pastors volunteering themselves to become coach partners with other ministers in their vicinity. The benefit of partnering is reciprocated as the two learners

¹Wikipedia, "Peter Senge," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Senge (accessed 24 April 2008). Senge "an American scientist and director of the Center for Organizational Learning at the MIT Sloan School of Management. He is known as author of the book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*" (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1990), 10. In this first chapter, Senge argues that the fifth discipline is systems thinking. The five disciplines he promotes enhance the purpose of peer-coaching for pastors: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning.

forge a relationship based on the desire to recover the passion God has placed in their hearts for a successful and rewarding ministry.

I believed that I personally needed a relation-based process that would help me maintain clear vision for optimal fulfillment and success in life for the duration of my pastoral career. Isolation and the absence of peer-interaction has been one of the highest felt needs of the ministry today and is creating demotivated² pastors that have long given up on the dream of a thriving ministry experience. "Spiritually neutralized"³ is the word Tom Blackaby draws on to paint the landscape he is seeing in the church pastorate today. Ministers who have become sheep instead of shepherds, content to follow someone else's lead rather than forging new paths from the hopes and dreams God has placed on them for their unique calling. Terry Swicegood admits, "The greatest crisis the institutional church faces at the beginning of the third millennium is marked by clergy burnout, dropout and kicked out."⁴ He goes on to explain:

The facts are indisputable. There is a growing crisis in church life, which robs our churches of good pastoral leadership and brings pain and hurt upon pastors and pastors' families. A growing number of ministers, priests and rabbis are experiencing depression, loss of vocation, and dissatisfaction in their work. Conflicts in congregations between parishioners and clergy are increasing because of the changing nature of the church and because the church and synagogue are embracing cultural values rather than Biblical ones. Pastoring has become a profession that extracts so much that it is nearly inhumane to expect the person to consistently manage all the multiple and conflicting expectations.⁵

²Demotivate means to "reduce somebody's enthusiasm: to make somebody feel less interested in working or studying effectively." MSN Encarta: Dictionary, "Demotivate," http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_561563477/demotivate.html (accessed 25 May 2008).

³Tom Blackaby, "Pastors: Be Shepherds, Not Sheep," SermonCentral.com, http://www.sermoncentral.com/article.asp?article=a-T_Blackaby_03_24_08&ac=true (accessed 10 June 2008).

⁴Terry Swicegood, "Mammas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Preachers!" a veteran Presbyterian pastor in a lecture, quoted in Carroll, 159.

⁵Ibid., 160.

Chapter three outlined a clear understanding of the biblical philosophy and practice of inter-personal relationships, the backbone of peer-coaching. From the concept of the trinity, the God family, the human race derives its very highest model of life and relationships. At the center of what we understand as God we see an inter-dependency of peer-relationships. The three dwell in each other completely. God is known only relationally, without peer-collaboration within the godhead there is nothing left to describe His existence. Peer-coaching relationships are built on the solid ground of this biblical image of God. We were made to thrive in "relationality"⁶ not individuality.

It cannot be stressed more clearly that mankind's basic dysfunction is derived from his alienation from God and his fellow man. From the time of Adam and Eve's departure from their inter-dependent relationship we see a pattern repeated throughout biblical history. The blessing of inter-dependent relationships or failures from the lack of them is clearly seen in the experiences of Abraham, Moses, and David. This is especially true in the New Testament where a wealth of examples are found from the practice of Jesus and His habit of using questions to engage the response of the hearer.

Questions are considered to be a major determining factor in the effectiveness of peer-coaching. Coaching differs from counseling or mentoring in that it seeks to find the motivating factors within the person being coached, instead of trying to teach a new concept or bring up an issue related to a psychological perspective. Jesus perceived the God-given destiny that existed in the heart of every person. It was His endeavor to bring their destiny to light through excellent questions.

⁶Rogers, 27.

The early church outlines a compelling picture of inter-dependent relationships that had as their purpose to grow in greater fruitfulness and fulfillment. Paul, the most prolific author of all the published apostles, was constantly modeling the support of ministry through peer-partnerships. In nearly all of his salutations he was listing companions with him in his work. More than this though was the fact that he never traveled alone and even when he was in prison or house arrest, he was strongly dependent on the support of other ministers, like himself. Without fellow ministers like Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy, we would likely have a very different New Testament.

A major aspect of the peer-coaching model set forth in this paper has been an attempt at providing pastors with a way to help them continue addressing the dysfunction of isolation and companionless ministry. Fallen human nature gravitates toward independence from outside assistance. If spiritual leaders avoid addressing this illness they will inevitably succumb to the neutralizing affect of isolation.

Chapter four shows the reader how the IPPCG was developed and implemented in Gentry, a small but growing community in Northwest Arkansas. The six pastors who participated were to be commended for their willingness to participate in this new experience.⁷ It was concluded from the questionnaires and interviews that they felt a need for more peer-interaction and anticipated the peer-coaching approach to help them form clearer goals that would bring greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in their life and ministry. These goals were satisfied to one degree or another in the brief four months that

⁷Only one of the six participants indicated a familiarity with the coaching model before this experience.

the group met. It was evident that some were more motivated than others to incorporate the benefits of peer-coaching into their already busy lives.

Recommendations for Pastors

For anyone wanting to launch an Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Group as described in this project, I would give several recommendations.

Recommendation one: Before you start, build the interest of your prospective minister(s) through a multifaceted approach. If you do not have at least a preliminary knowledge of the person from ministerial meetings or other encounters, you will need to invite them to lunch or some neutral place for the purpose of getting acquainted. You could follow the F.O.R.T. method that includes sharing about your family, occupations, recreation, and testimony. You could take turns sharing. Then present some material from a well-known author that has inspired you to develop peer-to-peer relationships like the book *Anointed to Be God's Servants: Lessons from the Life of Paul and His Companions*⁸ by Henry Blackaby and his son Tom. At another appointment you could share a questionnaire that would start your discussions leading into an understanding of peer-coaching, similar to the one in this paper. Only after you have developed an understanding of peer-coaching are you ready to launch into a long-term commitment. I would also add, you need to have at least six months to a year to begin seeing noticeable differences. Some would recommend a year or two.

⁸Henry T. Blackaby and Thomas Blackaby, *Anointed to Be God's Servants: How God Blesses Those Who Serve Together* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005). Chapters include "Paul's Need for Companionship," "Paul Nurtured Relationships," and "Paul's Lesser Known Companions."

Recommendation two: Before the participants of your peer-coaching group can focus on areas that make a big difference, you will need to grapple together with the idea of what success looks like for you, success in life and ministry. Ask questions like: What would excellence look like in my personal life? or What would excellence look like in my church? Until a compelling picture of the desired future is defined in the pastors' minds there will be a constant level of frustration from undefined and unfulfilled expectations. Deciphering the challenges that face the pastors' ministry and personal life will be necessary before they can determine where the greatest contribution can be made toward excellence in pastoral leadership. It is very important that the participants choose an area to concentrate on that is "the issue" that is keeping them from greater fruitfulness and fulfillment in life and ministry.

In order to help a pastor determine where their greatest area of focus should be, the following may spawn some ideas:

- Developing skills in areas like exercise, music, money management, sermon writing and delivery, parenting, or leadership
- Discovering and developing passions
- Building a clearer vision for the future
- Developing a mission statement
- Learning to manage change effectively
- Learning to relate to people effectively
- Finding clear values
- Building communication skills
- Appraising performance
- Getting unstuck, out of ruts, and moving forward
- Learning to think and see things differently
- Expanding the capacity to take action
- Getting free of self-sabotaging behavior and destructive self talk—the kind of talk, for example, that says, "I can't do it," "Things will never change," "No one will listen to me," "I'll never succeed so why try"
- Building better teams—like getting athletes to play for the name on the front of their shirts instead of the names on the back
- Building self-confidence

Finding meaning in what one is doing
Getting the courage to take risks
Learning to take responsibility
Developing a closer walk with God⁹

Even after a person thinks he or she has found the area of greatest need to focus on, it should not be set as an unmovable compass. Based on the experience and information they receive in the process, there may be areas of greater need that they will want to shift their concentration toward.

Recommendation three: Concerning accountability partnering, I should have included a question on the first questionnaire that made the participant think if they had such a person. A question like, Do you currently have another person, to whom you hold yourself accountable in areas of moral integrity and leadership goals? One of the goals of the IPPCG was to have an accountability partner that could provide this service. It would have been good to know how many of the participants had an accountability partner like this before the group started.

One pastor in another study commented that regular evaluation and accountability to growth goals was essential for him. After a prolonged coaching experience he said:

If you don't take coaching and the accountability that is associated with coaching, there is very little chance of changing. I certainly wouldn't have changed without somebody coming up to me regularly and holding me accountable to things that he was drawing out of me. If we want to change, we need people who can be more objective than we can be. People who can offer the encouragement and support, who will ask the hard questions that need to be asked. Without that, I think we are deceiving ourselves. How do we know that we are doing okay? We need somebody to help work through these things or you won't change.¹⁰

⁹Collins, 24.

¹⁰Rogers, 112.

On the other hand, if an area of accountability is entered that creates genuine distress or goes beyond the proper domain of a peer-coaching relationship, both parties should know that they are free to remain neutral and not pursue deeper questioning in those areas.

Recommendation four: Picking your peer-coach-partner. Norman Cohen in his book on mentoring lets the reader know that there are two schools of thought on how to find the right mentor.¹¹ One group says that random and arbitrary assigning of a mentor to a protégé is just as effective as other ways that involve great details. My hunch is that the truth is somewhere in the middle. If there was a brief questionnaire for pastors to take that gave a place for them to outline their experience in ministry and life it would help. Even something like a vita would be a starting point for the group to learn more about each other. On the questionnaire there should be a place for the person to give a general idea of the areas they would like to improve or address in their coaching sessions.

Once an informative tool like this is designed it could be compiled and copied for all participants to review before the peers are paired off. If the group felt it would be more helpful to pick their own partner, then this would help. Even if they chose not to pick their own partner, the general information would improve group dynamics for the large group meetings.

Recommendation five: Based on the fact that 87 percent of the population is composed of visual thinkers, more visual aids could be incorporated in the peer-coach meetings. I am a visual thinker and would much appreciate a coach with visual aids to

¹¹Norman H. Cohen, *Principles of Adult Mentoring Inventory* (Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 1998), 9.

chart the patterns of my thinking as he asked coaching questions. Christina Merkley has created charts that help the coach help their partner see how to define where they are in visual terms and see how they can get to where they want to be in creative visual ways.¹² There would need to be an investment of money in order to secure these visual aids, but the payoff would be worth it when the visually inspired pastor could see how to move progressively forward. These kinds of charts could actually be hung on office walls and prominent places to serve as reminders of the direction their life and ministry is going.

Recommendations for Denominational Leaders

Recommendation one: Introduce the IPPCG concept at a conference ministers' retreat or area pastors' meeting to see if there is an interest in peer-coaching. It is not likely that you will find a pastor that has much training in the field of peer-coaching; however, it is important that you find a pastor that has a greater interest in learning and implementing peer-coaching skills in their ministry. If funds are available, send the pastor (or possibly a group of pastors willing to partner in peer-coaching) to a training seminar that will accelerate their learning curve. At this point in time I do not know of any Adventist pastor-to-pastor coaching seminars available in the United States.¹³ Tony Stoltzfus, whose workbook on peer-coaching I used for this project, is available for

¹²Christina Merkley, "Visual Aid Charts," Shift-It Coach, www.shift-it-coach.com (accessed 10 March 2008).

¹³Rob Steed, a Seventh-day Adventist coach trainer is offering leadership training in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia called In2action Christian Coach network. It seems to be geared more for training coaching methods for laity in the local church. Record.net.au, "In2action Provides Training," <http://www.in2action.org.au/REC2507.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2008).

teaching peer-coaching to pastors.¹⁴ There are other places for coach training already mentioned in chapter five.

One caveat on conference leadership promotions; as conference leaders you would need to be careful as to how such a project would be promoted. Often things brought down from headquarters are looked at as obligations more than privileges. This would need to be promoted as an opportunity for a select group of pastors that are specially chosen. "Enrollment and commitment require freedom of choice. . . . Commitment likewise is very personal; effort to force it will, at best, foster compliance."¹⁵

Recommendation two: Considering the impact that the IPPCG has made on this project's small group of pastors in this short amount of time, has inspired me to think in terms of applying for a Lilly Endowment (See footnote 55 on page 114 of this paper). In places like Northwest Arkansas, the IPPCG could have a wide regional effect. It would present itself as an attractive opportunity for pastors who realize the need of peer-relationships with like-minded pastors in their area. Most large cities have several pastors of the same denomination with whom they could form peer-relationships, but in places like Gentry, Arkansas few pastors from ones own denomination live close enough to allow consistent peer-coaching to take place.

Already in Northwest Arkansas another organization has applied and received a large government grant for developing healthy marriages. "Siloam Springs, Ark. — The Center for Relationship Enrichment (CRE) at John Brown University was recently

¹⁴CoachingPastors, "Tony Stoltzfus," <http://coachingpastors.com/workshops.htm> (accessed 26 May 2008).

¹⁵Senge, 223.

awarded a \$2.7 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families to support research and development of healthy marriages in Northwest Arkansas. CRE is the only Arkansas recipient of the grant."¹⁶

On a similar scale, ministers, as shapers of society,¹⁷ need a regional effort to remedy the hemorrhage of pastors dropping out, burning out, or getting kicked out of ministry. With a Lilly Endowment one could set up a three year program where pastors could receive peer-coach training. Most pastors, as in other professions, do not take the time to develop peer relationships, much less peer-coaching relationships. Pastors would likely be attracted to an organization that has as its primary goal the development and implementation of an interfaith peer-coaching forum. The benefits could be a win-win for the pastor, the church, and the cities in which the churches carry out their ministry.

A slogan used by the Northwest Arkansas Center for Relationship Enrichment goes something like this: As goes the marriage, so goes the family, and as goes the family, so goes the church, and as goes the church, so goes the society. Such a progression is arguable by secular humanists, but in a nation in which the majority still claims to be Christian, there seems to be support for such sentiment. It would not be too much of a stretch to think that an organization like the Lilly Endowment, which has funded hundreds of faith based initiatives, would endorse such a proposal.

¹⁶CRE-NWA Healthy Marriages, "Grant Information: CRE Receives \$2.7 Million Grant for New Initiative," <http://www.nwamarriages.com/about/info.php> (accessed 7 April 2008).

¹⁷Carroll, 10. Here the author speaks to the sociological significance of pastoral leadership. He quotes from political scientist Robert Putnam, "Faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America." By social capital he means "connection among individuals, social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."

Conclusion

Could it be that God is blessing the growing interest in leadership coaching and peer-coaching in particular, to accelerate developing accountability and maintaining excellence in the leaders of our churches today? I believe that Christian peer-coaching is a method that will encourage pastors to tap into the stream of God's limitless resources for greater fulfillment and fruitfulness in life and ministry. It has been tried in educational fields, psychological and business disciplines, as well as non-profit organizations, with good results. People are finding that the best motivator for change is within the person themselves, and that is what peer-coaching is based on.

Leaders of organizations have continually sought ways to motivate employees to achieve their potential. Numerous incentive programs have been introduced with varying success. The mentoring movement in business has been promoted for similar purposes, to engage the employee at a higher level of learning than they could achieve on their own. The traditional classroom learning/teaching style where new information is shared with students has been found to be as low as 15 percent effective "in sustained behavioral change within the workplace."¹⁸ For these and other reasons organizations have turned to professional coaching and peer-coaching to optimize the abilities of their employees.

Peer-coaching has come on the scene as an innovative way to stimulate greater goal achievement and personal growth through asking questions and active listening. Christian coaching helps the individual to seek God's will for their life, then to form a plan how to achieve what that will is. Let us keep in mind the truth that "People [pastors]

¹⁸S. Cromwell and J. Kolb, "An Examination of Work-environment Support Factors Affecting Transfer of Supervisory Skills Training to the Work Place," *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 15 no. 4 (2004): 449-71.

do not drift into becoming loving, joy-filled, patient, winsome, world changers. It requires intention and effort. But the default mode of the human heart is to drift."¹⁹ This natural tendency to drift can be broken when pastors form a partnering relationship with a peer who is willing to learn and use coaching skills. In the process of learning coaching skills the peers assist each other in developing growth goals with action steps that make completion of the God-given vision achievable.

Coaching is not a new concept; many of the principals of coaching actually come from the Bible and other historical sources. The triune God sets the example on how perfection in ministry exists—through inter-dependent relationships. The Godhead exists in community, three cooperating as one; in a sense. They operate the universe from a peer-to-peer relationship with each other, co-equal and co-eternal.²⁰ Transformational growth happens in a healthy environment where inter-dependent relationships flourish for the glory to God.

Pastors, more than in times past, are in need of tools that will strengthen their leadership capacity and bring them out of a normally isolated career. With the crush and rush of demands from the modern church, pastors have been caught in a career that is failing and flailing on many fronts. Peer-coaching inherently directs pastors to health-producing leadership practices that help them assess and respond to what they believe God is leading them to do. Peer-coaching relationships, unlike mentoring, counseling, or teacher-student relationships, assume that God is working in the peer's life and the best solutions are the ones God has placed within the peer. Through skillful questions and

¹⁹Ortberg, 35.

²⁰P. Gerard Damsteegt, ed., *Fundamental Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 22-25.

active listening, coaching peers allow their partners to take the necessary steps for themselves without someone telling them what to do. As Malcolm Knowles stated, "What adults learn on their own initiative they learn more keenly and permanently than what they learn by being taught."²¹ Once the individual creates the needed action steps for growth in vital areas of life and ministry, the likelihood that the actions will be taken are much greater.

Peer-coaching creates peer-relationships that lead to greater accountability to God who ultimately gives responsibilities to pastoral leadership. Pastors have few places where their life and work is accounted for and at the same time affirmed in a supportive environment. In my twenty years of denominational ministry, it has appeared that Adventist teachers are held to a greater breadth of accountability than church pastors. Pastors, as the highest profile leaders in the local church, need the greatest accountability in order to maintain better influence and confidence from the people they lead. Yet, the person directly responsible for the pastors' health and performance is the furthest removed from the pastor, the conference president. As Larry Downing, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor since 1967 said, "The accountability that exists between the pastor and the local church board is by mutual consent rather than design, since the local church can neither hire nor fire a pastor."²² He goes on to explain that various conferences have tried

²¹Malcom Knowles, *Designs for Adult Learning: Practical Resources, Exercises, and Course Outlines from the Father of Adult Learning* (Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development, 1995), 265, quoted in Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 10.

²²Larry Downing, "Toward a More Effective System of Church Governance," *Adventist Perspective*, December 2000, 2.

to initiate accountability processes with "less than positive results." He believes this is because there is "no system wide reward and punishment."²³

Reward and punishment is not the goal of peer-coaching, but peer-coaching does offer a place for pastors to focus on their God-given vision and then form practical goals and objectives that they voluntarily avail themselves to be held accountable to. This is not a top-down approach to ministry motivation; it is an inner-guided method that keeps the responsibility with the individual where it will get the greatest results. The peer-to-peer approach does not remove the authority of the conference president; in fact, it affirms and expands on it providing a greater probability of producing positive change from the pastor.

Knowing that the position of the pastor is being challenged, their effectiveness is being questioned and the very organization that they represent (the church) is being disparaged as a diminishing part of society, there needs to be an all out effort to support local pastors with tools that can buoy them up. One pastor perceived that "the pastor is kind of a 'fifth-wheel,' an employee of an institution that is comforting to have around but far removed from the real issues of the world."²⁴

The inter-faith aspects of this project have brought me and five others in contact with pastors who share similar struggles and have comparable experiences. The Adventist pastor should be the first one to make the move toward affirming these inter-faith relationships. At present, I have no knowledge of the Adventist Church having any program that equips pastors to develop accountable relationships with pastors of other

²³Ibid.

²⁴Carroll, 12.

Christian churches in their vicinity. Why would a pastor not want to get to know the other spiritual leaders in their community? They pray for the same people in the community, work for the same people in the community, and shape the lives of the same people in the community, just like Adventist pastors do.²⁵ Adventist pastors have much they could offer for the community and much they could receive from collaborating with these other spiritual leaders. The IPPCG offers one way where pastors can build meaningful, encouraging relationships with pastors of other faiths.

Expecting pastors to individually break out of the downward spiral the church in the United States is moving into is asking for a lot from any one person; it is going to take a corporate and comprehensive effort to give pastors the impetus and tools necessary to break the fall. The use of Interfaith Pastors' Peer Coaching Groups is one way that has been shown to help pastors become more focused on building relationships with pastors in other churches.

I would like to see a model like the IPPCG offered to all the pastors of a conference as an alternative to maintaining the status-quo and minimum expectations of the church and conference.²⁶ If peer-coaching was embraced by a few pastors that would run with the idea and become adept at peer-coaching, there could be a revolution in the way they carry out their work and life, which in turn would set a precedent for other

²⁵In some cases pastors are sharing parishioners that attend their church and other churches, thus emphasizing the need for collaboration and cooperation between churches.

²⁶David Newman, "Hidden Heresy: Is Spiritualism Invading?" *Adventist Today* 13, no. 6 (2005): 23, 24. Newman quotes from a George Barna survey that concluded about church attendance, "Only 47 percent of Adventists reported attending church during the past seven days, which actually is pretty close to what Mark Finley reported at the same Fifth Business session of the 2005 General Conference concerning attendance worldwide—57 percent. Episcopalians were at 30 percent and Lutherans at 47 percent were the only ones out of the 12 that were lower. The highest were Mormons at 71 percent and Assemblies of God at 69 percent."

pastors to follow. Peer-coaching would provide a feed-back loop every week so they could evaluate their progress. Their over-stuffed life and ministry "to do" list could be prioritized and brought into manageable portions. There would be stronger relationships formed between pastors and this could help them address the discouraging challenges of leadership in the modern church. There would be a greater impact on pastors from other churches through the inter-faith advantage. The churches would begin seeing a gleam of satisfaction in their pastors' eyes that comes from a well-thought-out and well-planned life.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRES

**Your opinion of the pastors experience in the Arkansas Louisiana
Conference Concerning interfaith pastor to pastor relationships**

(This questionnaire is cited in a dissertation by Raymond C. House in partial fulfillment of his requirements toward a Doctor of Ministry degree through Andrews University Theological Seminary. His advisors for this project are Dr. Walt Williams and Dr. Philip Samaan)

(All questions about pastor partners, friends or coaches describe pastors partnering with pastors of other Christian denominations)

CIRCLE ONE:

Yes Somewhat No 1. Do the pastors of this conference interact regularly with pastors of other faiths for peer collaboration and/or fellowship?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 2. Would pastors benefit from spending time discussing their goals with another pastor, with whom they had developed the tools and commitment to ask helpful questions for greater clarity and effectiveness?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 3. Would pastors be enriched by evaluating their personal and professional goals with a pastor partner who was committed to their wellbeing?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 4. Would a pastor benefit from having this friend ask him for accountability toward goals he (the individual pastor) has set for himself?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 5. When pastors have so many "irons in the fire" would it be helpful for them to have a fellow pastor ask questions to help them toward sorting out their priorities?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 6. Would it be helpful for pastors to have a pastor friend in full time ministry from another denomination (for confidentiality and transparency) with whom they could share openly about their struggles?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 7. Would pastors benefit from a fellow ministry confidant to pray with and for concerning their challenges?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 8. Would you encourage pastors meeting with pastors of other denominations for the purpose of learning and implementing the principles of peer coaching and accountability toward fulfilling life goals?

Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 9. Concerning fruitfulness and fulfillment toward reaching personal and ministry goals, where would you guess the average full time pastor in your conference would be on a scale of one to five, five being the highest fulfillment?

Conference initiated 10. Assuming the benefits of peer collaboration and pastors coaching each other toward greater success, do you think the conference office would be more successful in initiating this process through education and

Pastor initiated coordination or do you see a pastor initiated peer coaching process in the field as being more effective?

Comments:

Your information please:

Yes No 1. I am a lay leader in my local church

Yes No 2. I am a conference official

Your opinion of the pastors' experience in N.W. Arkansas Concerning interfaith pastor to pastor relationships

(This questionnaire is cited in a dissertation by Raymond C. House in partial fulfillment of his requirements toward a Doctor of Ministry degree through Andrews University Theological Seminary. His advisors for this project are Dr. Walt Williams and Dr. Philip Samaan)

(All questions about pastor partners, friends or coaches describe pastors partnering with pastors of other Christian denominations)

CIRCLE ONE:

Yes Somewhat No 1. Do the pastors of your denomination interact regularly with pastors of other faiths for peer collaboration and/or fellowship?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 2. Would pastors benefit from spending time discussing their goals with another pastor, with whom they had developed the tools and commitment to ask helpful questions for greater clarity and effectiveness?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 3. Would pastors be enriched by evaluating their personal and professional goals with a pastor partner who was committed to their wellbeing?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 4. Would a pastor benefit from having this friend ask him for accountability toward goals he (the individual pastor) has set for himself?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 5. When pastors have so many "irons in the fire" would it be helpful for them to have a fellow pastor ask questions to help them toward sorting out their priorities?

Comments:

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Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 7. Would pastors benefit from a fellow pastor confidant to pray with and for concerning their challenges?

Comments:

Yes Somewhat No 8. Would you encourage pastors meeting with pastors of other denominations for the purpose of learning and implementing the principles of peer coaching and accountability toward fulfilling life goals?

Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 9. Concerning fruitfulness and fulfillment toward reaching personal and ministry goals, where would you guess the average full time pastor in your denomination would be on a scale of one to five, five being the highest fulfillment?

Yes Somewhat No 10. Do you think many of the pastors in your denomination would join a peer coaching pastors group like the one described in this questionnaire?

Yes Somewhat No 11. Would you encourage your pastor to join an interfaith peer coaching pastors group that did the things listed in this questionnaire?

Comments:

Your information please:

My denominational affiliation is: _____

Yes No 1. I am a lay leader in my local church

Yes No 2. I am a governing leader for my denomination over several pastors and/or churches

APPENDIX 2

HOLINESS QUESTIONS

Covenant: Holiness Questions

General

- How does it with your soul?
- What do you need to confess and repent of?
- What do you need to celebrate this week?
- What is God asking you to do right now?
- What was the highlight and what was the low point of your week?

Sexual Purity

- Have you dwelt on any sexually explicit material?
- What do you need to remove from your life so you are not led into temptation?
- Have you walked by your standards of sexual purity since we last met?

Money

- How did you give or share freely this week?
- Did you live within your budget or within your means this month? Have you spent wisely?
- How did you choose a life of simplicity instead of materialism this week?

Work

- Are you maintaining a healthy pace of life?
- How did you show respect and grace to your co-workers and customers this week?
- Did you put in an honest day's work each day this week at your job?
- How many hours did you work this week?

Spiritual Life

- How many days did you have devotions this week?
- Did you take a sabbath day of rest this week?
- How did your fasting go this week?
- What did God speak to you in your times in the Word?

Thought Life

- How have you been aware of God's presence throughout your day during this week?
- Where have you put greatness into your mind this week? Where have you put in garbage?
- Have you been anxious about anything?

Lordship

- Did you make Jesus Lord of _____ this week?
- Where is Jesus asking you for Lordship of your life? How have you responded?
- How were you obedient to follow God's Word or his voice to you this week?

Integrity

- Were there any times you told a lie or twisted the truth to make yourself look good this week?
- Did you keep full integrity in all your business and financial dealings since we last met?
- Did you keep your commitments this week?

Relationships

- Are you holding on to any bitterness, envy or a grudge against another person?
- Did you meet the challenges of parenting in a way you are proud of this week?
- How did you honor, bless or show love to your family since we met last?
- Who did you go out of your way to minister to or share the gospel with this week?

Body Stewardship

- Are you addicted to anything?
- Have you had a [drink, smoke, pill] this week?
- Did you stick to your diet and exercise this week?

My Holiness Questions

Peer's Holiness Questions

(This resource comes from Tony Stoltzfus' website <http://www.coach22.com/insidethebook/peercoachingcovenant.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2008). The IPPCG used this resource from Stoltzfus' workbook, *Peer Coaching: Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth Centered Peer Relationships*, (Prepublication PDF version of the participant notebook, 2006), 45. These questions were only suggestions, meant for the person being coached to request his coach partner to ask him each time they met.

APPENDIX 3

NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

A list of Bible fifty-five New Testament texts on the role of a pastor, given to each participant in the IPPCG. The suggestion was that they read over each text and decide which ones God may be calling them to focus on as growth areas during their peer-coaching experience.

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

Acts 6:1-4 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*. 2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables." 3 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task." 4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 20:20 How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

Romans 12:6 And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise

1 Corinthians 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness

1 Corinthians 2:4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power

1 Corinthians 9:27 But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

2 Corinthians 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.

2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

Galatians 6:2-5 Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. ⁵ For each one shall bear his own load.

Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

Ephesians 1:16-18 Do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Philippians 1:9-11 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

Philippians 4:9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with

Colossians 1:9-10 For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.**1 Thessalonians 1:2-3** We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³ constantly

bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸ Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 Just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, ¹² so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you; ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; ¹² in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

1 Timothy 3:5 But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?

1 Timothy 4:7 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness

1 Timothy 4:13 Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.

1 Timothy 4:16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

1 Timothy 5:20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of *sinning*.

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 6:11-12 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**2 Timothy 1:14** Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:24 – 26 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

2 Timothy 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Titus 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Titus 1:6-9 If any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. ⁷ For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward; not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Titus 2:1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

Titus 2:7 In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified,

Titus 2:7-8 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, ⁸ sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

Titus 2:15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate them.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders, and submit *to them*; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, ²¹ equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

James 3:1 Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

1 Peter 5:2-3 Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

APPENDIX 4

PEER COACHING COVENANT

Peer Coaching Covenant

LOGISTICS

1. We will meet: *weekly bi-weekly*
2. We are agreeing to meet together for _____ months, then we will reevaluate.
3. We will meet as a: *peer pair peer triad*
4. This relationship will be:
 - *Closed: just us*
 - *Open: we will bring in others and multiply*
5. Our regular meeting place and time will be:

S.M.A.R.T. Goals (See page 40)

Powerful growth goals are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-Specific

Action Steps: CD¹ (See page 44)

Effective action steps pass these four tests:

- Clarity: I know exactly what to do
- Datebook: This step can be scheduled
- Commitment: I know I *will* do this
- Deadline: I've set a date for completion

GROUND RULES

Purposeful

We are not getting together just to chat. This is an intentional, growth-centered relationship we are in to help us grow and accomplish important goals.

Structured

We are committing to a structured relationship where we will meet regularly and be on time.

Mutual

A peer coach is a partner, not a guide. My job is to provide positive support, encouragement, accountability and challenge, not to give advice.

Authentic

We will be open and honest with each other about the things we are working on, and deal with it honestly when something is not working.

Accountable

When we choose to commit to something, we will follow through. We want to be held accountable.

Discrete

What we talk about stays between us.

Under Authority

If we are not sure whether our goals, action steps or life patterns are appropriate, we will take it to Scripture first and then to our church leadership.

Peer Covenant (sign below)

We agree to build a strong, supportive, mutual relationship that will help us grow, accomplish important goals and become more like Jesus. We are in this relationship because we want it. If our times together become inconsistent or unproductive, we will choose to refocus, recommit or end well.

Date _____

Date _____

My Growth Goal: (use a pencil)

Peer's Growth Goal:

(This resource comes from Tony Stoltzfus' website <http://www.coach22.com/insidethebook/peercoachingcovenant.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2008). The IPPCG used this resource from Stoltzfus' workbook, *Peer Coaching: Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth Centered Peer Relationships*, (Prepublication PDF version of the participant notebook, 2006), 44.

APPENDIX 5

OUTLINE FROM SESSION 3

Cultivating Authenticity

Accountability: (5 minutes. Facilitator would ask each pastor to share their input to the following questions so the whole group could learn and become accountable to the process of learning coaching)

1. Ask your partner an accountability question: “What principles did you come up with from last week’s article on creating buy-in?”
2. “When you read the article on the coaching approach, which of the six benefits most appealed to you?”

A. Cultivating Authenticity: the Catalytic Paradigm (15 minutes. The purpose of this discussion was to define authenticity, relate it to the story of Adam and Eve, and apply the results of hiding. I shared a personal story of being inauthentic and how it hurt a relationship)

What happened to Adam and Eve relationally when they fell? (We read Genesis 3:7-11. The point of this discussion was that “we return to the original state of transparency in our relationships.”¹)

Two Roads to Authenticity: (This was part of the same 15 minute discussion from above.)

1. The Time and Trust Paradigm—getting authentic a little bit at a time
What are the disadvantages of the Time and Trust paradigm?
(The disadvantages of this approach were in the fact that it takes a long time to make incremental steps toward authenticity if someone is not taking the lead to be boldly authentic.)
2. The Catalytic Paradigm—leading in authenticity by taking the risk yourself
What are the advantages of the Catalyzing paradigm?
(The advantages are that “you can have a great, life-changing peer relationship from day one, instead of taking 6 months to get comfortable with each other. Your ability is independent of who you are with. You can have an authentic relationship with almost any believer, anywhere, anytime”²).

¹Tony Stoltzfus, *Peer Coaching Presenter Outlines* (Prepublication PDF copy sent to Ray House for use in this project, received from tonystoltzfus@coach22.com).

²Ibid.

B. What principles make a personal story effective at catalyzing authenticity? (20 minute discussion and practice time. The following four points were taught as vital characteristics catalyze authenticity in telling your story.)

1. Vulnerable
2. Significant
3. Detailed
4. Not needy

(After these four characteristics were discussed we were referred to an article from session two where Tony Stoltfuz wrote an authentic story of a turning point in his ministry. He used all four characteristics in describing his frustration and resolution through a coaching session with Tim.)

C. Peer Exercise: Catalyzing Authenticity (20 Minutes. The facilitator summarized this exercise with the group and then asked them if they would be willing to make this the point of their peer coaching meeting the following week when we met as partners, not as a group. They agreed.)

Part 1: Risk-Taking. Take a risk and share an authentic story with your peer! Use the four characteristics of authentic stories we developed in the discussion (handout page 16). Then have your peer share a story with you. If you have time, each of you can share a second story. Work at building an authentic foundation for your relationship by going deeper than usual.

Part 2: If you could make only one request of God today, and you knew you'd get an answer, what would it be? Share something with your peer that you'd like to pray for together. Don't share someone else's need, or something surfacy: share something that you really need from God today! Spend a few minutes praying with each other about what you shared.

D. Article: Peter's Authentic Life Story (The articles were to be read by each pastor on their own. It was to enhance their understanding of the coaching principles for that session.)

E. Action Step: Biblical Authenticity (The facilitator used the action step section in two ways. Sometimes I would have the pastor partners do it in their coaching session the following week. Other times I would have them do it on their own, like this one.)

1. Study: All the Boo-Boos of Passion Week (How many places can you find in the biblical accounts of Jesus death and resurrection (Mark 14-16, Luke 22-24 or Matt 26-29) where the twelve disciples did something wrong or stupid or ignorant? Make a list below (remember, they wrote this stuff down about themselves for you to read!)
2. Reflection: Your Own Authentic Life Story (If you were telling the story of Jesus from his work in you own life, what stories of your own faults and failures would you include? Can you think of a fairly recent situation where you've told a less-than-completely honest) or down-right spin controlled) version of your story in the past that you'd like to change? What could you do about that?

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