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ABSTRACT

DISCIPLESHIP COACHING FOR EMPOWERING MEMBERS
AT NORWALK SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

John W. Strehle, Jr.

Adviser: Walton A. Williams

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DISCIPLESHIP COACHING FOR EMPOWERING MEMBERS AT
NORWALK SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: John W. Strehle, Jr.

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Date completed: May 2022

Problem

Based on members' feedback, there were concerns of judgmental and critical attitudes at the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church. A study in 2009, "Christ's Mission in Norwalk" by Monte Sahlin, Senior Consultant for Center for Creative Ministry, indicated a need for personal involvement in the Norwalk church in meeting the challenges of one another and the community. Yet, the judgmental and critical atmosphere was limiting the lay involvement. Likewise, the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey confirmed in 2014 that Loving Relationships was a minimum factor for the Norwalk Church. The survey showed that the community was not relying on friends nor sharing personal problems.

Method

The task of this project was to study the Pauline missionary journeys described in the book of Acts and see how authenticity and interdependence were cultivated. The literature review examined seminal and contemporary scholars on what Life Coaching is, and how it could be utilized in a local church setting to improve Loving Relationships. A sermon series was developed to create awareness of the importance of authenticity and interdependence in enhancing Loving Relationships. A sign-up was set up after the sermon series to participate in a six-week program. The participants would engage with video demonstrations and interactive discussion, followed by coaching in triad groups. An NCD survey was conducted at the end of the six-week program to assess Loving Relationships. The NCD survey was evaluated for changes across the NCD Survey and in Loving Relationships in response to the coaching training.

Results

Nineteen participants started the implementation of the project with a weekend workshop. A week later, the five-week follow-up sessions began with 12 participants who completed the implementation process. The participants that attended the workshop felt the information was valuable. Seven participants were not able to continue. Nine out of the 12 that followed through the weekend workshop and five-week follow-up sessions found more meaningful relationships with their peer coach(es) that helped them move forward with the goals that God put on their hearts. Peer coaching did not make a

paradigm shift in the church. However, it did help empower people to recognize the value of influential relationships, more than helping people to be more authentic.

Conclusions

The most considerable improvement was in sharing one's spiritual journey, which was the strength of the Peer Coaching seminar. Bitterness and conflict were issues discovered in analyzing the NCD 2014, 2016, 2019. Even so, the five NCD questions for interdependence, when averaged, saw a six-point increase from 2014 to 2019. Furthermore, the seven NCD questions averaged for authenticity showed a decline from 2014 to 2019 of 1.28 points (See Appendix E). Consistent investment was needed to build an environment trusting in God to minister in influential relationships and an atmosphere of vulnerability to open the door of one's truest identity in Christ, thus fulfilling His purpose in their lives.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DISCIPLESHIP COACHING FOR EMPOWERING MEMBERS AT
NORWALK SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

by
John W. Strehle, Jr.

May 2022

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LIST OF TERMS

NCD	Natural Church Development
Coach	is facilitating the discovery process with a coachee
Coachee	is the one receiving insights as God uses the coach
Christian life coaching	is an influential relationship where God, through a partnership with a coach and coachee helps the coachee discover their truest identity in Christ, and the ways to live out God's purpose
Authenticity	is a journey of vulnerability and willing submission to Christ, who walks with people to find their truest identity in fulfilling His purpose in their lives
Interdependence	is a community recognizing the value of influential relationships with one another to fulfill Jesus' purpose in their life.
Triad	is a partnership of three people in a coaching relationship between coach, coachee, and one other.

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CHAPTER 1

AUTHENTICITY FROM COMMUNITY

Introduction

In North America, the church is experiencing challenges through distrust, confusion of purpose, and lack of personal identity in Christ (Natural Church Development (NCD). 2016). These factors affect the effectiveness of the church in fulfilling its mission (Acts 1:8). Fewer turn to the church as a place to find support in meeting the challenges of life and spiritual growth (Garbi, 2012, pp. 2-3). Hence, fewer members are equipped to be a spiritual guide through these challenges. A relational community equipped with the tools to meet these struggles can encourage trust, purpose, and personal identity in Christ.

A relational community that works together has a significant influence on the quality of the environment. The word “relation” as defined by Merriam-Webster is “an aspect of quality (such as resemblance) that connects two or more things or parts as being or belonging or working together or as being of the same kind” (Merriam-Webster, 2020, November 20). A church community should use its influence for the glory of God (Logan, Carlton, & Miller, 2003, pp. 13-21). A coach can help bring awareness of God’s influence, and He can use this relational influence for the betterment of the whole community. Coneff and Gendke (2013) append, “When they [believers in Jesus] turn to

God to receive the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, their identity, their sense of who they are, and their purpose in life grows in grace, truth, and joy” (p. 753). Stoltzfus (2005) agrees, “Christianity is an interdependent, community-oriented faith” (p. 29). There is a strong culture of individuality in North America, where people feel they must face their issues alone. A counter to individuality is a “learning community” where together we learn from one another as a spiritual guide (Stoltzfus, 2005, p. 29; Blackaby, Royall, & Pyle, 2018, Chapter 6, para. 18; Brantley, Jackson, & Cauley, 2015, pp. 27-29). Coaching provides the tools to build a healthy framework for a relational community, building trust, purpose, and one’s calling in Christ.

This project provided an intervention here at the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church, part of the Southern California Conference, to develop the values of authenticity in interdependence in this local context. This chapter presents the scaffold on which this project was built by reviewing the ministry context, problem and task, delimitations, description of the process, and definition of terms.

The Ministry Context

The Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church started with 14 charter members who opened the doors in the fall of 1883. The humble beginnings started with just a room for the sanctuary. The eager members expanded their efforts with building a room behind the sanctuary to host a school for K-8th grade. As the church expanded, their campus did, too. The fellowship bought the property across the street and constructed a 7,700 ft² city mission building called, “Our Daily Bread,” finished on October 31, 1993.

The pinnacle of membership was 752 in the 1990s. Controversy arose in 2010 and in 2013, which caused a split. Norwalk membership in August 2018 was 347, with an average attendance of 180. The church today is multi-ethnic as is much of Southern California. A church study in 2009 on the ethnicity of the church showed 34% Hispanic, 28% White, 23% Asian, 10% Black, 5% Other.

A *Percept* study (2017) of the zip code 90650, in which the church is located, shows a population of 108,661. The breakdown is as follows: Hispanic / Latino 72.5%, Asian 12.1%, Anglo 9.8%, African-American 4.1%, Native American 1.6%. The generational groups are largely Millennials (ages 11-30) at 31% and 28% Survivors (ages 31-51). The high Hispanic/Latino group is comprised of 35% foreign-born. Single parents account for 32% of the people in this target area. In the zip code, 73.4% of the population graduated high school, but did not go further. The lifestyle is Middle-American Family, at 73%.

The church is led out by a lead pastor (John Strehle) and an associate pastor. An additional network of volunteer leaders from ministries of the church account for about 25 people actively in support of the weekly ministry responsibilities. The ministry focus has been for the young families and outreach. The church outreach efforts are around prophecy seminars and felt-need health programs. The generational make-up of the church is: Silent generation (17%); Baby Boomers (33%); GenX (17%); Millennials (14%). The balance between genders is 38% men and 61% women.

Problem and Task

In 2014 the church took the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey and

followed up with another one in 2016. The NCD survey showed evidence of a struggle with interdependence and authenticity as shared in Figure 1. The questions (Q) for authenticity looked at the church's health in the area of encouragement, empowerment, and peacemaking, whereas interdependence looked at the health of the attributes of trust, purpose, and sharing one's spiritual journey. Reflecting on Figure 1, one can conclude that there has been an improvement in these areas since 2014, but there still is a need, especially with resentment and disagreements present, as noted in Q43 and Q80. Likewise, authenticity is in need, too, because of the lack of willingness to share the spiritual journey (based on Q30 and Q39). Further, the church, when compared with NAD 2016 data, has shown that Q 30, 39, 43, 80 have scored below the national average. Trust, purpose, and identity in Christ are growth areas needing strategic focus to move toward a healthier thriving community.

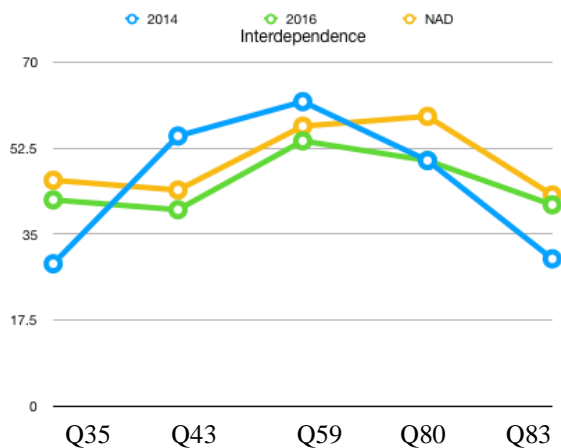


Figure 1. Graphical depiction of Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church NCD survey and NAD survey.

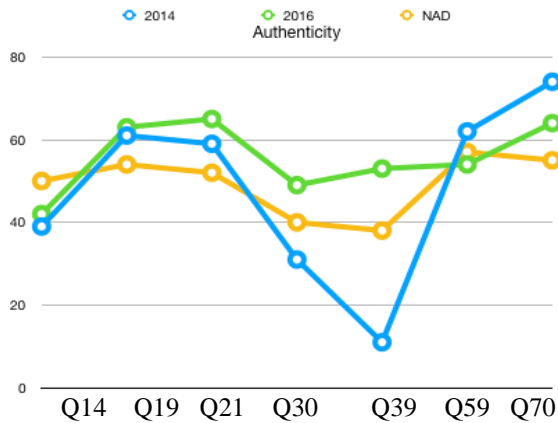


Figure 2. Graphical depiction of Interdependence and Authenticity from 2014, 2016 Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church NCD Survey and 2008-2018 NAD Survey, See Appendix E for more details.

The task of the project was to implement a strategy developed from the biblical narrative from Paul's missionary journeys in the book of Acts to equip members to build trust and walk alongside one another in a nonjudgmental manner. The implementation has been revised by the literature review to enhance the effectiveness of improving loving relationships at the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Delimitations of the Project

The first delimitation for this project was that the implementation was limited to the members at the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Southern California Conference of which, as lead pastor, I have the authority to implement. The second delimitation was to narrow the theological review to focus on Paul's three missionary journeys as noted in the book of Acts—notably, the conversion of Paul and some of the relational and influential relationships noted throughout the missionary journeys. The third delimitation was limiting the study of the writing of Ellen G. White to Paul's three

missionary journeys recorded in the book *Acts of the Apostles*. These limitations would benefit the exegesis process and learning of principles to implement for this project. The fourth delimitation in the literature review was to focus on Christian life coaching. A brief overview of the history of coaching in North America was studied along with seminal works, and a study on contemporary works written after 2014. The fifth delimitation was the NCD Survey used to evaluate the project as two surveys were taken prior (2014, 2016).

Description of the Project Process

This project used an already-developed coaching program to test the effectiveness of coaching to improve loving relationships, and particularly the values of authenticity and interdependence.

My own personal enrichment during this time was essential to the impact of this project on the local congregation. A leader needs to grow alongside those they are called to serve because “character is good to the degree that it grows Christ in other people” (Allender & Baugher, 2006, p. 144). Further, Blackaby et al. (2018) would agree that a leader’s living example is essential because “others will quickly discern whether the person’s relationship with Christ is genuine, growing, and dynamic” (Chapter 2, para. 8). Those last three attributes are essential in character development to build trust in implementing this project.

The first step to building community trust in this project was a sermon series and many conversations explaining the need for building influential relationships with people. This was followed by a kickoff weekend with a five-week interactive coaching session

for all those who signed up for the training. Tony Stoltzfus' *Peer Coaching* model was adopted as the instrument to lay the groundwork of this coaching project (Stoltzfus, 2007a, 2007b). The NCD survey was conducted at the end of the last session to assess the influence of the project with that sample group.

The Definition of Terms

The terms used in this project have many meanings depending on the context used. The field of coaching is very diverse. This project referenced a particular form of coaching called *Christian life coaching*. *Christian life coaching* is an influential relationship where God, through a partnership with a coach and a coachee, helps the coachee discover his or her truest identity in Christ, and the ways to live out God's purpose. The *coach* is the individual facilitating this discovery through open questions and exploration of a coachee's calling, God's purpose, and goals. The *coachee* is the one receiving insights as God uses the coach and guides the coachee through discovery in this intentional, influential relationship. These terms are further discussed in chapter 3.

The critical values of this project are *authenticity* and *interdependence*. These two terms will be used in every chapter because the process of growing these values through coaching is the focus of this project. *Authenticity* is defined as a journey of vulnerability and willing submission to Christ, who walks with people to find their truest identity in fulfilling His purpose in their lives. *Interdependence* is defined as a relational community recognizing the value of influential relationships with one another to fulfill Jesus' purpose in their lives.

A term used in a few of the chapters is *triad* groups. The *triadic relationship*

used in this project is a partnership of three people in a coaching relationship of influence between coach, coachee, and one other. The coach facilitates the coachee through a process of discovery into his or her truest identity in Christ. The coachee is receiving coaching. The third person is listening and supporting the session through observation by following the coach's lead. This style of group dynamics will be reviewed in chapter 3.

The assessment tool used in this project has been around for many years, and is used by many denominations, especially Seventh-day Adventists. This term is *Natural Church Development (NCD)*. *NCD* is an international network that centers on "all by itself" principles through eight quality characteristics that help a church family explore how they can unleash their potential through a tested and reliable survey that gives a snapshot of health in those eight areas, and can provide coaching to assist in following through the discovery process. The NCD Eight Quality Characteristics are Empowering Leadership; Gift-Based Ministry; Passionate Spirituality; Effective Structures; Inspiring Worship Service; Holistic Small Groups; Need-Oriented Evangelism; and Loving Relationships.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to equip the members of the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church with the coaching principles to grow the values of authenticity and interdependence. The study of the Bible, Ellen G. White, and contemporary literature contributed to the value of implementing a coaching ministry in a local context. The implementation of the project resulted in an increased awareness of God's desire to fulfill His purpose in their lives.

The flow of this written project starts with chapter 2 examining Paul's three missionary journeys, and Ellen G. White's commentary on these journeys through the book *Acts of the Apostles*. Chapter 3 is a study of the contemporary literature related to coaching, Christian life coaching, its history and use in similar fields, and impact made in its use. Chapter 4 details the preparation for implementation. Chapter 5 is a narration of the steps of implementing the project in the local context. Chapter 6 elaborates on the evaluation of the NCD survey and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

Introduction

This chapter is a narrative reflection on Paul's conversion and certain relationships that grew from the three missionary journeys in the book of Acts. This is not an exhaustive, exegetical study, but a narrative analysis. The values learned from this study are applied to the implementation process.

This chapter looks at Paul's conversion in community (Acts 9:1-25), Barnabas' influence with Paul (Acts 9:26-31; 11:19-31; 12:25; 13:13-52; 14:1-7; 14:8-18), the separation in the second missionary journey over a dispute with John Mark (15:36-41), the shepherding over Silas and Timothy as ministry colleagues, and Paul's last message to the elders of Ephesus. It explores what values and principles can be learned about God's calling on disciples' lives, and how community is used in that journey. Further, Ellen G. White's (1911) book *The Acts of the Apostles* chapters 12-13, 16-27 was studied, chiefly on Paul's missionary journeys. Altogether, the purpose is to learn principles that can be applied in the implementation of a life-coaching program at Norwalk Church.

Paul's Conversion in Community

In Paul's conversion, the Holy Spirit revealed the character of Christ directly and through community. The church affirmed the call of God upon Saul (Acts 9:1-19). God used key influencers as extension of His ministry in proclaiming the gospel. Paul's life experience is a testimony of the value of community in faith development.

Even though Saul's past presuppositions from Jewish tradition limited his worldview, God would not give up on expanding Saul's faith in God's plan. Saul (Jewish name) was born in the town of Tarsus, a Roman province (Acts 22:3), and he was taught at the hand of Rabbi Gamaliel (22:3). As a Pharisee, Saul had a hard time accepting Christ as the Son of God, and especially the people of "The Way" (Acts 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22) sharing about the resurrection of Christ. The Pharisees' goal was to see the law of God preserved, and they corrupted doing that, as demonstrated in Jesus' interaction with them (Luke 5:17-26; Luke 7:37-50). Christ would crack through the corrupted foundation of the strong traditions of Paul (Roman name, Acts 13:9), as recorded in his conversion experience (Acts 9:22; 1 Cor 9:20-21). Assurance in Christ was strengthened versus trusting in himself or in his Pharisee colleagues' teachings.

On the road to Damascus, Saul walked with confidence in his hostility toward the fleeing converts of Christ. He was convinced by the priest that the resurrection of Christ was a lie, which fueled his tenaciousness in persecuting Jesus' disciples. He would, by the commission of the high priest, seek their removal from the Jewish synagogues in Damascus (Acts 9:1-2) (White, 1911, p. 118). Yet at noon, God met Paul in the fullness of Christ's glory, and took a self-confident young man and humbled him. The Creator refocused Paul's trust and redefined his purpose. This path began with a question by God,

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4). Through a powerful question, God continued to clarify to Paul that his attack on the Christians was an attack on Him: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5). This is not the first time that this concept of attacking God’s community of missionaries is like attacking Him, as shared in Matthew 4, 25:40; Luke 10:16; Acts 22:8; Romans 8:17; and Hebrews 2:11-15. Paul responded to Jesus, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Paul recognized the authority of God, and began to refocus trust in God and not himself (White, 1911, p. 115). White (1911) notes as Luke writes of Paul’s reflection on his conversion experience in Acts 9, “He knew that his former prejudice and unbelief had clouded his spiritual perception and had prevented him from discerning in Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah of prophecy” (pp. 119-120). At this point his confidence in the priests’ commission to persecute these enemies of the Jewish officials was shaken. In a humbled, powerless state, unsure of his mission, and confused of his calling, he got direction from God to go to Damascus as a person in need versus a persecutor (Acts 9:6).

The blindness humbled him physically, and remembering his acts of persecution humbled him emotionally. White (1911) describes the emotional weight of this moment as:

soul agony were to him as years. . .With horror he thought of his guilt in allowing himself to be controlled by the malice and prejudice of the priests and rulers. . . sadness and brokenness of spirit he recounted the many times he had closed his eyes and ears against the most striking evidences and relentlessly urged on the persecution of the believers in Jesus of Nazareth. (p. 118)

Paul felt this was a punishment from God, and yet it was through Jesus’ words and acts through community that God’s love for him was affirmed. God used his companions who, in fear and amazement, led him by the hand to Damascus (White, 1911, p. 117).

Jesus reaffirmed Paul's trust in Him and not in himself or Jewish leaders. Perhaps Paul reflected on this when he stated later in a letter to Philippi, "I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me" (Phil 3:12). The word "hold" in the Greek is *katalambanō*, which means "to understand" or "to hold fast." In the solitude and presence of God Paul grew in the assurance of Christ.

Furthermore, God used the people Saul came to persecute to come to his aid. Ananias, a disciple of "The Way," was invited by God to be His advocate to restore Saul's calling as a soldier for Christ (Acts 9:11). Ananias questioned the request of God because he knew of Saul's intention in coming to Damascus (Acts 9:13). However, Christ declared that Saul was His missionary, and gave a glimpse to Ananias of His plan for Paul's life, to witness to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16). Ananias started with distrust, but was assured by God, and made his way to Damascus. He found Paul, and greeted him with a powerful statement: "Brother Saul, the LORD Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Paul knew that Ananias was coming because God was gracious enough to give him a vision before his arrival (Acts 9:12). God humbled the heart of proud Paul to recognize the power of Christ, and the power He showed his disciples. White (1911) alludes to this when she writes, "Christ had performed the work of revelation and conviction; and now the penitent was in a condition to learn from those whom God had ordained to teach His truth" (p. 121). Even more humbling for Paul was to hear the words, "Brother Saul" (Acts 9:17). Here Ananias, a Christian brother who knew that Paul's original plan was to put him and others like him in prison, was pronouncing God's words, "you are a new creation in Christ," as was suggested earlier

(Acts 9:15). God used servants and followers of Christ to aid Jesus in building trust, redefining purpose, and redirecting God's calling on Paul's life.

Paul's time in isolation gave him the opportunity to be transformed in the presence of God by trusting in Christ. The companions with him, and the church community, walked in partnership with God to further support this Jewish Pharisee as a disciple of Christ. White (1911) elaborates on the power of God and the relational influence one has in being God's affirming spiritual partner to another:

In Christ's stead he [Ananias] places his hands upon him, and, as he prays in Christ's name, Saul receives the Holy Ghost. All is done in the name and by the authority of Christ. Christ is the fountain; the church is the channel of communication. (p. 122)

Ananias was the channel God used to reaffirm Saul's new identity as a disciple of "The Way." This was evident by Paul's baptism (Acts 9:18), and was seen in Paul's actions to serve Christ's mission after the laying on of hands by Ananias, whom God used to restore Paul's sight (Acts 19:17-20). Jesus included community as part of the discipleship experience as a reminder of the importance to trust God in community to affirm His calling in the lives of His disciples.

Many others who heard his testimony in Damascus were not receptive to the conversion witness of Paul, and this baffled Jews to the point of wanting to kill Saul because he was not fulfilling his original commission order from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 9:23-24). The disciples helped Paul escape the Jewish leaders' discipline (Acts 9:25). Understandably, the disciples in Jerusalem, too, doubted (Acts 9:26) Paul's intentions. Three years after Paul's conversion God provided an advocate, Barnabas, in Jerusalem to coach him and the disciples forward in God's purpose and calling (White, 1911, p. 128; Acts 9:27). In addition, Paul wrote to the Galatians that he spent 15 days

with Peter in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18). Barnabas' willingness to trust God and advocate for Paul opened the door to more fellowship and support in community. God intervened to give Paul space for personal self-reflection as guided by the Holy Spirit (White, 1911, pp. 115, 120, 122). Also, a part of this journey was those with relational influence. They were hands being used as God was leading in Paul's transformation. Jesus was calling Paul regardless of his education by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and Pharisaic traditions (Phil 3:5). His presuppositions were changed through prayerful self-reflection and the channel of support through the church. Paul was shifting away from his dogma and comforts of the Jewish traditions, and being introduced to and invited to be a part of a new family network. His conversion perhaps inspired his words to the Romans:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Rom 8:15-16).

The Holy Spirit humbled Paul, and through self-reflection he recognized his path was not aligned with God's leading. Furthermore, this experience did not happen in a vacuum; weaved into the conversion was the community God needed to come alongside Paul to encourage God's will for his life.

Barnabas' Influence With Paul

God directed another spiritual partner alongside Paul as he interacted with the Jews and disciples in Jerusalem. As important as Ananias' laying on of hands, and words "Brother Saul" (Acts 9:17) were to Paul, he would need further encouragement as he came to the synagogue in Jerusalem and interfaced with the disciples. Understandably, he met opposition to his preaching, and skepticism among the disciples as to whether he was

genuinely a disciple of Christ (Acts 9:26). Yet Barnabas, acting like a coach, mentor and ministry partner, recognized Paul's value and advocated for Paul before the apostles.

Paul did not have an in-person interaction with Christ as the apostles did, and his past would place him at a disadvantage with the disciples. The disciples had fear and doubt of Paul's conversion, and rightfully so. Nonetheless, an advocate was there for Paul. A fellow missionary, Barnabas, would speak on Paul's behalf of God's vision to Paul and his ministry through Damascus, Arabia, and Jerusalem, which testified of the Holy Spirit's enlightenment for Paul to spread the Gospel. Luke describes the moment with these verbs, that Barnabas "took him [Paul], and brought him to the apostles" (Acts 9:27). The Greek word for "took" is *epilambanomai* (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 374). Luke's use of the word (Luke 9:47, Luke 14:4 and Acts 9:27; Acts 23:19) describes a taking hold of someone. Further, it has use in context of an arrest (Luke 23:26; Acts 17:19; 21:30, 33). Likewise, *agō*, the Hebrew word for "brought" has similar meaning to bring/take along or direct a movement (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 16). Perhaps this has greater meaning.

Prior to Paul's conversion Luke introduces Paul (Roman name) before Acts 13:9 as Saul (Jewish name) at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60). He is noted there and in chapter eight as one who brought "havoc" to the church (Acts 8:3). Following this, Luke notes the support of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem by giving him a letter to continue his havoc on the Christians in Damascus (Acts 9:1-2). Yet, in route to fulfill his commission by the Jewish leaders, Paul was converted to be a follower of Christ (Acts 9: 10-19). It seems that once blinded by tradition and the Jewish leaders' powerful influence, he found liberty to serve in his truest, deepest identity in Christ. His new identity was reaffirmed

through the Holy Spirit as the Comforter led a Christian Ananias to be a community advocate. Perhaps a tangible reminder of God was guiding his future. Paul witnessed the gospel, and was rejected by his Jewish family (Acts 9:21-23). Paul was forced to leave and was back in Jerusalem not as a Jewish leader, but as a baptized follower of Christ. Instead of support and praise for his mighty work that he had done in the region, he was met with skepticism and fear. Now, His new faith community was rejecting him, as well as his previous church community. Even among the tension of his earlier experience with his present experience, God guided a brother in Christ, Barnabas, to physically be God's hands and feet to remind Paul that He was claimed as a child of God.

For example, a use of the word in the book of Hebrews as it describes God's grace toward Israel states, " 'I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them', says the LORD" (Heb 8:9; Jer 31:31-34). Jeremiah uses the Hebrew root word *chazaq*, which means in context, "take hold in order to lead one" (Brown, 1996, p. 305). A similar use is found in Isaiah: "For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you'" (Isa 41:13). God used Barnabas and his relational influence to open the perceptions of the apostles to God's leading. White (1911) adds, "Upon hearing this, the disciples received him as one of their number. Soon they had abundant evidence as to the genuineness of his Christian experience" (p. 129). The text implies Barnabas had relational influence with the apostles to speak on Paul's behalf. It was the convicting testimony of Barnabas that the Holy Spirit used to build the confidence of the apostles to trust God's leading in Paul. It appears here that the church community was a partner with the ministry of the Holy Spirit to reinforce the confidence in God's calling for Paul which

would have impact on the Gentiles, apostles, and the Jewish nation. Thus, by virtue of Barnabas' action Paul was accepted into the church community.

The gospel missionaries were spreading to surrounding communities to encourage and strengthen the people. Paul had gone to Tarsus (Acts 9:30), and Barnabas was asked to go to Antioch because of the many converts there. The missionaries there were witnessing to the "Jews only" (Acts 11:19), and Barnabas saw an opportunity for the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles in Antioch that were scattered by the persecution (Acts 8:1). He knew he needed "suitable help" and he went to get his "companion in ministry," Paul (White, 1911, p. 156). Paul was back in the regions of Syria and Cilicia trying to heal the brokenness of persecution by his own hand. Even so, Barnabas convinced him to come to Antioch. White elaborates, "His learning, wisdom, and zeal exerted a powerful influence over the inhabitants and frequenters of that city of culture; and he proved just the help that Barnabas needed" (p. 156). Barnabas might have had more seniority as an Apostle, but he was willing to recognize the strengths that others brought to the church community. Partnering together, they extended their strengths for the building up of the fellowship in Christ.

This witness of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas opened the door for the church of Antioch to recognize their ministry as a fellowship of believers as they headed out on the first missionary journey commissioned by the church. Luke writes the church community had gathered in Antioch and they "ministered to the Lord" (Acts 13:2). The word "ministered" is the Greek word *leitourgeō*, "to serve" (Kittel, Bromiley, & Friedrich, 2006, p. 526). The root of *leitourgeō* is *laos*, defined as "people," and *ergon*, defined as "a call to action" (Bauer & Danker, 2000, pp. 390, 590-591, 586-

587). The word *leitourgeō* is only used in the book of Acts in this instance, and also appears in Romans 15:27 and Hebrews 10:11, where the emphasis is to acknowledge the call of service. White (1911) points out, “It was God who gave to them the name of Christian. . .The believers at Antioch realized that God was willing to work in their lives ‘both to will and to do of His good pleasure.’ Philippians 2:13” (pp. 157-158). As a church community, they witnessed the rich blessing God was bringing to the church through Paul and Barnabas to enrich the gospel mission in the mission field (Acts 1:8).

Barnabas is known as “the son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). He was more than a son, a disciple, and an apostle. In my opinion, Barnabas exhibits the qualities of a life/ministry coach which will be further discussed in the chapter three literature review. As described earlier, Barnabas was willing to recognize value, strength, and humbleness, and to utilize the gift given by the Holy Spirit to further the mission of Christ. His maturity in the faith did not hold him back from choosing a missionary like Paul to minister as God had called. White (1911) elaborates on his relational influence with Paul when she pens, “Paul’s labors at Antioch, in association with Barnabas, strengthened him in his conviction that the Lord had called him to do a special work for the Gentile world” (p. 159). Furthermore, she makes a broader declaration that the church is a strength for the individuals and thus the community:

God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ’s body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater

confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work. (White, 1911, p. 163)

As they labored for the edification of the early converts, Barnabas was placed alongside Paul as a pillar of strength to him personally. Their relational influence seen together gave confidence to Paul, as White points out in the last statement to the church as well. The church of Antioch recognized God's calling, and affirmed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas with the laying on of hands (Acts 13:3). It is important to note, "laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualifications...they, by that action, asked God to bestow His blessings upon the chosen apostles in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed" (White, 1911, pp. 161-162). Christ was the central figure in whom the people of "The Way" trusted. The community then affirmed His leading in the calling of those He entrusted to minister His work.

In the book of Matthew Jesus is quoted saying, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20). This concept expanded as Paul and Barnabas continued to serve. They built up the community around them as they were encouraged in Christ and strengthened through God's ministry through each other. As they traveled through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, the key words "strengthen" and "exhort" used to describe their mission to those to whom they modeled the gospel by faith (Acts 14:21-22), the Greek words used here are *epistērizō*, meaning "to establish" (Kittel et al., 2006, p. 1085) and *parakaleō*, meaning "comfort or encourage" (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 764). Paul and Barnabas as ministry partners, strengthened one another and the church. They, too, modeled this effort to increase the people's confidence in trusting in God with the trials they were facing, and the value of

fellow believers to strengthen and encourage one another. It seemed Paul modeled what he learned of Ananias and Barnabas. Paul, too, had to rededicate his heart daily, trusting God's plan for his life. The ministry that expanded through the dedication of Paul and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit allowed a great expansion of the gospel message.

This led to intentional leaders being placed where people were converted. The author Luke writes, "So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). The Greek word for elder, *presbuteros*, is used three times throughout Paul's journeys (Acts 14:23; 15:1; 20:28). It is defined as an older/elder (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 863). This particular use would emphasize not age so much as a mature disciple. Just as Paul's calling in Acts 9:31 affirmed his truest calling in Christ, here the elders were partnering in service to the mission of God and not the traditions of men. *Presbuteros* was further developed in the third missionary journey. White (1911) noted how important it is not to be alienated and separated from one another, but by the power of God and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the people are to co-operate with one another:

The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to co-operate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God. (p. 164)

Paul, in giving his final word of encouragement to the elders of Ephesus, urged, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). By the third journey, Paul understood an elder is more than merely

titular, but is an under-shepherd to Christ. Adding to the understanding of elder is the word applied in Acts 20:28 of *episkopos*, which means “overseer, bishop, or guardian,” and would appear to be about service as well, rather than just position or age (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 379). The elders would be following Christ’s example, and in the footsteps of Paul as seen in his first journey. John described Jesus as the “Good Shepherd” (John 10:10, 14). The Greek word for shepherd is *poimainō* (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 842). These *presbuteros* were to be authentic, reflecting Christ through their witness and teaching (Acts 20:17, 28). This is implied in the Greek verb used in verse 32, *paratithēmi*, which means “to present, or entrust” (Kittel et al., 2006, p. 1180). In other words, God was entrusting to them a calling to under-shepherd His flock, facilitating unity in the mission, and cultivating spiritual growth. Paul delineated this point further in his letter to Ephesus: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors [same Greek word used for shepherd- *poimain*] and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:10-11). White (1911) specifically adds, “This was in harmony with the gospel plan of uniting in one body all believers in Christ, and this plan Paul was careful to follow throughout his ministry” (p. 185). Paul and Barnabas were enlisted as under-shepherds, and they modeled this to the growing church. White details, “Paul and Barnabas sought to follow Christ’s example of willing sacrifice and faithful, earnest labor for souls... [the converted were] taught how to labor unselfishly, earnestly, perseveringly, for the salvation of their fellow men” (pp. 186-187). Paul and Barnabas recognized the value of these attributes in ministry.

Even so, there was tension between Paul and Barnabas to the point they had to go their separate ways as they cultivated the people and ministry God had called them to serve. From what has been detailed earlier, there was no doubt they were unified for the salvation of their fellow men. However, whom they would serve alongside was in question. This was a pivotal moment that led the two missionaries to walk different paths as they served the Lord.

Growing Pains With John Mark

Just before heading out on the second missionary journey to revisit the communities on the first journey, Paul and Barnabas experienced conflict over Barnabas' cousin John Mark. Barnabas wanted John Mark to join them as he once did in Antioch (Acts 12:25). Luke describes John Mark with the Greek word *hupēretēs*, assistant, which is used 20 times in the NT. In Luke's writings it is used six times: four times in Acts-- twice referring to "officers" (Acts 5:22, 26); "helper or assistant" (Acts 13:5); "minister" (Acts 26:16). The other two instances are found in Luke 1:2 in applying it to the apostles as "servants or ministers" (NAS, NKJ). Later, in Luke 4:20, Jesus was in the synagogue, and after preaching from the Word, He gave the book back to the "attendant" (NAS, NKJ). John Mark had partnered with Paul and Barnabas to support and aid their efforts to minister to the Jews and Gentiles. Although John Mark was a support to them when they arrived in Perga on the first missionary journey, he left to go to Jerusalem in the journey (13:13). Neither Luke nor Paul detail why he left. Yet Luke suggests (Acts 15:37-38) that Paul took John Mark's prior actions as indications that he was too inexperienced for the trials of ministry. White (1911) clarifies Paul's critique of John Mark after that

experience: “He [Paul] urged that one with so little stamina was unfitted for a work requiring patience, self-denial, bravery, devotion, faith, and a willingness to sacrifice, if need be, even life itself” (p. 202). The Greek word used to express his emotion in Acts 15:39, *paroxusmos*, is used to mean “sharp disagreement or incitement,” but can also be used to mean “ardent or affectionate incitement,” as seen in Hebrews 10:24 (VanGemeren, 1997, p. 107). It would seem in this case, Paul could not see the potential because of the past experience. This limited his view of the opportunities that Barnabas was more open to explore as a spiritual coach to John Mark.

After verse 39, Luke no longer writes of Barnabas’ journey. The conflict opened the door for Paul and Barnabas to walk on different paths. The emphasis of Luke in the book of Acts stays on the Holy Spirit’s ministry through the life of Paul and other missionaries. Paul and Barnabas were aligned in spreading the gospel, they were aligned in vision, but saw differently their role in the mission. The bigger picture of Paul’s life reveals an inclination toward being task-oriented in motivation.

Reflecting on Paul’s journey, this young man came on the scene dedicated to his task, and at his conversion he transitioned from the task of persecution to the task of fulfilling the promise that the Holy Spirit would enable the disciples to be a witness “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Paul’s task-oriented mindset was important for the needs of the church that lay ahead in ministry. Even so, Luke describes Barnabas as more inclined to being people-oriented. He had a heart for seeing the potential in people, as we saw with Paul and John Mark. This attribute was just as vital as Paul’s gifts. White (1911) describes how Barnabas saw his cousin (Col 4:10): “He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he

saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ” (p. 170). So set were they in their views that the best thing to do was to separate for a time. Thus, Barnabas set sail with John Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15:39), and Paul with Silas to Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41). Conceivably, God utilized this tension to further ministry for the kingdom and strengthen the disciples for Christ’s mission.

Paul would recognize the once-latent gifts of John Mark as manifested assets for the ministry. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry” (2 Tim 4:11; referenced in Col 4:10; Phlm 24). Scholars suggest 2 Timothy was written around A. D. 64, which was near the time Paul died, although it is unclear why Paul finally recognized John Mark’s value to the ministry team. It was during Paul’s two years in Rome that he recognized value in John Mark. Paul needed more time to see what God would do through the ministry partner, Barnabas, in John Mark. Luke shared of two missionaries, different in their gifts but both vital to the ministry. Barnabas was a spiritual partner to encourage John Mark in faith and service for God. Paul, too, would grow in being a spiritual mentor/coach as God continued to unleash His calling and purpose in others so they, too, could expand the ministry. Paul would grow as he moved forward on a spiritual journey with Silas and Timothy.

Shepherding Silas and Timothy

The Holy Spirit’s interceding throughout the missionary journeys continued through relational interactions with growing leaders in Paul’s missionary journeys. For example, Silas was chosen by Paul because Silas’ experience proved his courage to face

the trials of ministry. Luke notes that Silas was considered a prophet, and as a prophet he “exhorted and strengthened” the people in Syria (Acts 15:32). These two key words were used earlier as descriptions of Paul and Barnabas’ ministry in Derbe (Acts 14:21-22), so Silas was following in the footsteps of his teacher. White (1911) confirms Silas “was a tried worker, gifted with the spirit of prophecy” (p. 203). In addition, Luke comments that Silas was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). God could use a mix of diverse people to serve right where He needed them. Silas being a Roman citizen would be a help in the cities of Troas, Philippi, or Corinth. All the missionaries had unique backgrounds and gifts that God could use as they were teachable and willing to grow as a family of God.

Furthermore, Timothy joined the team when Paul and Silas came to Derbe and Lystra (16:1). White reveals what Paul saw as values suitable to missionary service: “In Timothy Paul saw one who appreciated the sacredness of the work of a minister; who was not appalled at the prospect of suffering and persecution; and who was willing to be taught” (1911, p. 203). Furthermore, the people of Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him (Acts 16:2). These attributes’ descriptions are opposite of what Paul saw with his initial encounter with John Mark. Timothy’s willingness and dedication overshadowed the fact that Timothy had a Greek father and a grandmother and mother of faith (Acts 16:3; 2 Tim 1:5) and was uncircumcised, which could cause conflict for some of the Jewish brethren to whom they would witness the gospel. White writes how Paul recognized he was “faithful, steadfast, and true.” Paul had concern for Timothy over circumcision, which was a big debate in Jerusalem (Acts 15). However, here Paul did not want that to be a point of division and seen as an unnecessary barrier to the gospel message. In Paul’s letter to Corinth he elaborated his view: “and to the Jews I became as

a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law” (1 Cor 9:20). White (1911) emphasizes, “He desired to bring to his Jewish brethren, as well as to the Gentiles, a knowledge of the gospel, and therefore he sought, so far as was consistent with the faith, to remove every pretext for opposition” (p. 204). Timothy was willing to be circumcised for the benefit of the gospel (Acts 16:4). Paul chose Timothy because he was a “true son in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2). As Paul traveled without his friend Barnabas, he chose two teachable and assured Christians that together would be a great strength to the church.

Paul witnessed to Silas and Timothy. As Ananias and Barnabas were examples for him in his life, Paul carried the dedication to spiritually coach his companions. White describes the dedication of Paul that “he carefully taught him how to do successful work” (p. 205). Further, she added:

Every true minister feels a heavy responsibility for the spiritual advancement of the believers entrusted to his care, a longing desire that they shall be laborers together with God. He realizes that upon the faithful performance of his God-given work depends in a large degree the well-being of the church. (White, 1911, p. 207)

As disciples for Jesus, Paul would recognize the responsibility it was for fellow believers and leaders to be beacons of light in a decaying world. The light they were shining was, “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal 1:3–4). Paul experienced the power of God’s assurance. White further supplements this tactic of divine love:

Paul set forth the great truth of human brotherhood, declaring that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of earth.” In the sight of God all are on an equality, and to the Creator every human being owes supreme allegiance.

. . .“In Him we live, and move, and have our being,” he [a local poet of their time] declared. (1911, p. 238)

Trust in God, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of each disciple were important to meet the needs of a fast-growing church. Mentoring is noted throughout Scripture (Moses and Jethro – Matt 18:1-27; Samuel and David – 1 Sam 16, 19; Jonathan and David – 1 Sam 20; David to Saul – 1 Sam 24, 26; Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar – Dan 1, 2, 4; Jesus and disciples – Luke 10:1-12, Luke 8:1-3; Barnabas and Paul - Acts 9:26-31, 11:19-31, 12:25, 13:13-52, 14:1-7, 14:8-18; Paul and Timothy – 1 Tim 1:18-19). So, too, with Paul and Silas and Timothy we see the torch of mentorship being modeled.

Throughout this second missionary journey Paul was revisiting places he visited in the first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-20). The believers were built up by the ministry of Paul, Silas, and Timothy as Luke writes, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5). The Greek word used here is *stereoō*, which is defined as “become firm” or “strengthened” (Kittel et al., 2006, p. 1077). They were strengthened as they shared the gospel and served alongside one another.

Paul and his companions saw the miracles of God time and time again. This would be an affirmation of God’s interceding ministry. For example, as they came to Macedonia and visited the Roman colony of Philippi, this great controversy took center stage (Acts 16:6-12). There they started their ministry walking alongside Lydia, a wealthy merchant, who worshipped God (Acts 16:11-15). There, through the Holy Spirit’s leading through the community of believers, God opened Lydia’s heart. The ministry team was where God needed them to be to hold her heart and help her into God’s calling for her life. These spiritual partners baptized her and her household. This

testimony experience was contrasted with a demon-possessed young lady (Acts 16:16-19). Yet for every seed planted for Christ, Satan is there to distract and discourage. She persisted in following Paul and Silas for many days, to the point that Paul cast the demon out, which upset the magistrates who rallied the people to beat them and put them in prison (Acts 16:22-24).

Their trust flourished in the support God provided in one another to help them to hold onto their faith in Christ. Luke writes of their resolve to hold on to Jesus' promises: "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25). Their worship not only encouraged them, it witnessed to those in the surrounding jail. "Guards and prisoners marveled and asked themselves who these men could be who, cold, hungry, and tortured, could yet rejoice" (White, 1911, p. 214). White continues, "His [Paul's] zeal and devotion, and above all, his willingness to suffer for Christ's sake, exerted a deep and lasting influence upon the converts" (1911, p. 218). After a great earthquake, the doors opened to the cells (v. 26), and Paul and Silas and those incarcerated stayed in the cells when they could have escaped to freedom. The jailer, seeing the doors all open, was preparing to take his life in fear of the higher officials killing him. "But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here'" (Acts 16:28). The jailer witnessed their faith in God, and God's intervention here lifted the confidence of Paul and Silas and the church. The jailer's heart was opened to a new life in Jesus (White, 1911, p. 216). God witnessed through the spiritual leaders, and this touched the jailer's heart. Paul and Silas were invited to the jailer's home where the jailer's own family could join him in his commitment to Jesus (Acts 16:34). The family and friends were called to a faith journey

in Christ, thus shaping a new identity through Christ (White, 1911, pp. 218-219). When the people saw Paul's confidence in the Savior among unfair treatment, they craved that same strength, which they found in Christ. The witness of their faith in community had far-reaching relational influence well beyond what they could see or know.

Satan would seek to undermine the light of the disciples, as noted earlier, and even among the persecution the people trusted in Jesus Christ. White elaborates, "they did not murmur" (White, 1911, p. 213). All these moments experienced together in community had impact in the exhortation and strengthening of the church through the Holy Spirit. Likewise, these experiences gave confidence to Silas and Timothy to serve without their spiritual coach, Paul. After the ministry in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, Silas with Timothy would remain to serve the latter two communities while Paul went to Athens for a time (Acts 17:14-34). God used the opportunity, through Paul's witness, to build a team of believers, "Dionysius, Damaris and others," (Acts 17:34) who took to heart the testimony of Christ and found purpose in Him. They accepted God's calling and joined Christ's mission. White (1911) articulates how Christ plants His seeds in those who do not know Him through His disciples:

God sets everlasting truth before them—truth that will make them wise unto salvation, but He does not force them to accept it. If they turn from it, He leaves them to themselves, to be filled with the fruit of their own doings. (p. 241)

Paul learned the Holy Spirit is the one God gave to break down walls of sin and build the pillars of righteousness in the heart of His people (John 16:8). He had witnessed this throughout his journey, and modeled it to Timothy and Silas, that God works through community to edify the church.

Message to The Elders of Ephesus

Paul invited a group of established local elders from Ephesus 30 miles north to Miletus to share with them a final word of strength, courage and resolve for ministry in this face-to-face interaction. White (1911) shared, “the Spirit of Inspiration came upon him, confirming his fears that this would be his last meeting with his Ephesian brethren” (p. 393). Luke uses the term for these leaders as “elders”; “overseers”; “shepherds” (Acts 20:17, 28). Luke describes how Paul had lived among them and modeled for them a life of a Christian, and so do likewise.

Previously, Paul spent three years with the people of Ephesus. The connections built during that time impressed him to share this homily. Luke points out his physical witness in the opening statements of Paul’s discourse: “And when they had come to him, he said to them: ‘You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you’” (Acts 20:18). The emphasis is on community and coming together. The Greek word for “know,” *epistamai*, means “to acquire information about something” or “to gain a firm mental grasp of something” (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 380). The root of this word is from the Greek word *epi* which is articulated as the preposition “upon” (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 363) and the Greek root *histēmai*, which is defined “to stand firm” (Kittel et al., 2006, p. 1082). The word implies that the relational experience they had was a firm foundation to build upon as they witnessed for Christ. White (1911) contributes:

Yet in the midst of discouragement the apostle was not in despair. He trusted that the Voice which had spoken to his own heart would yet speak to the hearts of his countrymen, and that the Master whom his fellow disciples loved and served would yet unite their hearts with his in the work of the gospel. (p. 398)

Meeting people where they are and walking with them in their life journey make the biggest impressions. The relational impact as shown through Ananias, Barnabas, Silas and Timothy, and countless others shows the strength of Jesus' gospel shared through the church, which is the light to the world.

This was the very example Jesus incarnate showed the people when the apostle John writes, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The apostles learned preaching was more than words, but words in actions. The church is built on the Cornerstone (1 Pet 2:7). It is the community surrounding their center stone that drives their living example with those in their area of influence.

Likewise, what drives the relational influence is important. Luke writes how Paul emphasized to the elders of Ephesus in "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews" (Acts 20:19). Serve with humility. The Greek word for serving, *douleuō*, is defined as "to act or conduct oneself as one in total service to another" (Bauer & Danker, 2000, p. 259). The use of *douleuō* is used only once in all three missionary journeys. The text emphasizes a contrast between the Jews who were serving the people by manipulation to gain power and control, and the witness of self-sacrificing humility. The author of the book of Matthew reminded the readers of Jesus's words to the spiritual leaders regarding the corruption they were planting:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. (Matt 23:23, NKJV)

God's desire was that they serve with humility. The Greek word used in Acts 20:19, *tapeinophrosunē*, is translated to mean "unselfishness" (Kittel et al., 2006, p. 1156). The scribes and Pharisees were serving God as they understood it, but had blinders on to what it meant to be authentic and interdependent in supporting God's Gospel mission. The opposite of interdependence and authenticity is power and control, and new converts were not free from the tyranny of the Jews. However, the chains of power and control were broken in Christ (John 1:14). This resulted in a new walk with God that served others.

Another important message Paul was sharing to the elders of Ephesians was "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). More specifically, looking at the words "proclaim" and "taught," which give greater depth to what it means to be a disciple. The Greek word for proclaim is *anaggellō*, which means "report, declare, or proclaim" (Kittel et al., 2006, pp. 10-11). The emphasis is on the information rather than on interpretation. We see this in the use of the Scriptures in Paul's missionary journeys (Acts 14:27; 15:4; 16:38; 19:18; 20:17; 20:20). There is power in God's inspired Word. Paul witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit's revelations as God provided. The second Greek word is *didaskō*, teach, which is used 16 times in the book of Acts, and six of those occurrences are found in the missionary journeys of Paul (Acts 15-21 [15:1; 15:35; 18:11; 18:25; 20:20; 21:21]). The meaning of *didaskō* is found in the life of Christ and exemplified through its use in Paul's missionary journey. The author of the book of Mark wrote, "And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not

as the scribes” (Mark 1:22). Jesus taught from the Scriptures. “On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him” (Luke 20:1). Paul followed in the footsteps of the Savior (Acts 15:35; 18:31), teaching from the Word of God. The purpose for teaching from the Word of God was as Jesus declared:

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matt 22:37–40 NKJV)

As Christ did, so Paul followed, and the commission came to the disciple of Christ to proclaim and teach of the crucified Christ who is the one that calls an individual into their truest identity through an awareness of value in community. As he made his way to Jerusalem at Pentecost, Paul was arrested at the temple to be taken to Rome.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I took a narrative analysis of the principles learned from Paul’s conversion and specific relationships noted through his three missionary journeys. I explored how God affirms His calling in one’s life and how community partners with God in affirming the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Here is a list of discoveries made:

Conversion

1. God used humbled people as an extension of His ministry, regardless of background.
2. The Holy Spirit provided the right mentor/coach/ministry partner to facilitate His leading in the conversion of Saul.

3. Paul chose to follow the Spirit's leading and not His own.

Barnabas' Influence

1. Barnabas saw potential in Paul to further the ministry to the Gentiles.
2. Barnabas was an advocate of the Holy Spirit to strengthen Paul's truest identity in Christ.
3. I see Barnabas as more people-oriented and Paul as more task-oriented.
4. Paul and Barnabas modeled community in the strength of the Lord as they shared the Gospel.
5. Tension between Paul and Barnabas split a team, and opened the door for new ministry partner growth.

Growing Pains With John Mark

1. A disciple's journey is not linear. There are seeds to be planted as one crosses their area of influence.
2. Paul was looking at the tangible attributes, Barnabas was patient in cultivating a person's growth.

Shepherding Silas and Timothy

1. The Holy Spirit led Paul, along with new disciples, to grow together as a ministry team.
2. It is God who works through one another to edify and build up the church.
3. God has a purpose and calling for each person, regardless of their background.

4. The Holy Spirit works throughout people's lives to prepare them to be His hands and feet in growing disciples, right where He needs them to be.
5. Community was an encouragement during time of persecution.

Message to the Elders of Ephesus

1. Relational influence is a powerful witness in a disciple's walk.
2. God, through community, is a pillar of encouragement to the church.
3. Christ is at the heart of what united and drove Paul and the disciples.
4. Humility is being willing to walk true to God's calling, and serving others as He leads.

These principles give guidance to the implementation process for this project. Having taken this narrative analysis, we now turn to the literature review of materials related to Christian life coaching.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A church community today is compelled to build communities capable of being effective and relevant in ministering across generations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had its beginnings in understanding new truths from previously held traditions, and how quickly it was forgotten that it began as a fellowship of seekers growing together. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has traditionally been information-focused and maintains structures that preserve the traditions, while some scholars believe there needs to be a paradigm shift in these traditional expectations. The church has a gospel message to proclaim, and it is cultivated through influential relationships. Jenkin and Martin (2014) analyzed a study done by The Barna Group, a Christian research firm, who surveyed Seventh-day Adventist Millennials to understand their experience with the church. The Barna Group observed six negative areas Millennials perceive in the culture of the church. These factors, listed in table 1, decrease trust and the influence the community has on one another. Thus, the value of authenticity and interdependence become a minimum factor that needs attention.

Table 1

Engaging Adventist Millennials: A church Embracing Relationships.

	U.S. Millennial	Adventist Millennial
Intolerant of Doubt	10%	28%
Elitist in its relationships	22%	34%
Anti-science in beliefs	25%	47%
Overprotective of its members	23%	36%
Shallow in its teachings	24%	29%
Repressive of differences	25%	37%

Jenkin & Martin. (2014). Engaging Adventist Millennials: A church embracing relationships. The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership, 8(1), 96-104.

They continue to suggest that intergenerational relationships' forgiveness and acceptance, and platforms for sharing, are vital in bridging the disconnect (Jenkin & Martin, 2014, pp. 96-103). A platform is needed to grow relationships with authenticity through community within the church. Stoltzfus (2005) recognized the value of relationships with purpose in community when he states:

I believe the biggest reason Christians in general experience so little transformation in their lives is that they ignore the bible's relational mandate for how to affect change. We were never meant to live the Christian life alone. Christianity is an interdependent, community-oriented faith. (p. 29; Burrill, 2014, pp. 79-82; Schwirzer, 2011, pp. 130-131)

At the core of faith is the hope to grow and transform. Faith is the desire to grow beyond mere information and have lives renewed by God's faith. Being transformed means a change in character and motivation toward a fulfilling mission. Thus, interdependence for

this project is defined as: a member of a church trusting in God, and respecting the value of people together sharing influence with one another to fulfill Jesus' calling or purpose in their lives.

People gathered together is a powerful influence, especially when they function from a place of purpose. Stetzer and Rainer (2010) emphasized, "The church was designed by Christ as a collection of people participating in one another's lives" (p. 35; Skytland & Llewellyn, 2021, pp. 77, 86). A church focused with intentional purpose through fellowship partners with Christ to understand His will for the person and church (Stetzer & Rainer, 2010, pp. 1-5). Stetzer and Rainer's theory is useful in understanding that community in Christ promotes transformation, by discovering one's authenticity in Christ. The challenge is this: A convert is first taught in Bible study how essential a relationship with Christ is to their growth, but taught little to understand how God uses people to build and grow a person's faith through experiential interactions. Even Kidder (2011) acknowledges there is a unity in cooperation between God, each other, and taking hold of the blessing that each brings to empower one another (pp. 15-16; Brantley, 2020, pp. 18, 26; Randy 2021, pp. 10-11, 55). Stetzer and Rainer, and Kidder's theories imply a radical growth of relational intentionality is needed, which then adds strength to the community through the value of interdependence. Schwarz (2006), founder and president of Natural Church Development (NCD), describes its ministry purpose as "releasing the divine growth forces by which God himself grows his church" (p. 15). Campbell (2011) denotes the growth forces are, "interdependence, multiplication, energy transformation, sustainability, symbiosis, fruitfulness...so that the church functions more like an organism than a spiritual organization" (p. 9). It is the community working together as an

organism that a healthy, growing community will have "Loving Relationships"--one of eight quality characteristics of a healthy church (Schwarz, 2005, p. 105). He writes, "Growing in love works best when it is tackled within the context of a group of fellow believers. . . . admonishing and encouraging, giving and receiving is an impressive demonstration of what Christian community is all about" (Schwarz, 2005, p. 121; Cloud, 2009, pp. 120-122; Schwarz, 2004, p. 9; VinCross, 2020, pp. 82-90). Schwarz would agree with the relational intentionality of Stetzer and Rainer, and how unity is shaped through love given by the Father, and shared by and with fellow believers. These scholars all emphasize the importance of fellowship, express that there is a gift in giving and receiving and how God uses those relationships to build character.

God is the essential relationship bridging the gap between people and helping to fulfill the Savior's purpose in their lives. God uses community as a partner with Him to help a person to find their truest identity. Living in authenticity is a journey of vulnerability and willing submission to Christ, who is willing to walk with people to find God's purpose. Garbi (2012) recognized what Jenkin and Martin found in their study of Millennials. He noted this is easier said than done. "Growth will not take place in the church until the church makes it safe to be accountable by relinquishing all use of coercive power to enforce morality" (p. 142; Schwarz, 2012). I wholeheartedly endorse Garbi's emphasis on the struggle the church faces in emphasizing conformity versus what is described in this project as authenticity through interdependence. Zaffron and Logan (2013) argue that authenticity is more than a dogma, which Garbi writes the church is often fighting over. Authenticity is "what we are committed to, what we are standing for, what our vision is" (p. 144). This is why it is so important, as Michael R. Cauley (2010)

found, “the church must learn their culture not only to reach them, but to lead them in a movement of authentic Christianity” (p. 78). Horst (2017) maintains that, “Jesus with his own body became a bridge from our earthly culture to our heavenly inheritance, the ultimate act of love for us” (p. 27). Wilder and Hendricks (2020) further elaborate, “Our brains draw life from our strongest relational attachments to grow our character and develop our identity. Who we love shapes who we are” (p.79; Lyubomirsky, 2007, pp. 130-131). Discovering one’s truest identity in God is an essential element for church members when they partner with God to help a coachee discover through the process of Christian life-coaching one’s calling. The pressing question is: how can a church community build these values of interdependence and authenticity within a local church context?

The focus of this chapter is to get an overview through research on life-coaching and its influence on interdependence and authenticity within a local church context. This literature review reflects briefly on the history of coaching, as well as survey the modern definitions of coaching expounded by prominent authors in the field. More specifically, this survey highlights the perceived agreements between coaching, mentoring, and pastoral counseling to advance a thesis that coaching would be an effective modality for the Norwalk, California Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hence, readers will understand the value of coaching in empowering members toward interdependence and authenticity in a specific local congregation.

The Similarities Between Coaching, Counseling and Mentoring

The Roots of Life Coaching

Looking at the early beginnings of life coaching helps to lay the ground work to understand the similarities found across the three fields of coaching, counseling and mentoring. The root of life coaching started with discontent in the mid 1920s with traditional psychoanalysis. Visser (2013) astutely points out the traditional thought of modern psychotherapy was that the cause of the identified problem was rooted in the subconscious of some previous unresolved trauma (p. 10). Visser (2013) further noted, “To obtain that information, psychotherapists used techniques like dream analysis and interpretation, hypnosis, drugs, and different kinds of projective techniques” (p. 10). The dissatisfaction escalated as Visser contends that some clients and caregivers became dissatisfied with this approach because it was a lengthy process and not always goal oriented (2013, p. 10). Discontent was an influential catalyst to open a new field of study in solution-focused practice.

Visser dates the foundations of modern life coaching to the 1960s and to the work of Insoo Kim Berg, a pioneer of the solution-focused approach we today call life coaching (2013, p. 11). In 1978, Dr. Insoo Kim Berg and Dr. Steve De Shazer started a practice called the “The Brief Family Therapy Center,” which explored the practical application of solution-focused practice. Visser (2013) observed that while the two therapists did not intend to build a practice based on theoretical research, they nonetheless realized over time that a consistent set of responses was emerging from their unique approach:

They discovered that analyzing and diagnosing problems could be removed from the therapeutic conversation without negative consequences for client outcome. . . They looked for interventions that helped clients to formulate more clearly what they wanted to achieve, that helped the client to become more confident in their possibilities and that helped to identify ideas for steps forward. . . They equated ‘what worked’ with what the client found useful. (p. 12)

Dr. Berg and Dr. Shazer observed team members and guests contributing to the development of solutions. This contribution brought to view the value of interdependence and empowering the client in the healing process facilitated by the counselor. Their work was thus “a breakthrough in therapy and in [life] coaching” (Visser, 2013, p. 15). Hall, Cooper, and McElveen (2009) record that in the 1990s, life coaching schools began expanding on the teaching of the critical skill of empowering the client (p. 19). International Coaching Federation (ICF) (2017) was established in 1995 as an “independent credentialing agency” to establish a “set of standards” for the field.

International Coaching Federation gave validity to the professional life coaching field that was springing up. Many institutions offered their version of training for certification. International Coaching Federation (2017) defined professional coaching as:

Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly important in today’s uncertain and complex environment. Coaches honor the client as the expert in his or her life and work and believe every client is creative, resourceful and whole.

These historical roots and consistent successes helped give intellectual gravitas to the burgeoning field of life coaching. The primary motivation that drove its creation was clients’ discontent with traditional early psychoanalytical methods. The new field of life coaching left clients feeling like they had goals that empowered them in moving forward. The study of solution-focused theory gave influence to the definition that is adopted today in general. Basic life coaching has been adapted into many professional, social

science and religious organizations, while its definition has changed organizational needs. However, research has shown in this project that the root characteristics of life coaching as previously discussed are present through the many changing interpretations.

Multiple authors remind us that life coaching's root values are more than sharing knowledge and experiences, but also a relationship of influence where the coach and client have an impact on one another. Robbins (2015) reports, "formal coaching builds upon a foundation of collaborative work" (p. 51; Foltos, 2013; McDermott, 2011). The essence of Robbins' findings indicate it was between teacher and student where respect was needed for collaborative influence to be effective. A Cistercian Monk, Aelred of Riebaux's (1974), pointed out an important addition to this collaborative influence, which is a core value for a Christian, life coaching relationship, "Here we are, you and I, and I hope that Christ makes a third with us" (p. 29). Christian life coaching is a collaborative triad relationship of influence converging to help the client find solutions for their situations.

Because God has given Himself to partner with us, He shapes disciples who partner with Him and with each other to become influentially effective. This realization of the value that God invests in each person is foundational to the success of any model of Biblical interdependence. The relational influence has a two-way impact on both the coach and coachee, allowing both to appreciate the opportunities God creates to fulfill His desire "that they may be one" (John 17:22).

Broadly speaking, professional counselors have been aware for decades that their clients are an influential resource to their lives and professional success. As counselors increasingly focused on empowering counselees, clients discovered the part

they had in creating a relationship characterized by both therapeutic success and personal satisfaction. In many professional settings, the client became the solution finder. The counselor's role began morphing, becoming more of a guide rather than an investigator unlocking secrets. As a result of this emerging emphasis, coaching "took off" in the mid-1900s, along with a series of professional structures designed to regulate this new field. Certification requirements and continued training became the preferred methodology providing prospective coaches with a variety of coaching concentrations. These include life coach, Christian life coach, fitness coach, marriage coach, organizational coach, Natural Church Development coach, and many more. The definition needs to be clarified even after taking a broad sweep of its history.

Definition of Christian Life Coaching

Hall et al. (2009) write that coaching is organic, which they describe like a farm. If a church community is nurtured, the church grows. Christian life coaching prevents it from becoming mechanical as most churches are today (p. 38). Furthermore, Christian life coaching is about developing an atmosphere of "learning that is transformational, not just informational" (Hall et al., 2009, p. 39). Regardless of the specialty, at its roots coaching leads to "cognitive change and behavioral change" (Hall et al., 2009, p. 40). Coaching asks questions to scratch below the surface toward what the heart truly believes and values. Hall et al. (2009) state, "Truth is [in] our actions flow from our thinking, which comes from our values and beliefs" (p. 41). Note that Figure 2 illustrates how underlying roots which come before results/errors are essential to discover authenticity and openness to interdependence.

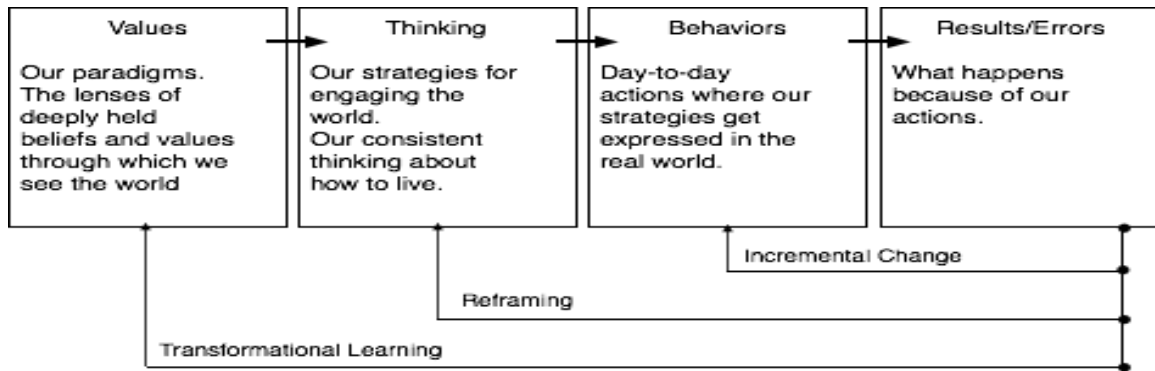


Figure 3. From values to results, data from *Faith coaching: A conversational approach to helping others move forward in faith* (p. 41), by Hall, Copper, and McElveen, 2009.

Every field of study influenced by life coaching has then been redefined by it, and rearticulated to fit its context. This project will define life coaching from a Christian viewpoint. Christian life coaching is an influential relationship that cultivates an atmosphere of spiritual enrichment between Christ, coach, and coachee, enabling them to be authentic to their truest identity in Christ. In Farina’s (2015) view, “the result of all coaching integrates the heart and mystery of behavioral transformation with the practical world of tools, skills, and results” (p. 67). Adding to Farina’s point, coaching creates an atmosphere linking who we are with who we want to be by using tools that an interdependent relationship helps cultivate. This collaborative exploration opens opportunities to a willingness to explore and grow in authenticity.

Life coaching is integrated into many fields, each with their definition or use for life coaching within their context. International Coaching Federation defined professional

life coaching, as shared earlier, as building one's potential, which leaves out an essential piece to the coaching relationship. In the specific area of Christian life coach, there is the added critical element in the relationship. Creswell (2006) emphasizes the root elements of Christian life coaching as: "Scriptural principles, Christ's presence, and high standard of excellence on trained coaches equals Christian coaching" (Chapter 2, para. 16). She illustrates the need for Christian life coaching by observing that even seasoned ministry practitioners such as pastors who have served for twenty years can get discouraged and need interactive support. This interdependence of support is both through Christ's presence, and the influential relationship with a coach. It does not matter—whether new to the faith or a longtime faithful follower, one can feel trapped in a cycle of bondage of negative thinking and lose the joy of ministry. Thus, an interdependent relationship with Christ and a coach can, according to Creswell (2006), bring back the blessing of joy (Chapter 2) because at the core definition of Christian coaching is a triad of influence: Christ, coach, and coachee.

The focus of the Christian life coaching relationship is broken down by Creswell (2006) into two categories, the "micro and macro level." She defines them as: "micro-level find[s] his or her untapped potential to make each day productive, to move from being stuck to having a plan. . . Macro-level rediscover[s]. . . focus/call/purpose and move[s] toward leading a life of significance" (Chapter 2, para. 7). Franklin (2019) would emphasize the latter is where coaches should focus to, "deepen their self-awareness and move forward" (pp. 29-30). Each level implies vulnerability and a willingness to submit to the influence of Christ. However, Christian life coaching goes further than helping to

find solutions alone, but in the macro sense, also a person's truest identity and living in authenticity to the revelation.

Living in one's truest identity in Christ invites strategic focus. Logan, Carlton, and Miller (2003) elaborate on the coach and client partnership: "A coach is someone who comes alongside to help others find focus" (p.13; Coastes & Bell, 2020; ICF, 2020; Thorn, McLeod, & Goldsmith, 2007). This interdependent relationship is more than just helping a person to get to the next step, or move toward a purpose, but to encourage a person to value people and walk in authenticity with who God has called them to serve.

In a data-driven and increasingly intense culture, information is continuously before our eyes and at our ears. Seeing value in people and being authentic to the person God made them to be often get put aside. Culture today looks to human experience for validation, and the church community looks to information for defining a person. Yet it is in living out the identity we find in Christ that we find value in ourselves and each other. Authenticity in Christ reminds a disciple that they have an influential purpose which enriches awareness of interdependence.

Logan et al. (2003) remind their readers that each Christian is a person with influence, which in turn is a form of leadership (pp. 13-21). As a community of believers, we should ask the question: How are we partnering with each other to grow as disciples and expand God's ministry in our lives? Logan et al. (2003) wrote that a leader "is not to do all the work alone: It's to prepare others for the word God has for them" (p. 15). Further, Christian life coaches are defined as "forward-looking and action-oriented" (Logan et al., 2003, p. 18). Sullivan and Hardy (2020) would agree having the right person helps one in, "utilizing relationships, and being transformed by them" (p. 31). In

this, the authors agree with Visser (2013): “Whatever was there in the context of the client; each seemingly coincidental feature or event in the life of the client could turn out to be part of the solution” (p. 11). Christian life coaches invest in people and experiences because they see the value in individuals. The triad team of Christ, coach, and coachee works to discover Christ’s calling and takes action toward its fulfillment in one’s life.

Whitworth, K. Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, and Sandahl (2007) argue that too-restricted a focus on specific accomplishments misses the point of Christian coaching: “Coaching is not about problem solving, improving performance, attaining goals, or achieving results... Coaching is chiefly about discovery, awareness, and choice” (p. xx). As discussed earlier, Visser (2013), who wrote on the “The Origin of the Solution Focused Approach” which later became known as coaching, discovered that awareness and choice was a root value that was emphasized from the beginning (p. 12). Whitworth et al. (2007) detail a definition of a coach: “A coach is someone who cares that people create what they say they want, that they follow through when they choose. The coach is there to hold people accountable and keep them moving forward toward their dreams and goals” (p. xxi; Reitz, 2017). Logan et al. (2003) agree with Whitworth et al., and would add that life coaching is, “helping others learn to listen to God for themselves” (p. 19). It is that powerful influence of Christ that adds discovery, awareness, and power of choice by the partnership in coaching. Horst (2017) emphasizes, “God is the one who initiates and invites growth in people’s lives. . . We partner with God when we walk alongside others and help them grow” (pp. 3, 5; Burrill, 1998; R. Campbell, 2016; Logan & Carlton, 2007; Taylor, 2021). The investment by coach and client requires an empathy in understanding and sharing in the triad of communication. Coaching is as much helping

others as it is helping oneself in growing in understanding thoughts, feeling and desires (Williams & Williams, 2011, p. 90). The investment is enriched as “being continually transformed by the selfless love of Christ can authentically convey a genuine selfless power of our heart” (Williams & Williams, 2011, p. 50). This intentional relationship helps in accountability and ongoing momentum to fulfill the discoveries found in that relationship.

The essence of Williams and Williams’ (2011) explanation of coaching is an internal motivation driven by God to love people (p. 50). Loving people is cultivated through a willing heart to respect one another and trust in partnering together for God’s purpose. Logan et al. (2003) agree that coaching is as much a life-changing experience for the one doing the coaching, as it is for the one being coached: “As we come alongside people to help them discover God’s agenda, and cooperate with the Holy Spirit to see that agenda become a reality—they will grow in Christlike character and realize their fullest potential” (p. 24). Williams and Williams and Logan et al. urge participants to trust in the God who brings healing through the partnership of interdependence and discovering one’s authenticity in Christ.

The definition of Christian life coaching has been enriched by understanding how it cultivates an atmosphere with Christ, coach, and client to enrich being authentic to one’s truest identity in Christ. By extension, the coach partners with Christ to help the client see who they are and who they want to be. Doing this can bring joy to one’s life because it helps them live with authenticity. Hence, the triad relationship is a partnership of coming alongside each other to open the eyes, discarding the blinders that have held them back from being authentic. As a result, the discovery and awareness that comes

from the Christian life coaching relationship empower a person's choice to be accountable and fulfill the calling that Christ puts in the heart.

Counseling Similarities to Life Coaching

In the 1920s, life coaching, employing a solution-focused approach, emerged as a separate discipline from traditional psychotherapy, yet both disciplines still share many similarities. Studies in the areas of learning, positive psychology, sociology, career counseling, and related disciplines all have links to coaching. Many writers on counseling and coaching have focused on their distinct differences, instead of their similarities. Stoltzfus (2005) understands that counseling and coaching help people to move forward. He makes clear the distinction that counseling “tends to concentrate on helping people get well” (p. 14). This entails past emotional or traumatic experiences. Furthering this point, Stoltzfus (2005) points out that “The counselor is diagnosing the client’s emotional or psychological state, and helping the client become whole” (p. 15). Like a neurosurgeon and cardiologist, they are both similar to doctors wanting to help people, yet their concentration shows their expertise. Hall et al. (2009) confirm Stoltzfus’ comments: “A counselor is someone who has a special ability to help another person heal from what he has suffered” (p. 24; Grant, 2001). Stoltzfus and Hall et al. appear correct in asserting that there is a distinct difference in specific, controlled situations between the fields. Counseling and coaching are dynamic, interactive disciplines dealing with core values, principles, and presuppositions that govern a person’s motivation and perseverance. Coaching focuses more on the action steps following the healing that comes from the experience.

International Coaching Federation picks up on Stoltzfus' point by detailing that counseling focuses on resolving problems. These are described as those that deal with "healing pain, dysfunction and conflict with difficulties arising from the past that hamper an individual's emotional functioning in the present, improving overall psychological functions and dealing with the present in more emotionally healthy ways" (International Coaching Federation, 2016). Though counseling has a greater tendency to focus on healing from past situations, there are remarkable similarities in the approach a skillful coach will use with past experiences to help bring clarity to the present, thus assisting the client to make better decisions moving forward. Stone (2007) observes a distinction between counseling and coaching concerning the corporate field: "When we talk about counseling, we are referring to a non-punitive disciplinary process" (p. 76). In other words, Stone is saying that counseling can be more prescriptive, versus coaching. The counselor is the one prescribing the healing steps and in coaching, the coachee is the one who sets the parameters and actions steps.

Stone claims that a distinction between how counseling and coaching are applied in the corporate/executive field rests upon the questionable assumption that coaching is not able to help those struggling with poor work quality. Irissou's description of executive coaching is very similar to how Stone defines areas of counseling effectiveness. Although she is writing from a perspective of working with senior managers, the similarity of descriptions is apparent. Irissou (2012) writes, "Executive coaching is aimed at inspiring executive leaders to make behavioral changes which transform themselves and the people around them, and thereby increase business results and performance" (p. 20). Irissou's statement links similarities between counseling and

coaching in the words “transform” and “performance.” Both counseling and coaching want the individual to be so transformed that performance/outcomes/action steps can move them toward a healthier goal. Each might use different tools in approaching and helping a person face reality and make distinctions on how they move forward based on the gifts they have.

Counseling is a professional field that requires years of study and professional degrees and certifications to practice. As with the corporate field, the use of counseling in the church setting is unique and situational, and ought to be practiced only by qualified and certified professionals. Coaching has its specialties, as does counseling, and in coaching their professional is the coachee. Whitworth et al. (2007), describe the benefit of coaching by maintaining, “Power is granted to the coaching relationship, not to the coach.... Client and coach work together to design an alliance that meets the client’s needs” (p. 10). The essence of this statement is that a collaboration between two people to work together toward success is a core dynamic in any successful congregational or believer relationship.

Collins (2009) agrees with Whitworth et al., when he writes, “Usually coaching is less formal than the therapist-patient relationship and more of a partnership between two equals, one of whom has skills, experience, or perspectives that can be useful to others” (Chapter 1, para. 11). Counseling and coaching both value partnership. A willing person, and an interdependent connection between essentially equal persons is crucial to building a team of coaches, and a willingness to form strategic relationships of learning toward a person’s truest identity.

Mentoring Similarities to Life Coaching

Mentoring, like so much of Western culture, has roots in Greek mythology. In *The Odyssey*, Homer tells of the adventure of Odysseus' son, Telemachus, and the care of the mentor that would guide him the next 10 years. According to Stone (2007), "[the Mentor] had less to do with teaching the young man the skills he might need in battle than with teaching him the values he would need to succeed as ruler of Ithaca" (p. 158). Stone's point is that mentoring goes further than telling a person what to do, but calling them to who they are based on the values they recognize and reflect in their lives. Mentoring is similar to coaching because it is an influential relationship that inspires exploration of one's truest identity.

Mentoring moves away from the stereotypical counselor-to-client mentality toward a friendship. Sellner (2002) writes on lessons learned from C. S. Lewis' life in describing mentoring as "a spiritual art. Its elements reside in the heart" (p. 1). Sellner is pointing out that for C. S. Lewis, mentoring was a friendship which Sellner calls "spiritual mentoring" (p. 1). Sellner describes a friendship between C. S. Lewis and his college roommate, Bede Griffiths, and showed the value of authentic friendship in their conversion experience (pp. 38-40). Sellner quotes Lewis as saying, "Friendship has been by far the chief source of my happiness" (p. 33). Sellner agrees that mentoring, like life coaching, is more than a paid transaction, but an investment of influence through a mutual respect.

Thus, life coaching and mentoring share an interest in the value of interdependence. Cassimy (2015) describes the relationship of mentoring "[it] is not only to make someone more productive—although that will probably occur—rather it is to

help the mentee develop in all areas of life” (p. 115). This implies that it is more a process and journey that transforms one’s life. Dortch (2000) agrees

Mentoring is a journey, a road you and the mentee travel together as you prepare the mentee for what lies ahead. And when the time comes for your paths to diverge, you will carry with you the profound satisfaction of knowing that you have earned a mentee’s unconditional regard. (p. 94)

Anderson and Reese (1999) believe the qualities needed for a journey that defines the mentoring relationship are: Trust, intimacy, potential, authenticity, vulnerability, responsiveness, respect, teachability, and the desire to serve God (p. 27). Furthermore, they define spiritual mentoring as a “triadic relationship between mentor, mentoree, and the Holy Spirit, where the mentor can discover through the already present action of God, intimacy with God, ultimate identity as a child of God and a unique voice for kingdom responsibility” (Anderson & Reese, 1999, p. 12). Mentoring and Coaching share a commonality of going beyond the solution, and displaying a change in character through affirming one’s truest identity in Christ and living a life of authenticity.

Mentoring and life coaching both share in the impact of interdependence for the mentor and mentoree. Hesselbein (2012) agrees when she writes, "Mentoring is circular. When we are mentors, we learn even more than the leaders we are mentoring. And lives are changed, theirs and ours" (p. 213; Starr, 2014). However, the ICF would disagree. The ICF (2016a) feels interdependence is minimized by defining mentoring as "provid[ing] wisdom and guidance based on his or her own experience." Ladyshewsky (2017) concurs, "The mentor adopts the mentee and provides unilateral advice and support in a one way direction from mentor to mentee" (p. 8; House, 2008) . While experience is certainly a core component of a successful relationship, ICF and

Ladyshevsky imply that the experience of the mentor is assumed to be more valuable than whatever could be offered by the mentoree. Hesselbein would disagree, as would Coker (2013), that more than experience is needed: “The one being mentored or coached is ‘seeking someone to walk with them as an authoritative influence in a person's life, and this person voluntarily is submitting to his influence’” (p. 27; Elias, 2020). Thus, Coker and Hesselbein would support that there is value to both mentor and mentoree and the experience they each bring to the table. Trautmann (1998) would agree that each brings value, but would describe mentoring as “the process of developing people. The mentor is the person who imparts both information and personal attention through empathy and understanding” (p. 30). What both life coaching and mentoring share is that they are influenced by the relationship. They both benefit because of the willingness to have mutual respect to what each brings to the relationship, and crucially, by following God’s lead.

Experience does not necessarily pose a disadvantage unless that experience and influence void the choice and commitment of the one being mentored. Anderson and Reese (1999) describe, “Mentoring is not about telling. It is about listening—to the Holy Spirit and to the life of others” (p. 28). When there is too strong a focus on the mentor, the mentoree’s value can be overlooked and his contribution to helping the mentor develop consequently undervalued. This spiritual journey is about the mentoree learning through the experience, not simply trying to avoid a mentor’s mistakes.

As a prominent advocate of the benefits of coaching, Stoltzfus (2005) would agree with the mutual interests of coaching and mentoring in developing people, but argue that mentoring and counseling have a tendency to create more "followers than

leaders" (p. viii). A follower takes action based on the opinions and advice of others, and this limits the use or potential of one's own ideas. As a Christian coach, Cauley (2009) believes that "coaching is, in reality, a kind of discipleship for vocation" (p. 4). Several authors referenced in this chapter describe the influential impact that an intentional, influential relationship can have on a community of disciples. Kidder (personal communication, 2015), defines discipleship as "living with a passion for the presence and cause of God." Coneff (2013) would add to Kidder's definition of discipleship as "investing my life into the lives of others to expand His kingdom of grace and truth" (p. 701). Kidder denotes the self-reflective necessity of discipleship, while Coneff recognizes the communal value of partnership to enhance the self-reflective aspect of discipleship, all of which Christian life coaching bridges very effectively. Cauley's description of coaching as a vocation would agree with Coneff's value of interdependence and Kidder's authenticity that together drive the heart of a Christian disciple. In Jesus' presence, each believer can find a place in the cause of God and discover how to fulfill it. Anderson and Reese (1999) would agree that relationship can unlock potential, but remind that this is a triad relationship of Christ, coach, and coachee as referenced from the lens of a mentor: "Spiritual mentoring includes a process of listening to the life of another then teaching people to open their eyes and see what is there —everywhere—teaching them to become detective for the presence of divinity" (p. 26). VinCross (2020) links the self-revelation and community when she states:

Disciples are established in Christ individually, but there is an aspect of the love of Christ that is not able to be realized outside of the community of faith. Only together with all the saints are disciples able to grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is Christ's love. (pp. 71-72)

As disciples, they are called by God as coach/mentor to facilitate the community in the spiritual journey. There are more similarities between coaching and mentoring than merely counseling. Mentoring and coaching both share in the capacity to develop one's creative influence and create a positive outlook, especially when experience is used as a tool to enhance the learning and not used authoritatively.

However, experience can be more destructive than constructive when it is used in an authoritative manner, versus as a tool to enhance the mentoring/coaching/counseling process. Hall et al. (2009) insist that:

As a mentor, you pass along the wisdom you've accrued through the years in order to help someone else grow and find success in ways similar to what you have experienced. In contrast, as a coach, you unlock the wisdom in another person so she finds her own path to success. . . The boundaries of their growth are not limited by your experience or expertise. (p. 23)

While differences in life experience are inevitable between the coach and the coachee, deep life experience is not necessary to make a life coach or mentor successful. The perceived success in a mentor/life coach is based on following a process, and providing powerful questions to the client's situation. Thus "success" is not dependent on an outcome, but determined by how the person who is being coached learns through their discovery process, and how they move forward in their experience. In other words, a person without prior history, who has none of the baggage that comes with the experience, may have a tactical advantage in the coaching experience. They avoid bringing their own experiences and concerns unhelpfully into the influential relationship. Collins (2009) celebrates the fact that "Christian coaching is the practice of guiding and enabling individuals or groups to move from where they are to where God wants them to be" (Chapter 1, para. 37). Coaching as mentoring creates an open, fresh perspective that

is discovered in a mutually-respected triadic relationship. VinCross (2020) writes in a similar way regarding the goal of discipleship, that it “is to create space for learning on all three levels—knowing, being and doing—in order to allow disciples to experience the power and change of God in their whole being” (p. 101). Christian life coaching, at its core, focuses its attention on God’s purpose and mission for the individual by asking explorative, open questions to help them on their journey as disciples. Mentoring and Christian life coaching value experience as a powerful tool, when used correctly, to enhance the person being coached or mentored. It enables them to learn from where they have been and to give guidance on where they are going.

In the executive context, Van Nieuwerburgh (2016) writes, "While coaching and mentoring are similar conversational approaches that share many of the same skills. . . there is some overlap in the interventions and that both coaching and mentoring are effective and necessary ways of supporting the development of professionals" (p. 3). Even ICF (2016a) observes that "mentoring may include advising, counseling, and coaching." Likewise, Hall et al. (2009) believe that:

In counseling it can get someone from a painful past to a healthy present, coaching starts with the present and helps someone move forward toward an even better future. A special note: coaching is not for a person who suffers from a major wound that limits his ability to think and act in a healthy manner. (p. 24)

While each discipline has skill sets and techniques that cause it to be useful in specific contexts, there are ways that both coaching and mentoring can enhance respect for one another, and in partnering together, find one’s truest identity in Christ. However, it could be argued that the coaching emphasis of empowering an individual’s strength of choice can also help them explore a calling, purpose, and solutions affirming that God is leading

them through this influential relationship. Consequently, this can lead to building leaders as declared by Stoltzfus earlier in this literature review. Therefore, mentoring and coaching can create a non-judgmental atmosphere, which opens the doors to interdependent authenticity.

Christian life coaching, like mentoring, is a conversational approach using language to influence performance. Zaffron and Logan (2013) explain that there are three laws that promote performance and the third one is “future-based language transforms how situations occur to people” (pp. 68-69). They continue to map out how communication generally focuses on “descriptive language versus generative language,” the former being language that looks back and notes patterns, and the latter communicating outcomes a person is being called to fulfill (Zaffron & Logan, 2013, pp. 68-69). Mentoring may focus more on descriptive language, but like life coaching, each works to help a person discover their future-based language. Cauley (2009) highlights the intentionality of a life coaching relationship when he states, “Could it be that in our complex world we need an intentional structure to help us have meaningful conversations that facilitate growth?” (p. 4; Dungy, 2010). Zaffron and Logan would agree with Cauley about how important intentional conversations are to a disciple’s growth. Cauley and Zaffron and Logan’s theory is extremely useful because it sheds insight on one of the difficult challenges with understanding the value and purpose of interdependence. Hall et al. (2009) further observe that “Coaching appeals to people because it is a highly relational and personalized approach for having the kind of conversation that moves a person toward his potential” (p. 35). In other words, coaching addresses a modern American illness, people suffer from—an “I want” norm. Hall et al. (2009) suggest:

Coaching is certainly a customized learning and development approach, one that makes didactic and procedural approaches look like off-the-rack suits compared to the beautifully hand-tailored ones, customized to fit a unique body. Sure, the off-the-rack suit will cover you, but the tailored suit fits you so well you actually take pleasure in wearing it. (p. 35)

Hall et al. are right about the uniqueness of each relationship, and coaching is a unique influential relationship that puts the coachee in the role of the metaphorical tailor. It can be agreed upon that this interdependent relationship can reshape thinking, which in turn reshapes language, and is all done out of an influential relationship. Since coaching builds up a generative language, it can create a place where innovation can be inspired, with vibrant tools applied to help people understand their purpose and their calling. As a result, people are living out their authenticity as God designed. Anderson and Reese (1999) recognize this is a tailored growth process, stating, “We discover our identity in the context of community” (p. 21; Case, 2020; Miller, 2021). It is within community that authenticity is discovered, and the value of interdependence enriched. So, there is an essential value to interdependence and in it finding authenticity as God leads.

Mentoring is similar to Christian life coaching because this influential relationship of mutual respect inspires exploration of one’s truest identity. Each field is not stuck on solutions to assess performance, but through a triadic relationship discover who one is being, and who they want to be. Coaching and mentoring both share in being changed by the relationship because of the experience they bring to this influential relationship. Furthermore, as they both share a conversational approach, they both foster a non-judgmental atmosphere that encourages a generative language that is formed in community.

A Christian community needs enabled people who have the skills to value interdependence, and walk with someone into authenticity in Christ. Hall et al. (p. 40) write, “Coaching helps bridge the cognitive/behavioral divide by linking our values, thoughts, and actions so that our thoughts and actions align and flow from the same source” (p. 40). As Powell, Mulder, and Griffin (2016) write, the young generation needs this kind of support to create a warm community to grow as disciples because one out of three young people state that “personal relationships” draws them to a church community (pp. 166-170). A community open to receive those God is inviting, and willing to partner with the Holy Spirit in creating space for conversations that coach a person toward God’s calling in their life seems essential.

This section has explored the roots that resulted in counseling. It defined the term Christian life coaching as an influential relationship that cultivates an atmosphere between Christ, coach, and coachee, enriching them spiritually by being authentic to their truest identity in Christ. Further, this section looked at the similarities across the fields of mentoring in relation to coaching. Coaching is similar to counseling and mentoring in promoting a community to thrive in interdependence and authenticity.

Using Triad Groups to Improve Interdependence and Authenticity

The evidence from the Bible is clear: In today’s world there is a huge chasm between what God designed for human interdependence and authenticity, and what most Christians experience. Stanley and Willets (2005) suggest that “In the midst of busy lives, overcommitted schedules, and congested cities, we feel alone. Although we drive on overcrowded freeways to catch overbooked flights, and sit in jam-packed airplanes, we

live in isolation” (p. 22). Ogden (2003), in his book *Transforming Discipleship*, agrees there is an infection of individualism and consumerism among people today (p. 32; Mohler, 2021; Schwarz, 2020). Many believers, overwhelmed by a complex and overstimulating culture, long for a safe place in which to be authentic in community. Church consultant Lyle Schaller, the co-founder of *The Leadership Network*, has also noticed this problem. He writes, “The biggest challenge for the church at the opening of the twenty-first century is to develop a solution to the discontinuity and fragmentation of the American lifestyle” (as cited in Womack, 2010, p. 62). The vital need in the community is to bridge the chasm between people, to address the importance of valuing people whom together influence one another to fulfill Jesus’ calling in their lives.

Titelman tried addressing this cultural isolation by looking at family dynamics. A key aspect of his research was understanding the essential work of Dr. Bowen, who described one of the first comprehensive theories of family systems. Dr. Bowen found that there is a need to not only work on the individual, but with the community in which one interacts. His life journey and psychoanalytic practice, although ridiculed at first for moving from a one-on-one counseling dynamic to a triad or family dynamic of study in the 1950s, was pivotal in revealing what John Donne penned four centuries ago: “No man is an island. . .any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.”

Titelman (2015), in reflection on Dr. Bowen’s work, notes:

Self is not defined outside of relationships with others. . . Self, in Bowen theory, is a description of the actions, reactions, and interactions of the individual in relation primarily to his or her family of origin, nuclear family, and extended family, and secondarily by the actions, reactions, and interactions between an individual and non-family members and societal entities in which he or she participates. (pp. 27-28)

In the family network, each member is vital to the health of the family. Self cannot be

adequately defined outside of the relationships into which an individual enters; the people with whom people associate have more impact on their values and thinking than society will often admit. Entering into an influential relationship like coaching can help be a catalyst of new discoveries in healing and fulfillment.

A study published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* confirms the positive impact coaching has in teams and performance. The meta-analysis showed there were benefits to the coached in the areas of “performance/skills; well-being; coping; goal-attainment; work/career attitude” (Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014, pp. 1-18). The majority of this project has focused on the influence that Christian life coaching has in what Creswell stated earlier as “macro-level” visioning, but this does not mean it will not impact the “micro-level” productivity. The Theeboom et al. research has shown the difference it can make in daily life. Cauley’s (2009) research discovered, through being coached himself, the effectiveness coaching brings to unleashing experiential growth. He participated in a six-month training seminar conducted over three, two-day periods. He interviewed the people who were being coached by asking “What is the single greatest benefit of the coaching experience?” (p. 2). Cauley placed the responses regarding the effectiveness in these four categories: “1. Providing a framework for growth and accountability 2. Giving support in the midst of challenges 3. Growing as a leader 4. Facing issues of self-care and family needs” (M. F. Cauley, 2009, pp. 2-3). The two studies reaffirm the impact that Christian life coaching has on the community in the micro and macro level of living in one’s truest identity.

It seems natural enough that a congregant ought to be able to turn to the church to find this oasis of interdependence and authenticity. Yet, according to Toler and Gilbert

(2013), “Statistics show that only twenty percent of our churches are growing at all, and fewer than five percent are growing by conversions rather than transfers” (p. 12). The essence of their argument is that we need to develop effective ministry teams to deal with this pandemic of little to no growth, and limited meaningful interpersonal growth. Toler and Gilbert (2013) elaborate when they write:

churches under the committee system usually grow only to the energy level of the senior pastor. When the pastor runs out of steam, the church loses any momentum that has been built up, and this often results in discouragement and low morale in the church. Ministry Action Teams, however, are much more effective. (p. 18; Logan, Clegg, & Buller, 1998b; Senge, 2006)

When the success of a church community depends on the stamina and charisma of one person, there is a major flaw in the system. A church family team recognizing the value each person brings to the atmosphere of the church helps the balance of influence bridging the community from maintenance mode to innovative mode. Womack (2010) writes, “This lack of connecting opportunity in the church can bring despair to those who have sought the church in the hope of finding community” (p. 65). Toler and Gilbert (2013) share an analogy of a flock of geese in “V” formation that convey the value of interdependence. They state:

The entire flock gains more than seventy-percent greater flying range than one goose flying alone. From time to time, the lead goose falls back from the point position, and another assumes the lead without breaking the formation. Every goose takes the lead during a long migratory flight. Each contributes his or her unique talents to the overall effectiveness of the flock. It should also be noted that the geese who are following honk to encourage the one leading. (p. 19)

A community serving one another in encouragement opens the doors to greater functionality. The church has lost the organic element of what the geese use naturally. However, Ogden (2003) still maintains that, “We could close the discipleship gap if we

adopted Jesus' approach to making self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted followers" (p. 74). He continues: "People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care" (p. 86). On the one hand, we need to grow as caring individuals so that we can better support the nurturing of the community. Yet, as discussed, a group dynamic helps to shape the whole. A church can work toward being more intentional about building the values of interdependence and authenticity, and as a result experience less isolation and less resulting segregation.

Traditional thinking of discipleship is that it takes place between a mature Christian and a less mature Christian. Although there is value in this form of mentorship, it has drawbacks. Ogden (2003) disagrees with the one-on-one form of discipleship in five particular ways:

One-on-one relationship, the disciple carries the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of another....sets up a hierarchy that tends to result in dependency....limit the interchange or dialogue.... create a one-model approach....inadvertently held up a hierarchical, positional model of discipling that is nontransferable. (pp. 141-142)

Clearly one-on-one discipling has some benefits, but it has limitations in building an effective, reproducible model that multiplies both personal growth and interdependence. The goal of an effective discipleship program that cultivates interdependence and authenticity is to expand its reach. This is not as easily done in a one-on-one relationship.

Western society is saturated with individualization, and popular opinion is that this leads to a more isolated society. Though some would concede on individualism, some sociologists believe that our being is always "with" another. Pyyhtinen (2010) astutely notes sociologist Georg Simmel introduced the idea that "the being of an individual is always supported, even constituted by something other than him-or-herself. This makes

‘the other’ a crucial component in the structure of being” (p. 91; Ortberg, 2007). Simmel and Wolff (1950) expand on “the other” by affirming the value of dyad (one-on-one) relationships and expressing the value of the association of three:

This peculiar closeness between two is most clearly revealed if the dyad is contrasted with the triad. The fact that two elements are each connected not only by a straight line—the shortest—but also by a broken line, as it were, is an enrichment from a formal-sociological standpoint. (p. 135)

Simmel and Wolff describe the influence of the third into a dyadic relationship as being one who can be the deciding voice in decision making, can help to ease the devastation of loss when a one-on-one relationship has to end, can be impartial and mediator between the others, can learn from the other two by taking advantage of the quarrel, and can be an influence of division (pp. 145-169). Ogden (2003) underlines the critical value of triad groups:

A small group of six to ten people tends to emphasize fellowship or intimacy, while the truth and accountability are secondary. In classroom teaching or preaching within public worship, truth content is primary, with intimacy and accountability taking a back seat. What makes the discipling context transformative. . . Is that it brings all of these elements together in a balanced way. (p. 172)

The essence of Ogden’s argument is that there can be a bridge between the values a large-numbered group has and those a small-numbered group has, and Ogden supports that triads help bring the best of both worlds together. Pyyhtinen (2010) summarizes

Simmel’s work this way:

to every dialogue there is an excluded third, a ‘he’ or ‘she’ a ‘that’ or ‘they’ that marks the outside or the exterior of the relation by not belonging to it, by being left out or excluded. To every communication there is a ‘noise’ that is always already part of the message; every exchange needs the object of exchange, merchandise, as a third; and the violence of war is preceded by a tacit agreement on a common code: weapons. (p. 101)

Simmel is right about the value of the “other,” and the impact a third person can have in adding to a dyadic relationship based on the studies and reflections Ogden experienced in testing triad groups in a ministry context.

Collaboration and training, both skills of mutuality, are nurtured in the triad or small group process. Moving away from a hierarchical approach invites participants to a triad dynamic. Three individuals are coming together in what Ogden (2003) calls a “peer mentoring model” (p. 144). He emphasizes that adding one person to a one-on-one model did not change the goal, but brought many benefits. He found, through observation and reflection, these attributes to triad coaching groups:

There is a shift from unnatural pressure to natural participation of the discipler. . . . There is shift from hierarchical to relational. . . . There is shift from dialogue to dynamic interchange. . . . There is shift from limited to wisdom in numbers. . . . There is a shift from addition to multiplication. (Ogden, 2003, pp. 146-148)

Ogden (2003) writes, “Every believer or inquirer must be given the opportunity to be invited into a relationship of intimate trust. . . apply God’s word within a setting of relational motivation, and finally, make a sober commitment to a covenant accountability” (p. 172; Robinson, 2016). Triad groups provide a foundational model that avoids the hierarchy and paternalism of both counseling and mentoring models by emphasizing mutuality, interaction, and group learning.

In a study done by Mühlberger and Traut-Mattausch comparing dyadic coaching and group coaching, the authors found similarities in effectiveness. They sampled 108 college students, randomly split into three groups: dyadic coaching, group coaching, and no coaching (control group). The group coaching test sample was made up of 10 to 16 participants. They found that either style was equally effective in helping the person

being coached (PBC) in reaching their goals (Mühlberger & Traut-Mattausch, 2015, p.

216). Their findings indicated that coaching:

either in a dyadic or group setting, has a positive influence on goal attainment beyond mere goal setting. Furthermore, dyadic coaching has some advantage over group coaching regarding the increase of goal commitment and goal self-efficacy as well as goal reflection and intrinsic goal motivation. (Mühlberger & Traut-Mattausch, 2015, p. 218)

While this study might appear to point to a perceived superiority of dyadic coaching or triad coaching, the large size of their test groups undoubtedly hindered the evaluation of group coaching concerning commitment, efficacy, reflection, and motivation. Most experts in small group dynamics will advise that once a group gets to be that large, it loses its effectiveness, especially relating to authenticity, interdependence, and accountability. What is truly significant from the Mühlberger and Traut-Mattausch research is that even when a coaching group reached more than ten people—an unusually large size not typically supported in the literature as optimal—participants felt the sessions were effective and beneficial.

Even Ogden, a strong advocate of the small group or triad coaching process, concedes there are times when one-on-one coaching is needed and essential for the process to achieve its goals. Stoltzfus (2007) likewise developed a special seminar series on peer coaching which works from the premise of a “tell, show, discuss, and do” form of training (p. 8). Stoltzfus' point is that as one shares the technique, demonstrates how peer coaching is done, discusses what they think, and does what they have learned, the entire group—three, four or more—experiences substantial benefit. In his assessment, peer coaching is no different from what was defined earlier, just without formal agreement. He points out that the value of this relationship is to “remain mutual friends” and be “less

likely to become controlling or unhealthy” (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 7). Further, it is said that peer coaching can establish “support, encouragement, and accountability” (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 7). Stoltzfus would support Ogden on the relational benefits as stated earlier.

Coaching in triad groups can reap some of the benefits of dyadic coaching, and limits the issues with the larger contexts of group dynamics. Osborne (2008) describes the disadvantages of dyadic ministry by noting how triads bring more people into the experience with the actual skillsets necessary for successful group functioning:

Its [the apprenticeship’s] downside is it often puts people into leadership before they are ready. . . .if there isn’t a journeyman around to help or pick up the pieces when needed, it can create quite a mess before anybody notices. The upside of the apprenticeship model is that it gets lots of people into the game quickly. (pp. 156-157)

Ogden (2003) emphasizes this from his personal struggles in witnessing that the one-on-one orientation stifles the multiplication of disciples. He writes, “As long as there is the sense that one person is over another by virtue of superior spiritual authority, however that is measured, few people will see themselves as qualified to disciple others” (pp. 141-142). Ogden claims that, over a two-decade span with triad groups, he has witnessed a “75% reproduction rate” in producing disciple-makers (p. 148). As Ogden has seen, benefits, multiplication of authenticity and interdependence in community give a substantial way to multiply a discipleship-growth process. Stoltzfus (2007a) adds that a peer coaching system can “teach the habit of responding to God’s word with action, introducing a coaching culture, raise spiritual temperature, make faith accountable, relationships to newcomers, and provide a discipleship system” (p. 77). Making connections in our sphere of influence through triad relationship helps create a sustaining environment to allow interdependence and authenticity to flourish.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was to understand how coaching builds an atmosphere of authenticity and interdependence toward empowering a church family. History has shown counseling, mentoring, and coaching have blended their strengths through a web of similarities. Though they are very similar, their fundamental distinctions that bring enrichment in separate yet specific contexts. Coaching fits the growing needs of the church community to cultivate the interdependence and authenticity needed for ongoing growth in triad relationships.

This Christian life coaching can be useful toward building interdependence crucial to a member of a church trusting in God and respecting the value of people together sharing influence with one another to fulfill Jesus' calling or purpose in their lives. Furthermore, it can cultivate authenticity, which is a journey of vulnerability and willing submission to Christ, who is always willing to walk with people to find their truest identity. DeGroat (2014) recognizes that people do not build interdependence and authenticity easily, but in referencing Eugene Peterson he states, "People are not problems to be fixed, Peterson suggests, but image-bearers to be known" (p. 3). A leader, as part of that community, functions by "influencing others to live their full Kingdom potential" (Creswell, 2006, p. 370; Folkenberg, 2002). Without the intentionality of training, "people in love, relational skills, and identity, this neglect produces a half-baked discipleship" (Wilder & Michel, 2020, p. 42). Coaching values coming alongside and seeking to help the clients to find the answers God is trying to share with them. Further, fostering a community of relational growth through triad groups helps create interdependence, accountability, and authenticity. Research shows one-on-one coaching

has its strengths in particular situations, as do group sessions, but triad groups have a way of blending the benefits of both in a particular style to help unleash the potential of those participating.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The theological principles through Paul's journeys shared a living example of God using people to call individuals into authenticity. The literature review informed on the need of intentional relationships and Christian life coaching as a practical tool to build authenticity and interdependence. This leads to the implementation methodology.

This chapter outlines the implementation of the project to be conducted at the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church. First, a description of the local context in which the project was implemented. Second, a description of my personal journey that influenced the development of the intervention. Third, this chapter features the principles of experiential learning through Paul's three missionary journeys (Chapter 2) and the value of influential relationships gained through the literature review (Chapter 3). Fourth, it describes the content, structure and steps of implementation. Fifth, I conclude with the research results.

The Ministry Context

The Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church is settled in a suburb of the metropolitan city of Los Angeles. The church is a part of the Southern California

Conference in the LA Metro region. The faith-based community started with 14 charter members in the fall of 1883 with the pinnacle of membership in the 1990s, with a membership of 752. As they climbed in membership, so did relational and emotional controversies that caused dissension in membership in 2010, and in 2013. Norwalk membership in August 2018 was 347, with an average attendance of 191 (assessed by averaging a weekly count from January 2015 to February 2017). The church study in 2009 showed the ethnicity of the church as follows: 34% Hispanic; 28% White; 23% Asian; 10% Black; 5% Other, which was characteristic of the church in 2018. This conservative community was a magnet for like-minded conservative Seventh-day Adventists for the region.

In 2014 and 2016 the NCD survey was distributed and evaluated, and action steps implemented. Of the eight quality characteristics of the NCD survey for the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist church, the highest average scores were in the areas of empowering leadership, gift-based ministry and need-oriented evangelism. The growth areas were in loving relationships (2014) and inspiring worship service (2016). A church health team implemented efforts to utilize strengths to address the growth areas with some improvement noted from 2014 to 2016 (NCD Survey, 2016, p. 12). Even though Inspiring Worship Service was the minimal factor in 2016, the church health team still felt that Loving Relationship was a central struggle (NCD Survey, 2016, pp. 19-20, 25-26). The associate pastor brought a stable influence of support during a time of conflict between worship teams. A focused living questionnaire done by the senior pastor in February 2017 with the church board and church family confirmed that there was still emotional hurt that was causing dissatisfaction, lack of trust, and judgmental attitudes.

The struggles noted previously could be seen in the 2014 and 2016 NCD Survey, thus the reason for an in-depth study to enhance the value of community with a focus of building a person's truest identity in Christ (which for this project is called interdependence and authenticity). Figure 1 noted in chapter one show the struggle with interdependence (Q43) and bitterness (Q80). Furthermore, authenticity showed improvement from 2014 to 2016 in being able to talk with friends (Q30) and rely upon them (Q39), yet the scores were low in telling others about their feelings (Q14) and inviting new people to get involved (Q19). Further restoration would be needed to stretch beyond the norms of dissatisfaction, lack of trust, and judgmental attitudes.

Learning Through My Personal Journey

The growth of appreciation for the community and finding God's calling for my life started when I went to night school to earn a bachelor's in Christian Leadership. The degree opened my worldview to seeing the big picture and built my skills to consult on strengths and growth areas in a non-profit organization. After graduation in 2004, I applied what I learned serving as a lay pastor in a two-church district in Southern California in the LA Metro Region. Working full time in Physical Therapy and as a lay pastor, I could appreciate the value of the whole "body" working together to unleash the untapped potential in the community, but how to do that? God opened an opportunity for my wife and me to relocate to Andrews University to pursue a Master's of Divinity degree (2006-2008). During my time there, I learned about life coaching, a way of working with God to help people move toward fulfilling their calling by asking powerful questions, and employing active listening. In addition to my school studies I pursued

training and certification in Natural Church Development coaching (2007 by NADEI, CoachNet, 2019 NCD AMERICA), Christian life coaching (2008 by NADEI, CoachNet, ChurchSmart Resources, Inc.), and marriage coaching (2009). I quickly learned I did not need all the answers, but Christ was the one who had them. Instead, I could help people relationally and intentionally connect with God to help them discover Christ's purpose for their lives.

Learning Through the Biblical and Literature Review

Experiential Method

At the start of Paul's call to the mission field (Paul's conversion, Acts 9), he had an opportunity to recognize that God uses people to bring miracles of God's grace into each other's lives. Ananias was a Christian life coach God used to transition Paul's brokenness of false identity, and bring to view his truest identity. Barnabas was used as a catalyst to affirm the newness of life that God had opened in Paul's life. The theological review pointed out the importance of fellowship and its influence to enable and empower people toward God's calling. Paul understood God was the one to "unite their hearts with his in the work of the gospel" (White, 1911, p. 398). Christ is the center, and it is the people that reflect His core values to the world. Thus, Paul kept expanding as a leader, growing in building up Christian life coaches so he could fulfill Acts 1:8, which was never meant to be done by one person.

Influential Relationships

The literature review revealed that influential relationships with intentionality can unleash people to fulfill their calling in their lives. A Christian life coach is a partner with God to help a person strategically calibrate toward fulfilling God's calling for an individual. When there is a space that is nurturing, communicating with healthy language can unlock authenticity of an individual's truest identity in Christ.

As chapter three showed, even though there are similarities between other professions of counseling and mentoring, Christian life coaching cultivates the empowerment of a person to go deeper with Christ to explore their questions and calling and to be molded by the Holy Spirit. The Christian life coach is just a tool used by God to cultivate a meaningful conversation toward enriching their truest identity in Christ.

Christian life coaching naturally encourages interdependence, which organically flows from receiving authenticity in Christ. As Titelman (2015) discovered in Dr. Bowen's work, self is discovered in a family network (pp. 27-28). The study showed smaller groups can cultivate intimacy and trust, which is vital to the success and the influential impact. Triad groups can balance between the pros and cons of large-group and small-group challenges.

Thus, the structure of Tony Stoltzfus' workbook *Peer Coaching* gives the framework to teach and to prepare the atmosphere to build the skills of coaching. Stoltzfus' method gives the tools to help nurture discipleship toward helping one another partner with God and one another in finding God's calling in their lives.

The Description of Implementation

The purpose of this research was to build a Christian life coach model to embrace God's influence to use community to affirm Christ's calling in one's life. Further, to evaluate how this improves the growth area of NCD "Loving Relationships" at Norwalk church.

A three-part sermon series (see Appendix F) was to introduce the key values of this project of authenticity through interdependence. Each future presentation was to reflect on how these values grew during Paul's missionary journeys. The material shared was to be from the theological review done for this project. An appeal to grow as community was to be shared at the end of each sermon.

A pilot group was recruited through voluntary responses to advertisements placed in the church bulletin and invitations shared after the second and third sermons of the series. Those who signed up will be over 18 years of age. Each participant was provided a brochure (see Appendix A). The sign-up was available in the church lobby and by church newsletter that was sent out electronically. After the third sermon in the series, those signed up received a special invitation to meet for the first group teaching on *Peer Coaching*. The group got together on a Sabbath afternoon in one of the church spaces that accommodated the group size. This pilot group met for a five-hour kickoff workshop training followed by a five-week class that worked through the material called *Peer Coaching*, by Tony Soltzfus. This material was a training focused on experiencing the power of authentic relationship through an influential relationship. The training was set up to share and give opportunity for participants to put into practice what they are learning, and follow up with more peer interaction throughout the training.

The pilot group got together a week later following the proposed format (detailed in Appendix A). The kickoff workshop opened the time by clarifying facility resources, prayer, and launching the training video. This orientation session established the desire, hope, and inspiration of Christian life coaching when applied in a person's life. After the video, the pilot group debriefed at their tables of no more than six people per table. Then a time was opened to allow those at the tables to share with the larger group. There was an exercise from the workbook that reinforced what was just learned. Followed by, the second video, which taught the basic skills of coaching. After the video there was time to reflect on what was taught, with an emphasis on making action steps with triad relationships at each table. This was followed by reviewing the action steps from the workbook in triad groups and the how-to follow up with each other during the week before the next session. A key component to this training was the triad relationships that are established at the orientation session during the kickoff workshop. Each participant was given a *Peer Coaching Training Workbook* that was the main guide through the material. At the end of the orientation session a commitment form was signed (Stoltzfus, 2007a, p. 15; 2007b, p. 12). This commitment clarified expectations, peer coach training, and individual responsibility outside the group training (30 to 45 min) and triad relationship commitment outside of group training (45 min). This last step was unique to this orientation session only. Each session had a more detailed schedule of the flow between video/discussion/exercise that was experienced during each session (see Appendix A).

At the end of the last session with *Peer Coach Training*, the participants was invited to take the NCD survey. Materials needed to take the survey was provided, along

with water and light refreshments. Participants took the NCD survey and placed it in a manila envelope to be sealed. Once all the surveys were completed, they were mailed to the North American Evangelism Institute (NADEI) to be processed. Once tabulated, NADEI would send back an *NCD Profile Plus* assessment to be reviewed. The evaluation would be discussed in chapter six.

Conclusion

The chapter started with a description of the ministry context that showed the need and value of this project implementation in the local context. This was followed by seeing the value of experiential learning as studied through the relational influence of ministry partners noted in Paul's missionary journeys, and application of the principles in the local context. Furthermore, a description was given of the power of influential relationships through the literature review and the groundwork it frames for implementing a Christian life coaching model in local context. This was followed by an outline of the implementation which described the content, structure and steps of implementation.

This is not a longitudinal study, although it is an in-depth look of how authenticity through interdependence using a Christian life coaching model (see List of Terms). The information gathered from this project would assess how well people are encouraged to enter into an intentional, influential relationship to build the kingdom of God through helping discover their truest identity in Christ. The Christian life coaching model used to implement was *Peer Coaching* by Tony Stolfzfus. The following chapter would describe the narrative of initiative implementation.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE OF INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Having outlined the research methodology and implementation process in the previous chapter, I now summarize the implementation of the research.

Sermon Series

A sermon series (see Appendix F) shared the values learned from the narrative review through Paul's missionary journey in the book of *Acts*. The series started on January 26, 2019. An invitation was given after each sermon to join a *Peer Coaching* seminar to build on these values in the church. Pamphlets were distributed (Appendix A), and a sign-up sheet was placed at a table in the foyer. The series finished February 16, 2019.

A volunteer and I were at a table to answer questions at the end of the services held on January 26, February 2, 9, and 16. The invitation was given, with handouts, to join a specialized training on building authenticity through interdependence with a weekend kickoff on February 16, 2019. By February 16, fifteen people had signed up. An internet e-mail/texting service called *Flocknote* was used to correspond with those that signed up and attended the kickoff and follow-up training. Weekly reminders about meeting time and location were communicated through text-messaging.

The spring was chosen as a time to implement the training because of the significant events of the International Pathfinder Camporee in the summer, and the Southern California Conference constituency meeting in the fall. Furthermore, the church already had pre-planned events connected with the national holidays (e.g., Mother's Day, Father's Day) around which the seminar could be worked, in exception of the women's retreat scheduled for March 15. By that date, the participants had participated in six sessions of *Peer Coaching*. The buy-in to the process and journey was established to the point that we were able to skip one week without hurting attendance.

Peer Coaching Kickoff

I arrived on Thursday before the kickoff to set up the main room. The tables and chairs were set out to host three to six people each. A reservation sign was placed on the center of each table with pens, pads of paper, and highlighters in a basket. A clipboard sign-in was passed around by the moderator, which I collected at the end of the session. The seminar started with 22 people, and each participant received a free *Peer Coaching Workbook* that they used throughout the whole training.

Fellowship lunch was shared in the same space as the seminar. Even though reservations signs were on the tables, people that were just eating lunch used them. I spoke to the people at each table, and announced to everyone the seminar would be starting soon, and asked if people that wanted to attend would sit at one of the reserved tables, while those not attending switch to a non-reserved table. A special Pathfinder club meeting was called just before the *Peer Coaching* seminar, which delayed three

interested participants. The Adventurer group met to help watch young children while parents attended the seminar.

The kickoff session started with orientation at 1:30 pm. I shared a welcome that consisted of a small testimony of my personal experience, training, impact with coaching, and a review of the flow of the program (Appendix B). I shared prayer and the video was played. The material covered during this kickoff was the orientation through session three of the *Peer Coaching Workbook*. The flow of the kickoff followed the format as laid out in the *Peer Coaching Facilitator Guide*.

Following the video, the group entered into a brief discussion on why peer coaching relationships are meaningful (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 10). The key value shared from that discussion was that God, through community, provides a network of support to help members toward His calling. There were many more questions about how, and I reminded them that all those answers would come as we participated in the training. The commitment form was read, filled out, signed and dated (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 12).

Following a five-minute break, *Session 1: Growing Toward Your Destiny* started. I gave a brief introduction, followed by a video segment. The debriefing started with the question, “How many of you have had a relationship like this at some point in your life? What did you receive from that relationship?” (Stoltzfus, 2007a, p. 31). All participants noted having had an experience with a relationship that was influential in their growth. I facilitated the exercise: *God’s Agenda for Your Growth*, which took 15 minutes to work through (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 15). I reminded them the seminar was meant to be an interactive process to experience partnering with God and two others to help one another understand God’s calling for their lives. After a five-minute break, session one resumed

with a video segment on a coaching demonstration. After the video, I shared that accountability is an essential part of a community, and as partners with God, we want to encourage one another to thrive in God's dreams for the future. A debriefing question was asked, "What questions do you have about peer coaching relationships?" (Stoltzfus, 2007a, p. 32). People's responses were focused on the value of having someone interested in them, and care for them enough to invest time. Questions were raised about techniques of coaching. I reassured them that the answers to these questions would be covered in future lessons.

After a five-minute break for participants to refresh themselves, *Session 2: The Coaching Approach* started. I asked the participants to open their workbooks to page 20 and to write in observations from the video that demonstrated two role plays. The video showed two approaches of a person telling another person what to do, and a person listening to what the other was sharing and using active listening skills. The next 15 minutes listening to the groups' observations. The initial question posed to the group was based on the first role play of the coach telling the coachee, Steve, what he should do: "How motivated was Steve to carry out the coach's ideas. Why is this?" (Stoltzfus, 2007a, p. 38). The video showed an unmotivated Steve, and the observations from the participants recognized that the method of telling a person what to do did not leave Steve feeling excited to move forward toward what God was putting on his heart. The follow-up question was, "What was different about the coaching approach in the second demo?" (Stoltzfus, 2007a, p. 38). Participants easily picked up listening, and active listening was far more motivating than telling a person what to do. I shared with the participants that God did not ask us to fix people's problems, but to walk alongside them and turn their

eyes to Christ through our acts of love. I had them turn to page 21 of their workbooks to focus on *Peer Exercise: Listening and Asking*. The guidelines to the exercise specified allowing eight minutes per person in the triad groups, and 12 minutes for those in dyad groups. I kept an eye out for questions and walked around the room. After 30 minutes the group was called together to answer the question, “What was your takeaway from this session on listening?” (Stoltzfus, 2007a, p. 39). The responses acknowledged how many of us do not listen. If we do listen, we need to be careful not to think of our response to what they are saying more than being an active listener. As an active learner, the body language, speech inflection, and words spoken are helpful hints of a person’s emotions and desires. After 10 minutes of debriefing time together, another five minute break was given before the last session of the kickoff workshop.

The introduction for *Session 3: Building Authentic Relationships* was opened with a reminder from me that although this had been a long day so far, it was a stepping stone to an experience that is life changing. I assured them there would be a treat after this session with dinner. I shared prayer, and the first video which focused on accountability was played, with participants taking notes on pages 26 and 27 of their workbooks. After the video, a peer exercise was introduced, and they were asked to discuss the two questions, “What are the disadvantages of the Trust Paradigm?” and “What are the advantages of the Love Paradigm?” (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 26). I called the group back together to share, “What do you see as the difference between the trust and love paradigms presented in the video?” Over the next 10 minutes, the responses were focused on being the first to love, and this love involves action. I summarized our discussion time, and introduced our second video by saying, “Being authentic is being the first to convey

one's truest identity in Christ. Listen to our next segment to go further in our journey.”

The next video segment, *Telling Authentic Stories*, was played. Following the video, the participants discussed the notes they took on page 27 in the *Peer Coaching Workbook* from the demonstration of an authentic story they heard from the video. I used the *Facilitator Workbook*, (pp. 43-44), to highlight the major points. This was then followed by asking the participants to spend the next 15 minutes with the *Peer Exercise* on page 28 of their workbook. I shared how God has begun a new journey for all of us, and it does not end here, but continues. I reminded them that in the title of this seminar was the word “kickoff,” and that was intentional. The door had been opened for us to experience more authentic relationships with God and with each other. Our growth could continue by joining every Sabbath on the first floor of the building at 1:30 pm for the next five weeks. A similar format would be followed, but only for an hour and a half each week. These follow-up training sessions would help us in applying this love paradigm in our hearts as we hold the hearts of our peer partners. A handout was given to each participant with dates and times, and the location address for the follow-up equipping. In preparation for the upcoming session, I asked participants to complete pages 29-30 in their workbooks. In closing the session I said, “As we wrap up today, what out of today did God use to plant a seed in your heart as an ‘ah-ha,’ ‘wow,’ or ‘oh-my’?” I looked around the room and asked, “Who would like to share first?” Many points of affirmation, encouragement, and questions toward application were shared. I could sense there was an eagerness to learn more. I thanked them for joining this discipleship journey. I told them the peer groups they formed at the table of two or three people would be the support team they would journey with for the follow-up training. I asked them to exchange numbers with

one another during our meal time. There were five groups of three and two groups of two. I asked them to reflect on the action steps on page one in their workbooks to prepare for the next session and to review material from sessions one through three. Prayer was offered with a full dinner provided. Casual fellowship and further conversations were had over the meal. I went to each table thanking people for coming, and shared in their excitement as they trust God's leading on the journey He will take them on during the following weeks.

Following the kickoff weekend, the participants received a text from *Flocknote* on Sunday reminding them of something they learned from the previous training. Another text reminder of their assignment, *Action Steps* on page one of the workbook, was sent on Sunday. A reminder text went out on Thursday of the time and location for the next meeting, to be held on Saturday at 1:30 pm.

Peer Coaching Five-Week Follow-up

The focus of the kickoff was to build momentum, and the follow-up weekly training was to facilitate experiential learning through relational conversations where the group would apply what they had learned at each training. In this 90-minute session, a similar format as the kickoff workshop would be followed: there would an introduction, video and debriefing, followed by a second video and debriefing. This would lead into a peer exercise with added emphasis on the action steps noted on page one of the workbooks. The goal of the *Peer Coaching* training was to see how authenticity is cultivated as the participants trust in God to use them to empower one another in their truest identity in Christ. The foundation was laid out in the kickoff workshop. The

follow-up training served to cultivate growth by expanding the participants' awareness of God working through people to reveal their potential in Christ.

Session Four

The training took place February 23, 2019 on the ground floor of the fellowship hall. The location provides minimal distractions, and has plenty of space to accommodate group discussions. The room was set up with six square tables with three chairs at each to facilitate the triad groups sitting together. Thirteen people arrived at the follow-up training. I welcomed everyone, and reviewed the commitment forms they signed during the kickoff workshop on February 16 (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 12). Prayer was shared, and I had the participants open to page 32 of their workbooks. I asked them to review this page with their groups. After seven minutes the video was started, and they were advised to take notes on page 33. The first video was projected on the wall with a Bose speaker for sound. There was no childcare this week, so the families that came with kids played in a booth in the back corner with some activities the parents brought.

After the first demo video was shown the group discussed the principles of healthy accountability: voluntary, positive, honest and consistent (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 32). The key discussed during the five-minute debriefing was how the one sharing is to guide the direction as God leads them. The coach has to walk alongside where the coachee is going, actively listen and ask powerful questions to help them process their calling or goal. The second demo was started. Following the video, 13 minutes were given to process *Peer Exercise: Asking Accountability Questions*, on page 34 of the workbook, and five minutes to share as a group. During this debriefing, the subject was

brought up of how sometimes it feels like the coach has to tell the coachee what to do to maintain accountability. The group then discussed alternatives to falling into a routine. I clarified the questions asked and helped them process their needs to make their goal and calling a reality. Further, I shared from my personal experience as a coach that one does want to define a person's accountability. Oftentimes it backfires, and the coachee can use the coach as an excuse for failure. This can enable an unhealthy dependent relationship if it becomes the norm in your relationship. The article "Covenant Living" was assigned as homework (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 36). Before closing with prayer, I asked each group to take five minutes to decide when they would meet in person and/or by phone for their coaching session with each other outside this training. I reminded them they are to spend one hour together coaching each other with the skills they are learning. All groups reported to me their dates and times.

Session Five

Session 5: Aiming for the Mark-Change Goals began March 2, 2019 at 1:30 pm. The session started with casual conversation about how their coaching time went that week as people were coming in. We started six minutes late. I welcomed everyone and had prayer to start our session. I affirmed all the groups for meeting and trying to meet. All but two peer groups had trouble meeting during the week. I asked the group, "What would be a good coaching question to ask a coaching group that could not meet?" The group started off with "why" questions, and I shared that "why" questions can come off as judgmental, and we can replace the "why" with "how" or "what." The two groups who missed meeting between last session and this session were encouraged to continue trying,

and they were asked, “What two days this week can you set up one hour for the peer coaching group?” The groups talked and set up two dates to try for that next week.

The video was projected and a 10-minute debriefing was shared over what they saw in the coaching demonstration. The participants picked up on the importance of S.M.A.R.T goals: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-specific (Stoltzfus, 2007b, p. 39). I added that SMART goals, when established by the coachee, give something realistic for the coachee to motivate and follow up with as an action step from the coaching session. The groups were asked to fill out the handout on page 39 for 10 minutes. I asked them to transition to the *Peer Exercise: Developing a Change Goal* on page 40 for an additional 13 minutes. Following this exercise, I asked the group if anyone was willing to share their goal(s). One participant shared about a book they want to write, another shared about their desire to have a better daily devotional time with God, and one of the parents shared how they want to be a missionary to their kids. I asked the questions from the facilitator workbook, “Do the rest of you have any feedback? How well does this fit the SMART format?” (Stoltzfus, 2007a, p. 56). Many questions started to be raised, and I put SMART on the white board, and I wrote their questions next to the different categories. I reminded them that the “SMARTer” we are the better we will actually follow through with the plan. I reminded them of the action steps from page one in their workbooks, and to read the article on page 41, *The Power of Goal-Setting* before our next session. We shared prayer, and I thanked them for allowing themselves to grow as peer coaches.

Session Six

The coaching training continued on March 9, 2019 at 1:30 pm. I started the time with a question, “What new things is God guiding you to learn and grow in?” One participant shared about the empowerment that it can bring to allow the coachee to grow in their fullness as God’s child. The reflection was inspiring to the rest of the participants. Following prayer, the group took five minutes to answer the accountability question in the workbook on page 44. I reviewed *The Coaching Funnel* on page 44. I shared a personal experience of how the goal is just a step to go further to unpack motivation, values, and creativity that help people stay committed toward following through on their action steps. I played the video “Turning Goals into Actions Steps.” The group debriefed for eight minutes where I emphasized the value of a coach to help a person move from casual conversation, which we call relating, to then reflecting on their thoughts and feelings, and transition to what could they do, want to do, or will do. I shared a personal story about a coachee struggling to take action on Sabbath observance and how the coaching funnel can be helpful to guide them to focus on what they “could do” versus what they “can’t do,” what they “want to do” versus what they “don’t want to do,” and what they “will do,” and the steps to move forward.

The second video, *Progress Report* was shown. This video segment shared the value of asking for a progress report at the beginning of each coaching session. I shared that knowing where a person is in their journey can be a springboard to help them recalibrate their goals or go further with their goals or action steps. The attendees were asked to work in their groups with the *Peer Exercise: The Next Step* on page 45 in their workbook. Twenty minutes were allotted for this segment. Just before they started, I

shared a story involving a communication breakdown with a husband and wife. When coaching tools were introduced to them, it helped them know they were not to fix each other, but to partner with God, and follow His leading in supporting His will in each other's lives. I moved about the room helping with questions. In one group discussion, I overheard the coach giving advice, and sharing their personal story about what helped them. I reminded them that it is about their journey, not ours. We want to keep advice and our personal stories to ourselves because this is about the coachee's journey not the coaches. Although, if the coach feels this would support the coachee, ask for permission before sharing. Once coaches start sharing, the focus is on the coach, not on the coachees and the journey God is leading them on. There can be times for stories, when it is appropriate, but we need discernment from the Holy Spirit, and guidance as to the right timing. I suggested avoiding it for the sake of our time together. This was such a valuable point that once all the participants got back together, I reviewed the concept with everyone about advice and sharing personal stories, not singling out the group I spoke with about it. As a mentor, we want to share our advice and stories, which I am sure have value, but as a coach we want to help the coachee flesh out more of his or her story and process the coaching funnel before ever considering adding any personal feedback. Oftentimes, when we jump into feedback, advice, or stories we can create an idea of, "I know better than you." I continued to share that God is greater than any of us, and since He is the one guiding, why do not we let God's feedback, advice, and stories guide us, and save ours for a later time? I explained to the group that it is not that one can never share feedback, advice, and stories, but that in a coaching session, the focus is on the person being coached, and not on our successes and failures. We want them to know

“God has the answers, and I will be walking alongside you, being a friend, to explore the calling and goal God has set you toward.” Some seemed to understand the concept immediately, while others needed time to reflect. We had prayer, and again I reminded them to “praise the Lord for what you are allowing God to do in you as a peer coach.” I reminded the group before leaving that we would be taking a week’s break to accommodate the women’s retreat, so I would see everyone on March 23.

Session Seven

Session 7: Coaching Your Peer took place two weeks later because of an annual women’s retreat that took place on March 16, 2019, so reminders were sent out about tasks to work on in peer groups and about meeting again on March 23, 2019 at 1:30 pm.

I welcomed everyone and asked how the women’s retreat was. The ladies who attended were excited by how the Holy Spirit led that experience. Some shared how they tried informally using their coaching skills. I encouraged their enthusiasm to apply what they were learning. I started the session with a question, “How are you valuing the moments you have been sharing in your peer groups?” Some groups talked about how hard it was to coordinate schedules, and some started off well, but were not being faithful in being accountable to reschedule if something interrupted their regularly scheduled meeting. I coached them through SMART goals to help them work through some of the issues. I transitioned to the video *Problem-solving the Coaching Way & Gathering More Info*. This was followed by a seven-minute debriefing. The emphasis was on the value of hearing the story to gather information, which often helps in moving toward solutions and action steps. The second video, *The Five Options Technique* was watched, and I asked

this question, “What questions could we come up with to help a person come up with three to five options for their situation?” It was a little hard at first, but as one person came up with a good question, the other participants picked up on creative questions to ask. I invited them to spend some time in their peer groups with the peer exercise on page 50. I gave the group 20 minutes to work on this exercise, with each person in dyad groups taking 10 minutes to share and then switching, while those in triad groups had seven minutes each. The groups were rushed because only the dyad groups got more than three options listed. Regardless, the discussion that followed was about how powerful it is to help guide someone toward options even when they have a pretty good idea of what they want. The option helps to create some space for alternatives that would not have been discovered otherwise. We ended the session with prayer, and I reminded them how strong they are as disciples to allow God to stretch them as peer coaches. I reminded them of their action steps on session seven in their workbook (noted on page one), and to read the article, *Sample Coaching Appointment* before our next session.

Session Eight

The closing session for this follow-up training that started with the kickoff on February 16, 2019 was on March 30, 2019 at 1:30 pm. Things were a bit rushed because of a family emergency that pulled me away up to the time of the peer coaching training. In addition, there was a special event in a local church nearby that pulled out three of the participants. I started with affirmation of the journey they had taken, and what opportunities they had opened in their lives, and the momentum they had gained in affirming God’s calling in their lives, and moving toward His goals for their lives. I

continued with prayer and showed the video segment, *A Little Change Theory and Demo: Naming Identity*. As a group, we reviewed *Handout: A Little Change Theory* on page 54. Following the discussion, I showed the second video, *Expressing Belief and Celebrating Progress*. I used the handout on page 55 in the workbook, *Three Ways to Affirm* to facilitate the discussion time. I had each peer group work for eight minutes on the *Peer Exercise: Affirmation* on page 56. This was followed by a 10-minute discussion on their own words of affirmation that they came up with. I thanked the participants for sharing their journey, their time, and willingness to walk alongside me and each other in moving toward being peer coaches. I shared that although the formal training was finishing that day, our life-long growth as peer coaches had begun a new journey of opportunity in our lives. I told them I would like to equip each of them with a special gift to invest in their journeys--*Leadership Coaching* by Tony Stoltzfus.

In addition, I added that I would need their assistance with some feedback. A volunteer was chosen to handout and collect the completed NCD questionnaires and to place them in a large manila envelope. I asked them to do their best to answer each question, and if there was something they did not understand they could skip it, and to please mark the bubbles clearly. I explained that small groups were related to this group or Bible study groups, that some of the questions would be addressing things that are bigger than just this class, because we are looking at the overall health of the community of which they are a part. Pencils and questionnaires were handed out to everyone, I asked if there were any questions, and I prayed with them. I stepped outside the door, and waited there with their gifts. Once all surveys were completed and turned in to the assigned volunteer, the manila envelope was sealed and mailed out to NADEI for

processing of data for analysis. The book was handed to them with a hug for what God had begun in them.

Following this training, I continued to send weekly texts from *Leadership Coaching* to the participants for an additional five weeks.

Conclusion

This narrative described the implementation of the peer coaching seminar at Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist Church to share the value of authenticity through interdependence in implementing a sermon series, workshop kickoff, and interactive coaching follow-up training through groups over a five-week period. The outline of the implementation was articulated in chapter four and was followed as realistically and practically as possible.

At the start, it was more informational than experiential, which was understandable since this was very new for this community. The atmosphere of interdependence was cultivated through a sermon series, building on the importance of community in how God transformed authenticity in the hearts of the followers of Jesus through Paul's three missionary journeys. The workshop continued the journey to build on the information through more interactive experiences and testimonies which led to building motivation and desire to stay invested in the follow-up five-week seminar. This created the atmosphere of building awareness of seeing value in one another. It was realized by the fourth session that there was a momentum growing in seeing the value this brings into their lives, and the lives of those around them. Each person is God's

partner in walking alongside each other to help them in the discovery of God's leading in their lives.

The following chapter will examine results from the NCD survey. Observations were noted throughout the implementation, and how the value of authenticity and interdependence was affected. Also, I will note improvements to be made toward implementation and areas of further study.

CHAPTER 6

PROJECT EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

This chapter seeks to assess the effectiveness and impact of the *Peer Coaching* course implemented at the Norwalk Church. This section examines the values of authenticity and interdependence through the tool of the Natural Church Development (NCD) Survey, and the researcher's own notes and observations. Furthermore, this chapter reviews the spiritual impact this has had on the moderator of this project, and examine the areas that need further research.

Description of the Evaluation

What follows is a description of how data from the intervention (Chapter 5) was evaluated and interpreted, along with a report of the resulting conclusions and outcomes.

Evaluation Method

The NCD recognized eight quality characteristics for healthy growing churches, and over eighteen years of research they have expanded their material to help communicate that growth is as much about an individual personal journey as the journey of the church. Unlocking the “all by itself” growth happens by “increasing the quality in the heads, hands, and hearts of the people” (Schwarz, 2015, p. 4). Schwarz (2019) elaborates that a key building foundation is that the church has all it needs inside, it is

how we cultivate the potential that lies within that is vital to thriving (pp. 10-11). The church grows as a family by cultivating the soil of fellowship. The concept of developing the community through these eight qualities found in healthy growing communities was a key reason for using this analysis in this project.

The survey was administered the last day of the seminar to those in attendance. The moderator gave a description of the NCD survey and described the steps to be taken to complete the survey. After participants completed the survey it was turned in to the assigned volunteer, and individual's surveys were placed in a manila envelope which was sealed and mailed for processing to the North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI). There were two participants that had been a part of the equipping journey, but could not make the last session, so they took the survey at a later time, with the same guidelines as noted in chapter 5, and added to the sample. The results of this current sample will be compared to the NCD studies done at the Norwalk Church in 2014 and 2016, and to the NAD results. The NCD Profile Plus surveys were returned to and analyzed by Pastor/NCD Coach John Strehle.

Evaluation

The data was first examined to note the broad observations of the findings, by looking at the strength (the highest score across the eight quality characteristics), and the growth area (the lowest number scored across the eight quality characteristics). Reflections will be made as to how this survey compares to previous studies. This will be followed by a more specific look at the results for Authenticity and Interdependence (see

Appendix E). The North American Division (NAD) results will be compared alongside the results from the Norwalk Church.

Overview of Strength and Growth Results

The data reveals Passionate Spirituality (PS) as a strong factor with a score of 65. Following closely is Need-Oriented Evangelism (NOE) with a score of 61 (Appendix C). These results are higher than the NAD NCD (2019) (see Appendix D) averages of PS (58) and NOE (54). The NAD and the Norwalk Church results both share those eight quality characteristics as their highest strengths. The counter to these results is the minimum factor of Inspiring Worship Service (IWS) (42) and Loving Relationships (LR) (43) with a one-point difference. The minimum factors here at the Norwalk Church differ from the NAD score of Holistic Small Groups as the minimum factor (44), yet they share LR (46) as following in second place for the minimum factor. Overall, the average score across all eight quality characteristics for Norwalk and the NAD is (53/50). Keep in mind a standard score of 35 or less means the church is in the bottom 15% of NAD churches scored; 36-64 is an average score that contains 70% of NAD scores; and a score of 65 and above means the church is in the top 15% of scores. A standard deviation is 15. The Norwalk SDA Church scores within the average range overall, and the individual eight quality characteristics score of PS (65) is in the top 15% of scores.

The results showed PS was ahead by four points from what I thought would be the highest factor of NOE because the church focuses on traditional prophecy seminars. The questions that scored the highest in PS were focused on individual spiritual growth (Q42, 72, 77 - Appendix C, p. 130) and the questions that focus on community spiritual

growth (Q29, 52, 68 – Appendix C, p. 130) scored low, which gave a minimum-maximum difference (min-max difference) of 33. Min-max difference is the score of the sustainability of the current NCD averages. If the min-max difference number is greater than 15 it is imbalanced. The min-max imbalance causes greater use of resources and energy to sustain the current health. The tension, if not addressed, will lead to burn out of individuals. The church history is reaching out through traditional evangelism (a two-week+ prophecy seminar) with less emphasis on building relational connections. Even though PS is the strength of the Norwalk Church, the min-max difference is a standard deviation beyond a healthy level, and thus the current health of the community will be challenging to maintain. When this project first started, LR was the minimum factor (2014-35; 2016-46; 2019-43). There was a heavier initial push toward improving LR before the project was implemented. This project was developed to introduce a level of training to enhance the relational benefits of improving a person's spirituality through community. Inspiring Worship Service (IWS) was not a minimum factor when first beginning this project in 2014, although it has shifted into the minimum factor position because of the focus being in other areas (2014-46; 2016-36; 2019-42). This minimum factor change can be anticipated, as the pastoral team leading up to 2014 had a strong ministry focus on worship versus the pastor following, who had a stronger focus on discipleship. Because this survey compared three surveys taken (2014, 2016, 2019), it helped to see the graph of the "Dynamic Progress" (Appendix C, p. 128). The result page showed that LR has seen an average of an eight-point increase since 2014. Furthermore, IWS saw a three-point decrease since 2014. The traditional style of worship and lack of

engagement with the church family leaves the community's spiritual growth wanting, which contributes to the minimum factor.

The journey of Passionate Spirituality (PS) had grown 16 points in 2019 after it dipped in 2016 by nine points from a starting score of 57 in 2014. The second strength, Need-Oriented Evangelism (NOE), has followed a similar pattern of growth with a 10-point increase in 2019 from a six-point decrease in 2016 after a starting score of 57 in 2014. These scores can be explained by understanding that any living organism is fluid. There are many factors, both internal and external, that cause these scores to move, as has been noted. In this particular context, there was a shift of duties in 2015 where an associate pastor (who served five years) transitioned to another congregation, and then the youth director (who served 14 years) transitioned to another church family in 2018. Furthermore, the focus during this time was growing the minimum factor of LR.

The church call, to prepare the way of the Lord, is a call that the church family uses to invite all to action. Furthermore, the church family, individually, sees Bible study and prayer as important parts of a personal walk with God. The strengths add a great value to the community, but unleashing these strengths in the community is limited by the LR and IWS minimum factors. The value of seeing God work through Scripture in influencing growth is just as instrumental as influential relationships.

Interdependence and Authenticity Results

In going deeper into the analysis, the study looked at the specific questions that relate to authenticity and interdependence in the NCD Profile Plus survey as pointed out in chapter 1 (see Appendix E). Interdependence is defined in this project as a community

recognizing the value of influential relationships with one another to fulfill Jesus' purpose in their lives. The NCD questions used to measure this as determined by the project facilitator were: Q35: The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments, Q43: I know of people in our church with bitterness toward others. (Q43 is phrased to slow down those completing the questionnaire and thus increase statistical accuracy. One can re-phrase the question by adding "not," or remember the higher the result the healthier it is), Q59: I share with various people in our church about my spiritual journey, Q80: If I have a disagreement with a member of our church, I will go to them in order to resolve it, Q83: Our leaders regularly praise and acknowledge volunteers (NCD Survey). These questions were singled out of the category of "LR" because of their influence on interdependence in this local context. The local context had a history of people feeling judged and criticized, as was expressed to the pastor and confirmed through a vision planning session processed in 2017.

Even with the Norwalk Church history, three out of the five questions for interdependence (Q35, 59, 83) had shown a steady increase in 2014, 2016, and 2019 (see Appendix E). Question 35 started off in 2014 at 29 and in 2019 improved to 47. This showed the score had improved by 18 points toward creating an atmosphere of affirming one another. This being said, between 2016 and 2019 the Q35 improved by five points. Therefore, the study showed the majority of growth in Q35 took place between 2014-2016, and less between 2016-2019. When NCD was first shared and implemented in 2014, there was more emphasis on the minimum factor. A Church Health Team was formed and set up action steps toward improving the qualities. There was less motivation to focus on church health in 2016 because of more emphasis on church evangelism, and

other internal conflicts. A visioning seminar was processed through the church board and church family in 2017 to improve motivation toward church health and mission, and ensure that the two support and enhance each other.

Although Q35 saw improvement toward praise and complimenting one another in this community, Q43 had taken a dip from 2014 to 2016. Personnel transitions in 2016 of both the associate pastor (five years tenure), and the patriarch member of the church could have added to the decline. However, the youth director (14-year tenure) transitioned out in 2018, and the position was not filled because of insufficient monetary support, and it appeared to have the same effect statistically. This being said, Q43 did improve four points in 2019. A seminar held on conflict resolution in 2018 and the *Peer Coaching* seminar for this project could have contributed to a healthier atmosphere.

A question that showed a decline was Q80. The comfort toward resolving conflict was static in 2014-2016, and dropped in 2019 by 12 points. This is 21 points away from the NAD average. Although Q80 took a significant decline, Q59 showed a boost of 19 points between 2016-2019. Unfortunately, people increased in their bitterness (Q43) toward one another, and yet, at the same time, there were people feeling more willing to share their faith journey with others (Q59). The other questions in this interdependence category saw an increase as well from 2016-2019 (Q35, five-point gain; Q43, four-point gain; Q83, 13-point gain). An atmosphere of feeling safe to process conflicts is missing.

How do the Interdependence scores of Norwalk Church compare to the NAD data that was compiled by Petr Cincala, *NCD America* Executive Director? The North American survey results are taken from a sample between 2008-2018 and of 970 SDA profiles (see Appendix D). When comparing 2019 scores from the Norwalk Church and

the NAD, one can find three out of the five questions were above the NAD averages (see Appendix E). The average score between the five questions used to measure interdependence for Norwalk was 51.2, and NAD 50. Overall, the averages were similar, though the local church was slightly higher. Taking a closer look, one finds that two questions scored differently between the Norwalk 2019 and NAD data--Q59 and Q80. The local church showed a much healthier position with sharing their spiritual journey when compared to the NAD. Question 59 showed the local church was 16 points, which is a little over a standard deviation above the NAD score on this question. However, Q80 was the opposite, where the NAD had a score 22 points healthier than the local church. Thus, conflict was more prevalent here at Norwalk, and yet the local church felt more confident to share their faith.

Interdependence is recognizing that the value of influential relationships that God uses to empower a person to fulfill God's purpose is an essential part of a church family. According to the data that was compiled in 2019, since the implementation of this project's *Peer Coaching* seminar there has been a healthier stride toward improving this value in the church. The strongest signifier of interdependence (based on the standard that any NCD score of 65 and higher is found in the top 15% of churches) is "share with various people in the church about my spiritual journey" Q59. An honorable mention is "leaders praise and acknowledge volunteers" Q83. A score below 35 is what the NCD considers in the bottom 15% of churches surveyed and none of the scores for interdependence fell into this category. Even so, Q80 came pretty close with a score of 38, and Q43 came in a close second. The *Peer Coaching* seminar focused heavily on walking alongside one's journey, which reflected positively in the survey results, with

sharing one's spiritual journey being the strongest factor (Q59) along with affirming one another (Q83). The implementation of the project did not focus on bitterness or direct conflict resolution, which was reflected in the results. The average of the five questions was 45 in 2014 and 51 in 2019. This means overall there was a six-point improvement in this community value of interdependence as I have categorized the questions.

When people feel that they are not accepted and valued then they do not walk in authenticity. Authenticity was defined for this project as a journey of vulnerability and willing submission to Christ, who walks with people to find their truest identity in fulfilling His purpose in their lives. The questions focused on for this analysis are: Q14: I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings, Q19: We encourage new Christians in our church to get involved in evangelism immediately, Q21: The evangelistic activities of our church are relevant for my friends and family who do not yet know Jesus Christ, Q30: In our church it is possible to talk with other people about personal problems, Q39: I can rely upon my friends at church, Q59: I share with various people in our church about my spiritual journey, Q70: I know of a number of individuals in our church who have the gift of evangelism. These questions were taken from "LR" (Q14, 30, 39, 59) and "NOE" (Q19, Q21, Q70). The reason "NOE" questions were used was because the questions focused on building and encouraging others to fulfill their purpose in Christ. As the adjective emphasizes for NOE, evangelism is not just about learning facts of prophecy from the Bible. Evangelism is about building people by connecting relationally with them. Need-oriented Evangelism is meeting relational needs, which is connected to discipleship. Together, evangelism and discipleship cultivate the value of interdependence and authenticity through listening, trusting in God, and realizing the

value in one another so people can stretch to new heights in Christ. The Norwalk Church in general has, for many years, used a traditional approach to evangelism. The traditional approach is focused on prophecy over a one-to-three-week period, five nights a week. The emphasis is on building awareness of the signs of the times, not cultivating authenticity in Christ through interdependence.

Seven questions were used, as discussed above, to evaluate how effective authenticity has been at the Norwalk Church. Overall, the NCD survey showed a decline in five of the questions to evaluate authenticity. In the three questions that focus on application of one's authenticity (as noted in the NOE questions considered for authenticity), we find Q19 saw a slight increase with each survey taken. Q21 saw a rise in 2016 from 2014, but went back to 59 in 2019, which was the same as it was in 2014. Q70 was very high in 2014, but has shown a steady decline since, with a score of 44 in 2019. Traditionally at the Norwalk Church, evangelism consisted of health seminars or traditional evangelistic seminars, and thus other methods or relational outreach are not viewed as evangelistic. In addition, the emphasis by the leadership over the years has been focused on reducing the criticism and judgmental atmosphere. Building up the members who can disciple people alongside their spiritual journey has been the emphasis, and thus perhaps why the results are showing negative here.

Question 59 was used in Interdependence and Authenticity as an evaluation tool because it interacts together with interdependence. This question was reviewed earlier, but in context of authenticity it is one of the highest questions for 2019. A complement to Q59 is Q19. Q19 focuses on encouraging new believers in sharing their faith, and has seen a steady increase since 2014. Although the local context leadership changed the

focus from the traditional door-to-door method to personally sharing one's spiritual journey with another, the church still felt that getting people involved was encouraged with a score of 65 in 2019. The *Peer Coaching* seminar added to the skills of how to get involved with an intentional way of letting God enhance one's spiritual journey and calling through community.

Questions that showed a decline and were more personal in nature were Q14, Q21, Q30, Q39 (See Appendix E). Each of these questions focus on a greater involvement in one's personal space. A closer look at Q14 (one finds it easy to talk to other Christians about feelings) shows it has been steady with a little movement up between 2014 and 2016, and a decline of five points in 2019. A similar pattern is seen with Q21, with a decline of six points, and Q30, suffering a 19-point decline in 2019 from 2016. The greatest growth area for this category is Q39, that one can rely on their friends at church, which was at 11 in 2014, and saw an increase of 42 points in 2016, and then a decline of 33 points in the 2019 survey. The decline could be related to the fact that the *Peer Coaching* seminar focus was intentional about intimate relational interactions. Thus, the seminar brought awareness of the distance between the reality and how much more intimate the church family could be. Another factor, as noted earlier, was the departure of the youth director in 2018. Also, some of the triad groups were set up with people with which participants were familiar, but not good friends.

The NCD survey of the Norwalk Church, as compared to the NAD statistics for authenticity, showed an average of 49 across the seven questions where the church averaged 47 in 2019. There was a two-point difference between the local church and the NAD, but a little more than with Interdependence. Individually, two questions scored

higher than the NAD average, which were Q19 at 65, Q59 at 73. These scores put these two questions in the top 15% when compared to other NCD NAD surveys. Furthermore, the remainder of the questions scored in the average range (35-65) except for Q30 and Q39. These two assessed how comfortable members feel in talking to others about personal problems and relying on one another. The NAD average score for Q30 was 40 and Q39 was 38. The local context was better in comparison to this, but still on the low side.

Authenticity saw a greater struggle in thriving in this local context and across the NAD. The questions that had personal vulnerability implications were in decline. Even though people are willing to share their personal journey, there are barriers to being real with their joys and insecurities. The church has struggled to come out from the shadow that these low scores have cast on the community. The *Peer Coaching* seminar utilized the strength of this community, open to sharing their spiritual journey, and opened the door for the participants to take a deeper look at how God uses fellowship to affirm His calling in one's life. As Q59 and Q19 were strengths for this area, there is still a lot more needed to take those relationships deeper to a more authentic community.

Personal Growth in Authenticity and Interdependence

The term authenticity in this project is a journey of vulnerability and willing submission to Christ, who walks with people to find their identity in fulfilling His purpose in their lives. The journey toward authenticity for me personally has been a long process, but the catalyst to revealing God's purpose has been the Doctor of Ministry program. I quickly learned in the first year that this is not my project, but a community

project. I was interdependent with an adviser, coach, church family, and many more. It was God working through this community that this project would find its fulfillment for God's glory. The following is a narrative description of the journey of God's leading through the church and me in growing authenticity through interdependence, which influenced the implementation.

Authenticity

In 2017 I led out in a seminar on "Focused Living," where a person takes a journey reflecting on how God has worked in the past and what patterns are being shown as Christ is leading the individual forward. It was well received, and we followed a similar process for the church. I saw that some of the people opened their hearts to see how God has worked in our history, whether good or bad. Furthermore, God is patient to use the people present to help His mission move forward. However, I quickly learned that I did not have enough people equipped to "hold hearts" in coaching them through their calling. Traditionally, the church was used to a lecture-type seminar, and less comfortable with a relational and interactive style of interaction. God is calling worshippers that will be vulnerable to go deeper with Jesus in transformation, and not just growing in information. An intentional, influential relationship was essential to following through this journey of authenticity through the community. The reality came to me that the church needed a group of people that realized their role as partners with God, called to walk alongside others. They are Christ's advocates to help the person, through grace-driven influence, to find their assurance in Christ. Then perhaps a community could unleash potential in people in a way that grows effective ministry leaders.

Interdependence

God provided and worked through many people to influence my journey as a Doctor of Ministry candidate. I have written that my personal biblical purpose is to spend time with my life coach, Jesus Christ, and let Him define who I am, and let that revelation be a witness of God's miracle of authenticity through interdependence. Over the last five years I have spent time in reflection on what the values are that drive me which I discovered are: comrade, conscientious, realistic, steady, patient, empathetic, service-oriented, good listener, family-oriented, and having a reserved demeanor. This helped me in understanding my strengths and growth areas as a coach and disciple of Jesus. This came as a result of being intentional with relationships around me, sharing the journey with others, and walking alongside them in theirs. It further helped me know who else I need around me as a support community team to help with my blind spots. This brought clarity to my personal vision as a Christian life coach that is willing and vulnerable to help others in transformational discovery and renewal in the salvation of Jesus Christ. As leader in this community, I look forward to seeing a ministry thriving through a cooperative partnership with God and each other, willing to be transformed through God's divine intervention as we walk alongside those in our area of influence.

Final Conclusions

No one seminar or sermon series can fix within the heart of an individual the growth areas of Loving Relationships. Transformational growth is fostered over time, and through individual willingness to engage with community, in seeing value in one another and how God works through fellowship to develop the values of our character. The study

showed some momentum of change was made toward the value of interdependence far more than authenticity. Further, the Norwalk NCD survey showed an average score of 53 across all eight quality characteristics which is an improvement of 6 points compared to 2014, and 2016. The experiences of the past and the current culture are challenging forums to promote new paradigm shifts locally and in the NAD. The paradigms of interdependence and authenticity are greatly needed for NAD church communities to be meaningful and influential in the future.

Recommendations

The recommendations conferred are based on the conclusion.

This is a process, not a program, and it takes two to three years to build roots and have them grow. Begin to introduce Peer Coaching to key influencers and leaders of the church first, followed by peer coaching for six months before implementing the journey in the whole church, in order to build buy-in.

Build more interactive points in the sermon series and give handouts for members to write SMART goals to complement the messages shared during the sermon series.

Establish a "Church Health Team" that would learn NCD and how to build momentum toward transformational growth in the church family.

Give a pre-reading of the short book *All by Itself* by Christian A. Schwarz to introduce NCD to the church board and church health team.

Expand further research on Ellen G. White's writings on the life of Paul outside of the book *Acts of the Apostles*. Further biblical research is needed on community throughout the Gospels in affirming one's calling through the Holy Spirit.

Practitioners should expand the Peer Coaching seminar to be bi-annual to give more opportunity for church engagement to build disciples.

Create a system for tracking accountability for Peer Coaching sessions. Also, do further research on Christian Life Coaching and how it can be applied to community-based discipleship.

For practitioners, I would suggest giving the book, *Spiritual Leadership Coaching* by Richard Blackaby and Bob Royal, at the conclusion of the Peer Coaching seminar and five-week group training. Use the book as a template to have six-week debriefings as one encourages the triad groups to continue, and at the same time allow more time for this new information to take root in their lives.

I recommend that the kickoff weekend be established as a special retreat weekend off-campus, giving time to foster trust in triad groups, and allow space for free time to process what is being learned.

Also to create self-administered questionnaires more specific to the group and focusing on relational influence. There is need for additional supplemental material to complement the Peer Coaching seminar. For instance, show more biblical examples of the value of community and affirming one's journey with Christ in moving toward their truest identity in Christ than what *Peer Coaching* by Tony Stoltzfus provides.

Final Thoughts

The study was not conclusive to show that *Peer Coaching* as a program based on the *NCD Profile Plus* transformed Loving Relationships into a warm atmosphere. Yet there were improvements in sharing one's spiritual journey with another (Q59), toward

which this program was geared. The participants valued having a coach to affirm Jesus' purpose and calling in their lives through the experience. I recognized the importance of the leadership affirming the volunteers (Q83), and how this grew trust and encouraged people to step out in faith. I grew to appreciate what it meant to have a Barnabas, Ananias, Timothy, and Silas alongside the journey in the book of *Acts*, and how as ministry partners we can grow in Christ as we walk together. I think the literature review affirmed the value Christian coaching can give a community to grow Loving Relationships. Throughout the project I was aware of being intentional in inviting people alongside me in my personal spiritual walk. I learned in the implementation that this was far more than a program, but a paradigm shift of how one sees a disciple's role in ministry. That being said, this is a shift that will take a few years to see the fruits of its benefits. Like Paul, I am encouraged to know that we are all part of a ministry team that the Holy Spirit calls to serve. Further, as spiritual partners, we are tools in the Holy Spirit's hand to facilitate the gospel with relational influence.

APPENDIX A

PEER COACHING BROCHURE

Peer Coach Training

The depth of the transformation we experience in our Christian walk is proportional to the quality of our relationships. It's like gardening: when our lives are watered with people who really know us, that we open up to and who walk with us through life's challenges, we grow the best. When we lack support, accountability and companions who invest in our growth, 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 mature disciples. And the coaching approach provides an innovative, biblical way to build great relationships that call us to responsibly steward the lives God has given us instead of telling each other what we ought to do.

What is Peer Coaching?

Peer coaching is a multiplying relational structure where two or three friends meet 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. Peer Coach Training is what creates that environment. This interactive process builds authentic relationships while training you to use a unique set of coaching tools that consistently help people grow faster than they can on their own.

What Makes It Work?

Peer coaching works because it helps people take responsibility and take action to grow. Each person chooses an important growth goal that they are motivated to pursue. Then peers use basic coaching skills to help each other turn those goals into concrete action steps that get done. The peer coaching structure provides the consistent encouragement, friendly perspective and healthy accountability you need to reach for excellence in your Christian walk.

Getting in the Habit

Half-way through the training, peer partners start meeting on their own, outside the group sessions. By the time you reach the last group session, you and your peer will already be meeting consistently and experiencing the benefits of walking with each other. This initial support structure greatly increases the success rate for creating effective peer relationships that last.

Multiplying the Movement

The peer coaching structure provides for multiplication as well: when new members come to your group, they simply join an existing peer pair or triad. When a group grows to four, it multiplies into two peer pairs to keep things relationally intimate and logistically simple. The *Facilitator's Guide* even includes materials for reinforcing the vision of peer coaching through periodic celebration, renewal of relationships and recommitment.

For more information contact:

Kickoff Training on Feb 16th 1:30pm*

Register Today to Reserve your Spot & participants receive FREE workbook

**Location: Upper Room
12201 Firestone Blvd**

**Pastor John Strehle (562) 863-6156
Norwalkcreations@gmail.com**

Peer coaching is about listening, asking questions and taking responsibility for your own life, not about giving advice and telling others what they ought to do. This unique coaching approach to working with others is extremely effective at building healthy accountability. Starting with a strong foundation of mutual respect fosters deep and lasting friendships while turning your disciples into mature leaders.

The Training Process

Most everyone would love to have an authentic, accountable relationship with a great friend. The challenge is overcoming the awkwardness of getting started, and then just sticking with it long enough for the relationship to begin to pay off. Peer Coach Training provides a structure to do just that. In weekly group sessions you'll learn coaching foundations (like asking powerful questions or developing change goals) using a hear/see/discuss/do training method that is highly interactive, effective—and fun! You'll see a skill demonstrated, then get to practice it with your peer. All the while you'll be investing in your friendship with exercises like telling life stories, identifying your dreams, setting change goals and making a covenant to support each other's growth.

"Building men and women is not that easy. It requires constant personal attention... something that no organization or class can ever do."

— Robert E. Coleman

Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth-Centered Relationships

APPENDIX B

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Topics of Each Session

SESSIONS	TOPICS
WORKSHOP 1	Orientation: Getting Started
WORKSHOP 2	Growing Toward Your Destiny
WORKSHOP 3	The Coaching Approach
WORKSHOP 4	Building Authentic Relationships
FOLLOW UP WEEK 1	The Covenant Life
FOLLOW UP WEEK 2	Aiming for the Mark—Change Goals
FOLLOW UP WEEK 3	Taking Action
FOLLOW UP WEEK 4	Coaching Your Peer
FOLLOW UP WEEK 5	Energy for Change

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 15

Kick-Off Workshop Format

Time	Session	Length
1:30 pm	Welcome, Opening Prayer	10 min
1:40 pm	Orientation: Getting Started	60 min
2:40 pm	BREAK	10 min
2:50 pm	Session 1: Growing Toward Your Destiny	60 min
3:50 pm	BREAK	10 min
4:00 pm	Session 2: The Coaching Approach	60 min
5:00 pm	BREAK	10 min
5:10 pm	Session 3: Building Authentic Relationships	60 min
6:10 pm	Closing Prayer	10 min

Follow-up 5-Week Format

Time	Session	Length
2:00 pm	Welcome, Opening Prayer	10 min
2:10 pm	Session	60 min
3:10 pm	Closing Remarks, Prayer	10 min

Orientation Schedule for Kickoff Workshop

Introduction	6 min
Video Part 1: The Power of Peer Coaching and Peer Coaching Demo	10 min
Debrief	10 min
Video Part 2: Training Overview	4 min
Question and Answer Period	10 min
Review the Training Schedule and Commitment Form	10 min
Action Steps/Prayer	10 min

Session 1: Growing Toward Your Destiny

Introduction	5 min
Video Part 1: Your Most Important Leadership Decision	12 min
Debrief	10 min
Exercise: God's Agenda for Your Growth	15 min
Video Part 2: Training Overview	11 min
Action Steps/Prayer	5 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 29

Session 2: The Coaching Approach

Introduction and Peer Matching	7 min
Accountability Exercise	5 min
Video Part 1: How to Torpedo Your Peer Relationship	13 min
Debrief	12 min
Peer Exercise: Listening and Asking	18 min
Action Steps/Prayer	5 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 35

Session 3: Building Authentic Relationships

Introduction and Accountability	5 min
Video Part 1: Cultivating Authenticity	15 min
Debrief	5 min

Video Part 2: Demo: Telling Authentic Stories	3 min
Debrief	10 min
Peer Exercise: Catalyzing Authenticity	18 min
Action Steps/Prayer	5 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 41

Follow-Up Weekly Session

Session 4: The Covenant Life

Introduction and Accountability	5 min
Video Part 1: Healthy Accountability & Effective Questions	13 min
Debrief	7 min
Video Part 2: Demo: What to Do When We Don't Measure Up	8 min
Debrief	6 min
Peer Exercise: Asking Accountability Questions	18 min
Action Steps/Prayer	3 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 47

Session 5: Aiming for the Mark-Change Goals

Introduction and Accountability	2 min
Video Part 1: The Power of Goals and SMART Goal Demo	16 min
Debrief	10 min
Peer Exercise: Developing SMART Goals	23 min
Debrief	5 min
Action Steps/Prayer	5 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 53

Session 6: Taking Action

Introduction and Accountability	5 min
Video Part 1: Turning Goals into Action Steps and Nailing Down a Step	12 min
Debrief	8 min
Video Part 2: Progress Report	4 min
Debrief	7 min
Peer Exercise: Coaching Action Steps	20 Min
Action Steps/Prayer	5 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 59

Session 7: Coaching Your Peer

Introduction and Accountability	5 min
Video Part 1: Problem-Solving the Coaching Way and Gather More Info	11 min
Debrief	7 min
Video Part 2: Five Options Technique	6 min
Debrief	7 min
Peer Exercise: Creative Problem-Solving	20 min
Action Steps/Prayer	5 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 65

Session 8: Energy for Change

Introduction and Accountability	5 min
Video Part 1: A Little Change Theory and Demo: Naming Identity	12 min
Debrief	6 min
Video Part 2: Expressing Belief and Celebrating Progress	6 min
Debrief	8 min
Peer Exercise: Affirmation	18 min
Wrap-Up/Action Steps/Prayer	5 min

Adapted from *Peer Coaching Facilitator Handbook*, p. 7

APPENDIX C

NORWALK SDA CHURCH NCD PROFILE PLUS SURVEY 2019



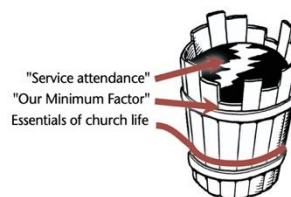
NCD Profile *plus*

Quality Characteristic Analysis & Trends
for the Natural Church Development Journey of

Norwalk SDA Church

Apr-19

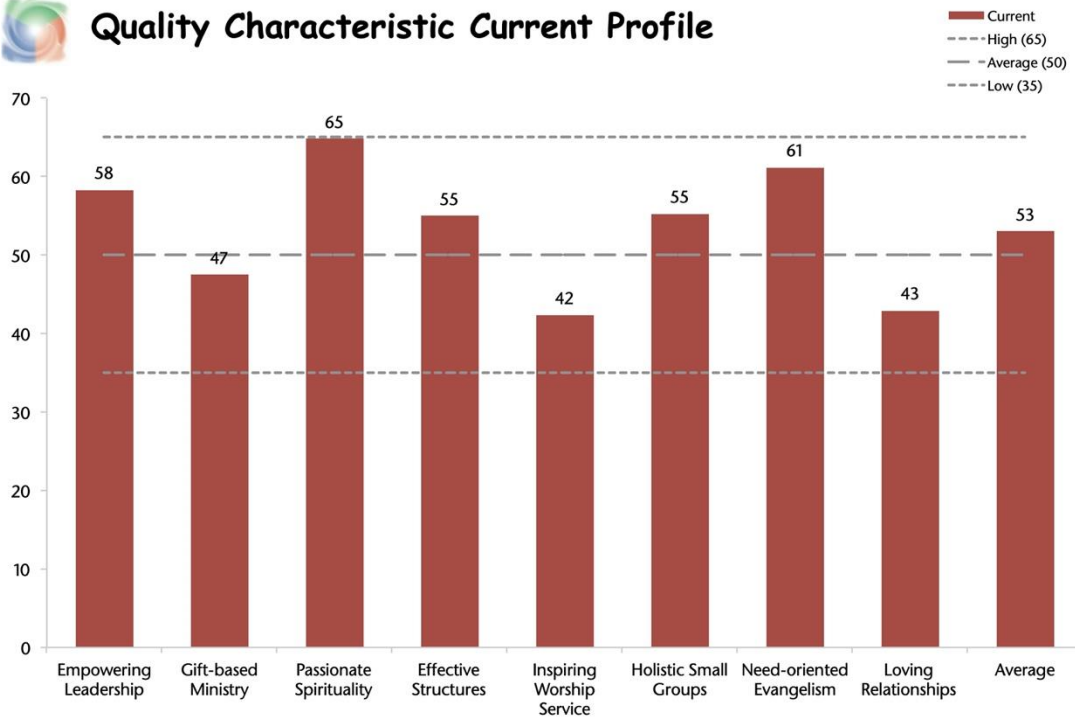
Pastor for 4 years: John Strehle



Profile	Date	Minimum Factor	Maximum Factor	Min - Max Difference	Average
3	Apr-19	42 Inspiring worship service	65 Passionate spirituality	23	53
				Change 2 - 3	+6
2	Mar-16	36 Inspiring worship service	52 Empowering leadership	16	47
				Change 1 - 2	-1
1	Apr-14	35 Loving relationships	57 Passionate spirituality	22	48

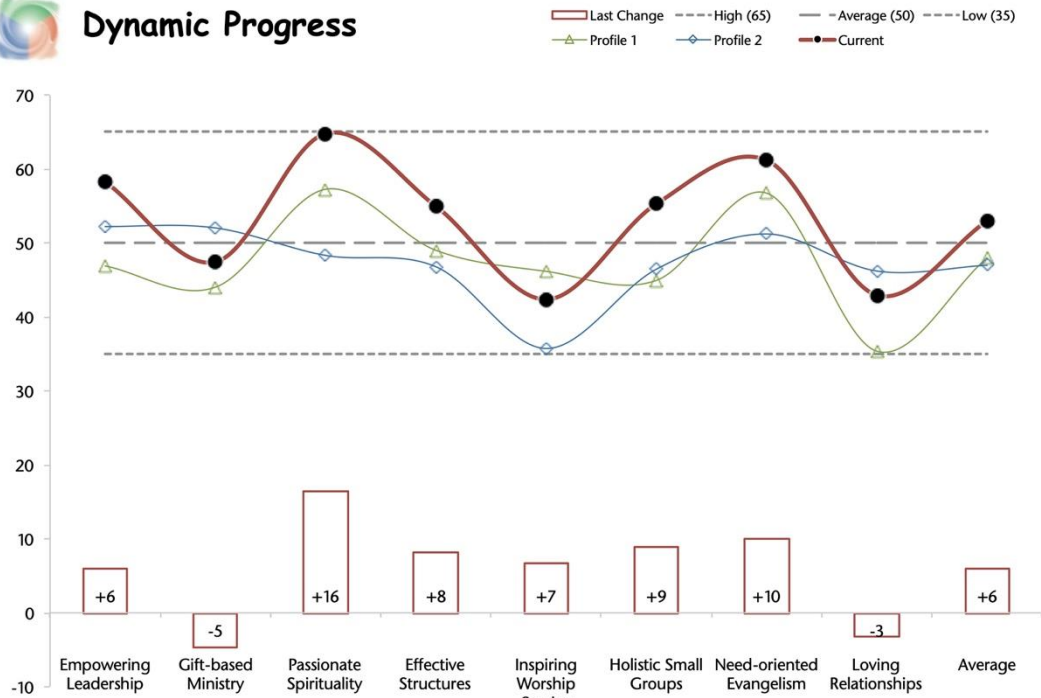


Quality Characteristic Current Profile



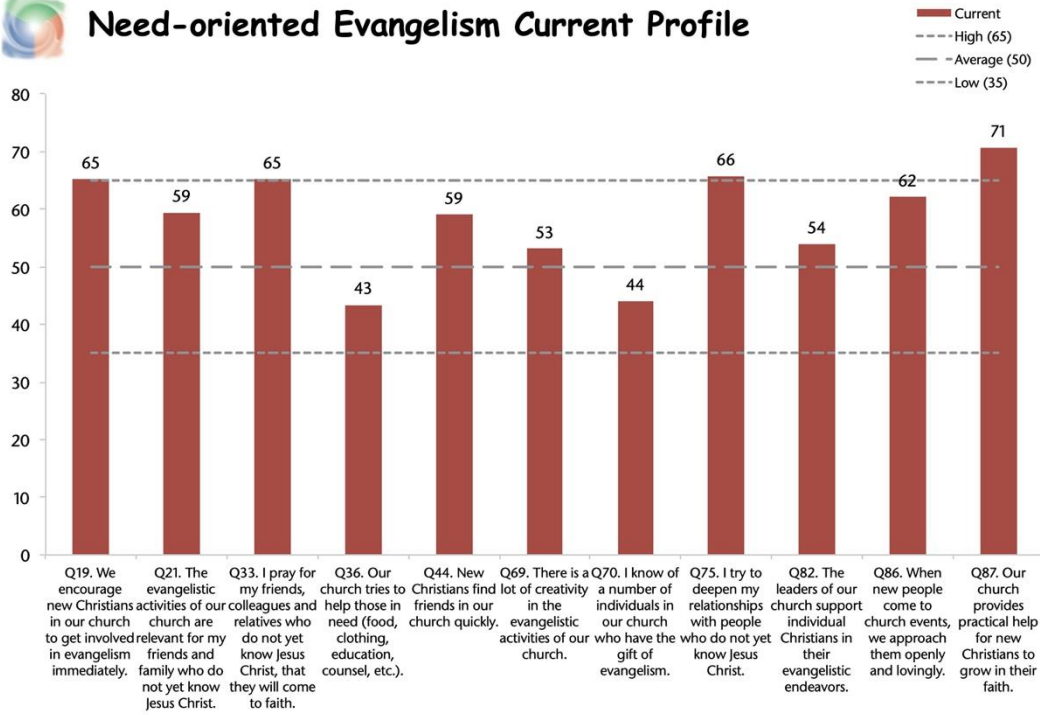


Dynamic Progress



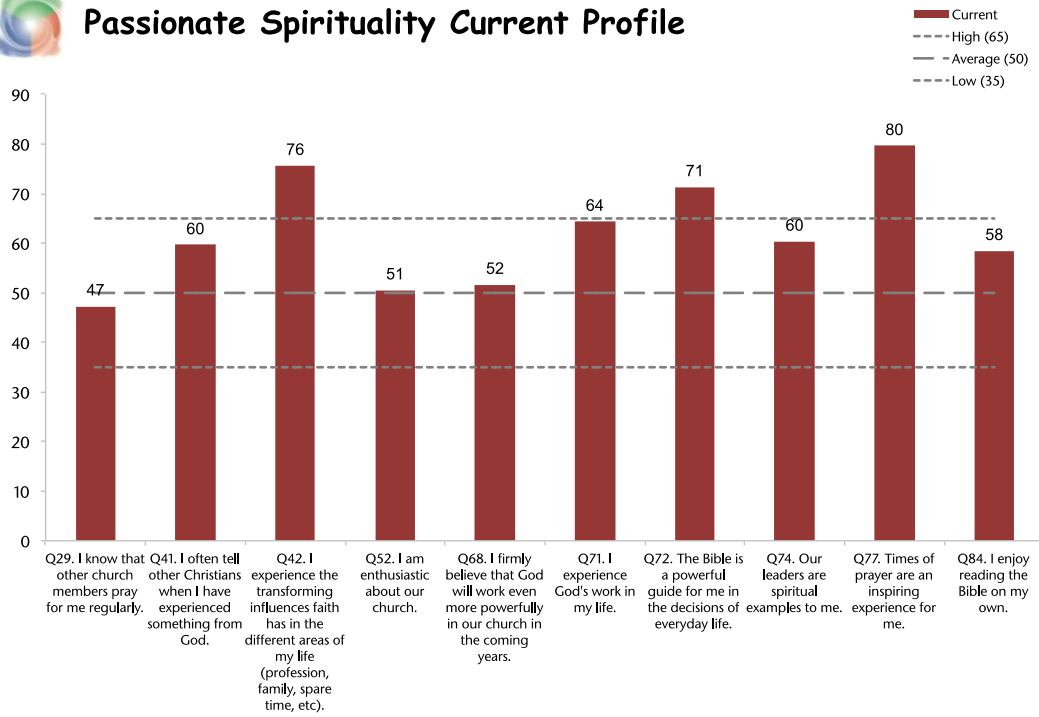


Need-oriented Evangelism Current Profile



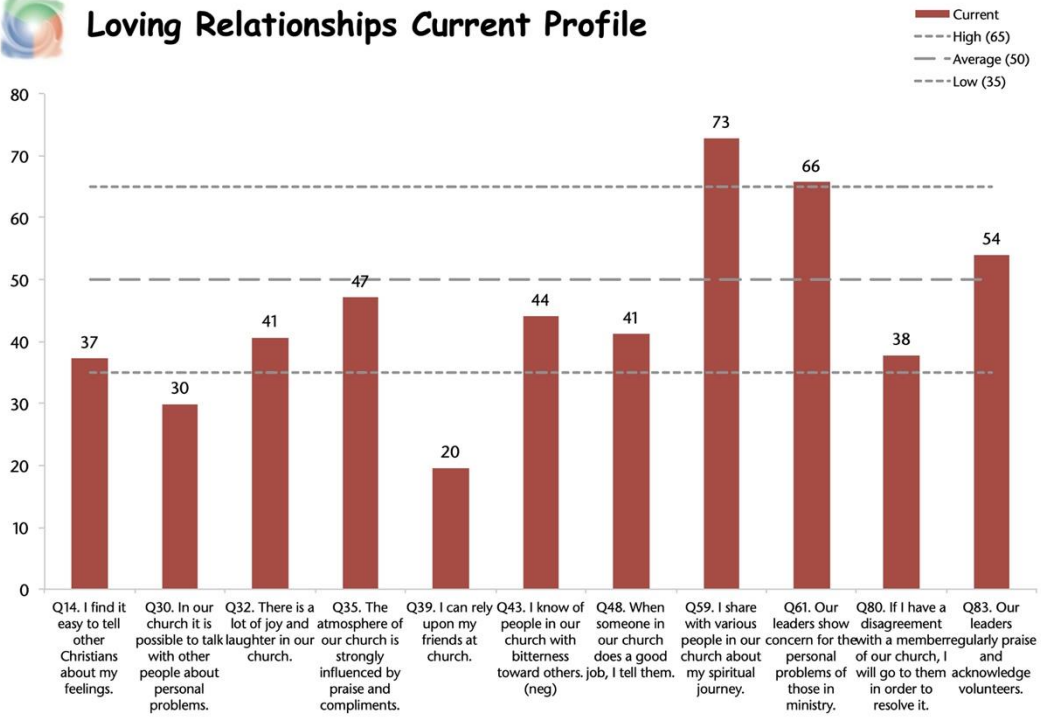


Passionate Spirituality Current Profile





Loving Relationships Current Profile

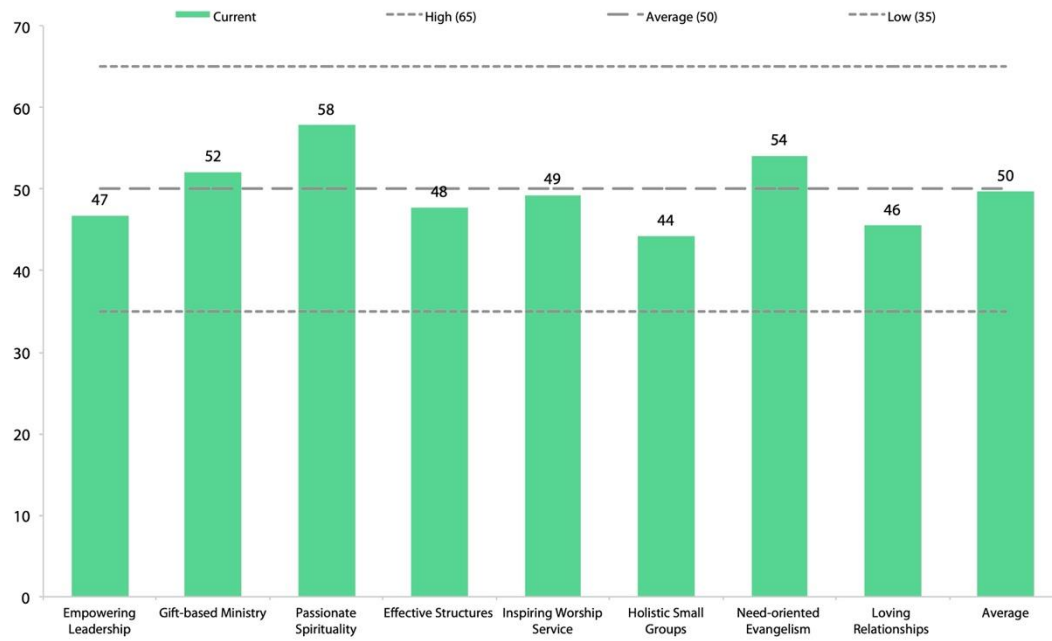


APPENDIX D

NAD NCD SURVEY RESULTS

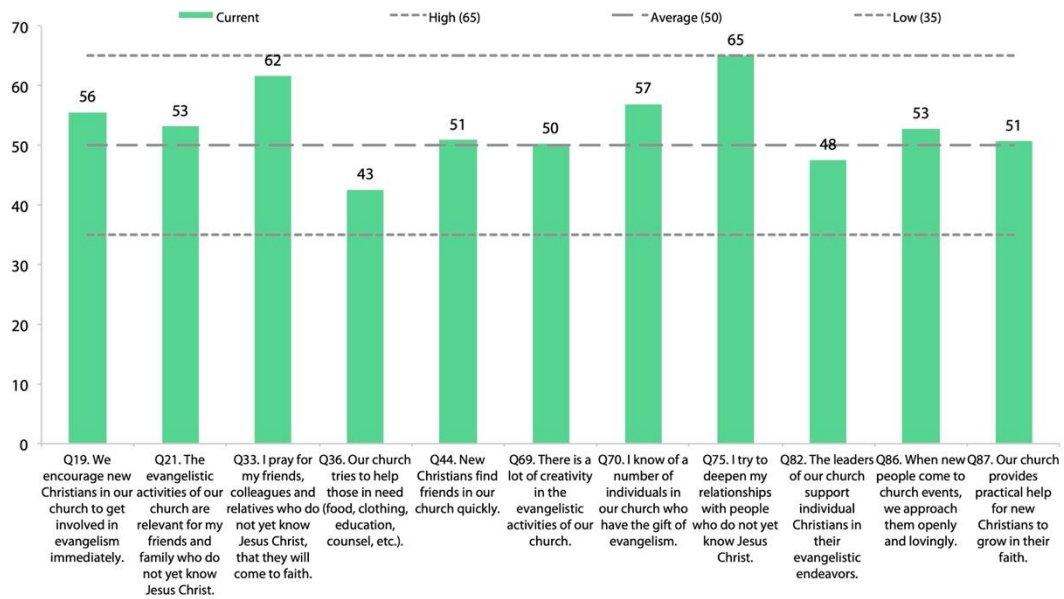


Quality characteristic current profile



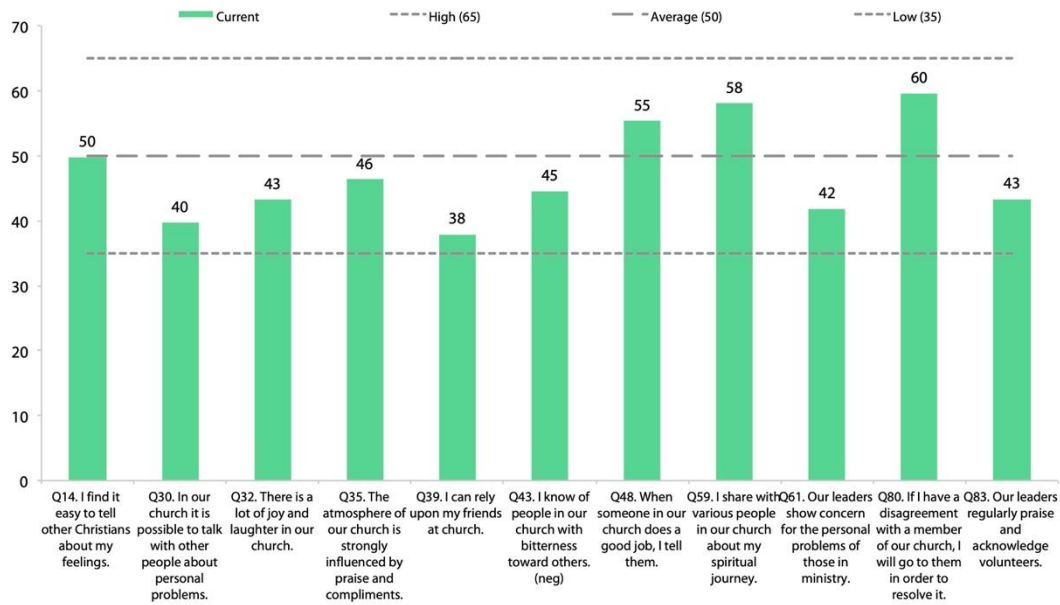


Need-oriented Evangelism Current Profile





Loving Relationships Current Profile

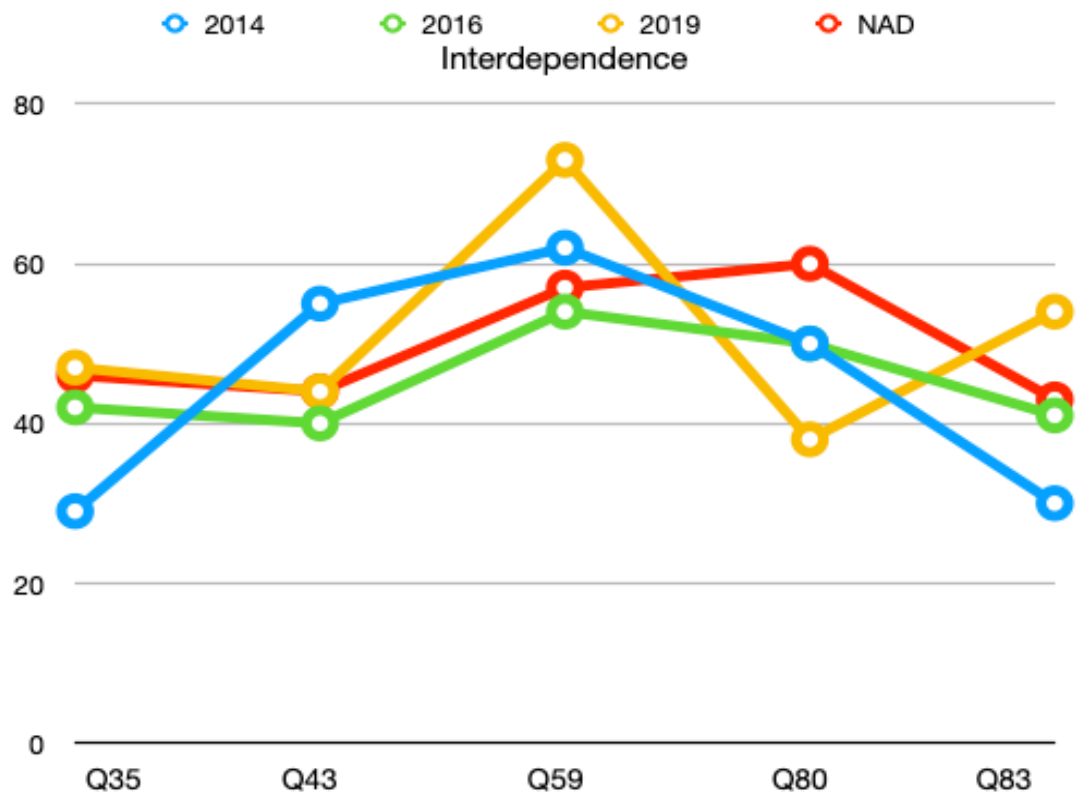


APPENDIX E

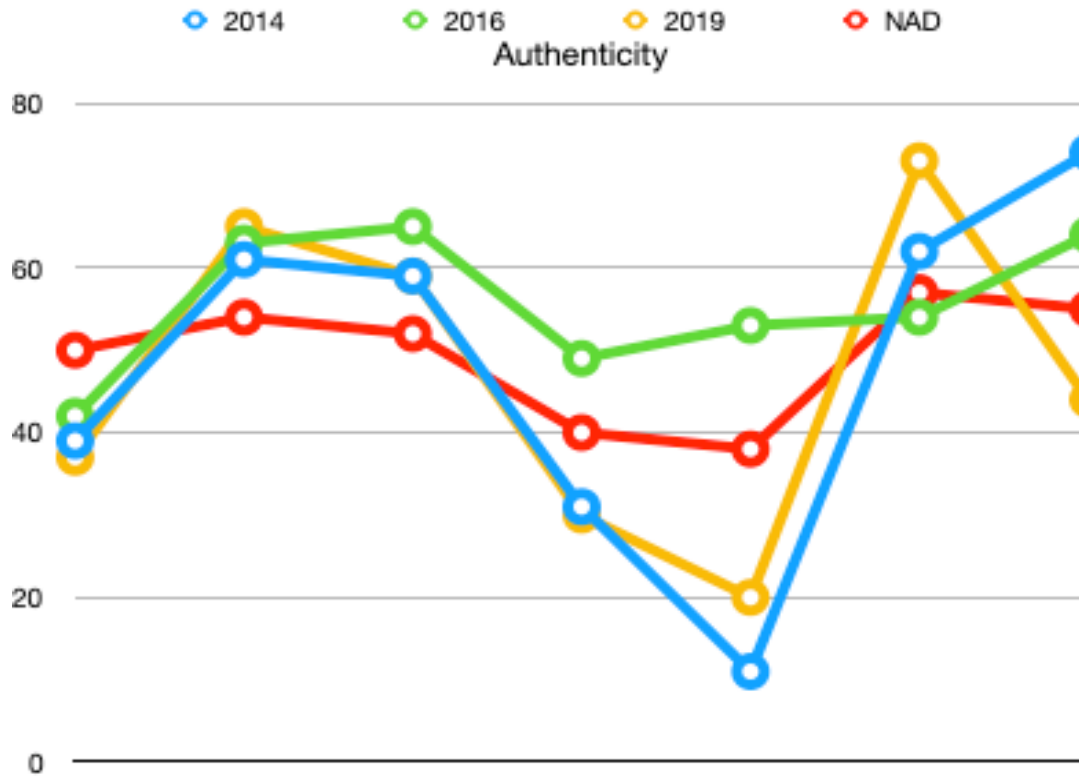
COMPARING NORWALK SDA CHURCH NCD SURVEY WITH NAD NCD SURVEY FOR INTERDEPENDENCE AND AUTHENTICITY

Interdependence	2014	2016	2019	NAD (2008-2018) 970 SDA Profiles	NCD 8 Qualities
Q35: The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments	29	42	47	46	Loving Relationships (LR)
Q43: I know of people in our church with bitterness toward others. (neg)	55	40	44	44	LR
Q59: I share with various people in our church about my spiritual journey.	62	54	73	57	LR
Q80: If I have a disagreement with a member of our church, I will go to them in order to resolve it.	50	50	38	60	LR
Q83: Our leaders regularly praise and acknowledge volunteers.	30	41	54	43	LR

Authenticity	2014	2016	2019	NAD (2008-2018) 970 SDA Profiles	NCD 8 Qualities
Q14: I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings.	39	42	37	50	LR
Q19: We encourage new Christians in our church to get involved in evangelism immediately.	61	63	65	54	Need-oriented Evangelism (NOE)
Q21: The evangelistic activities of our church are relevant for my friends and family who do not yet know Jesus Christ.	59	65	59	52	NOE
Q30: In our church it is possible to talk with other people about personal problems.	31	49	30	40	LR
Q39: I can rely upon my friends at church.	11	53	20	38	LR
Q59: I share with various people in our church about my spiritual journey.	62	54	73	57	LR
Q70: I know of a number of individuals in our church who have the gift of evangelism.	74	64	44	55	NOE



Q35: The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments	Q43: I know of people in our church with bitterness toward others. (neg)	Q59: I share with various people in our church about my spiritual journey.	Q80: If I have a disagreement with a member of our church, I will go to them in order to resolve it.	Q83: Our leaders regularly praise and acknowledge volunteers.
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Q14: I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings.	Q19: We encourage new Christians in our church to get involved in evangelism immediately.	Q21: The evangelistic activities of our church are relevant for my friends and family who do not yet know Jesus Christ.	Q30: In our church it is possible to talk with other people about personal problems.	Q39: I can rely upon my friends at church.	Q59: I share with various people in our church about my spiritual journey.	Q70: I know of a number of individuals in our church who have the gift of evangelism.
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APPENDIX F

SERMON SERIES

Sermon One Outline: Building Blocks of Community

Jan 26, 2019

Outline

Opening Prayer

Introduction

Acts 13:1-2

- a) “Ministered to the Lord” is about worship.
- b) What does worship look like?
- c) This team of disciples gathered to recognizing the Holy Spirit’s leading and empowered them as a family to go forth and witness.

Body

Saul

- What was God’s desire for Saul?
- Acts 1:8 God desires that they would receive the Holy Spirit.
- By the Holy Spirit’s leading share their life, gifts, talents to empower others.
- This sets the tone for the disciples here in the first Century as described in Acts 1:8.
- Acts 1:9-11. We get caught in our present situation and forget the mission.
- E.g. Dog waiting for his master
- God’s purpose and His testimony is fulfilled in the community.
- Saul acknowledged God, and received Jesus’ authority into His life in Acts 9 at his conversion. God chose to intercede with the community. He used the value of his friends journeying with him, and Ananias (Acts 9). As the Trinity is a partnership with God-Father, God-The Son, God-Holy Spirit, so we are in a partnership with them. We each other as we serve together in the mission of God.
- Ellen White states, “The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ’s service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men. (COL 328.2)
- “I am because of the I am.”
- 1 Cor. 12:7 The community needs what you bring to the family.

- What God gives is not limited to the four walls of the church. Paul took to heart Acts 1:8 and realized that reaching the world required a ministry team.
- 1 Cor 12:11; Eph 4:7
- Luke 4:1-13 Satan attacks us the same way He attacked God in the Wilderness. Christ was tempted to prove who He was; He was tempted to Protect Himself from pain; he was tempted to Provide for Himself instead of trusting in His Father.
- If Satan attacked Christ's identity, then would he not do the same to us individually and as a church.
- Acts 2:17 Peter is quoting Joel 2:28-32 to build awareness of our dependence in Christ, and interdependence.
- Interdependence is when a person inclines a trust in God, and respect in the value of people together sharing their influence with one another to fulfill Jesus' calling or purpose in their lives.
- 2 Cor. 4:6,7 As shared earlier Paul experienced this light at His conversion in Acts 9, and it came by Divine interventions, and through companions along the journey.
 - Acts 9: 3-10, 13-18 "Ananias" --Paul experienced this reality. Paul was not alone, but had his traveling partners (v.7) and Ananias.
 - Personal Story: I needed to be willing to trust God to work through community to share His love with me in a difficult time in my life.
 - We can see people as obstacles, but God called His church. Thus, His people should be building blocks.
 - God used the community around him to open the door. Paul is not a lone ranger without God or without community. Yet, it is in Christ and in community that Paul found Authenticity. A building block of community.
 - **Authenticity:** is a journey of vulnerability and willing submission to Christ who is willing to walk with people to find their truest identity.
 - Ananias did not bring sight to Paul it was God who had the power, and it shined through Ananias.
 - These values are planted like seeds over the 1,500 miles the disciples put on their sandals in Southeast Asia Minor as we see Paul, Barnabas and John Mark begin the first missionary journey in Acts 13:3
- "God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work." (White, AA, p. 163).
- Will we partner with God?
- Our identity is shaped by the Savior who clothes us with His robe of acceptance, and Jesus pulls up a chair at His table for you and I, if you are willing, to sit.

Thus, in Acts 13:43,48 we see blossoms of the building blocks of authenticity through interdependence in Christ and in community.

- Can we blossom in interdependence and authenticity in seeing God use community to call out our truest identity in Christ? Will we hold one another's heart?

Conclusion

- We can grow as a community in the authenticity of who God called us to be by the value of interdependence. A community trusts God and is willing to use His gifts in each of us to enrich the family atmosphere. Perhaps you are longing for a deeper friendship? Join us [This Feb] to kick off Peer Coach Training, followed by a five-week experience in relationship building!
- In this seminar, you will match up with a peer partner and begin meeting each week to share your lives, pray together and help each other grow in Christ. Along the way, you'll learn coaching skills like asking powerful questions, developing growth goals, and more. Contact Pastor John Strehle 562-863-6156 or norwalkcreations@gmail.com for more information and to reserve your spot.

Sermon Two Outline: Co-Operate with the Devine

Feb 9, 2019

Outline

Recap of Journey 1

- a) Paul's conversion was the manifestation of the building blocks of community (Acts 9).
- b) Paul in his first missionary journey to South East Asia Minor walks with Authenticity through interdependence
- c) Eph 3:5-11
- d) "Paul's labors at Antioch, in association with Barnabas, strengthened him in his conviction that the Lord had called him to do a special work for the Gentile world" (White, AA, p. 159)

Introduction

- e) God is calling each of us to Co-Operate with the Divine.
- f) Story: Yolanda Clarke a church organist from Brooklyn who thought her presence is a testament to the power of God to help African Americans. Adventists, like Jesus, should actively engage in the world around us. This is the message that Clarke wants to convey 2015 to fellow Seventh-day Adventists as the United States celebrates Black History Month in February:
 - She said, "I would stress two things," she said in an interview. "First, we as African Americans need to remember that the only thing that has helped us as a people to survive and prosper in America is God's unchanging hand. It has been our relationship with God that has gotten us through.
 - "And No. 2, we as Adventists are too withdrawn from what's happening around us. We must change that. Jesus was among the people — that's where His ministry was. And so, we also need to be a part of what's going on. That's the only way our light will shine." (<https://adventistreview.org/news/whos-that-adventist-woman-beside-martin-luther-king-jr/>)
 - "This was in harmony with the gospel plan of uniting in one body all believers in Christ, and this plan Paul was careful to follow throughout his ministry. . The Christians were thus taught to help one another, remembering the promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20 (White, AA, p. 185)

BODY:

- g) Acts 16:11-15 Church Established
- h) Paul goes to Philippi and finds a woman. A church planted in Philippi.
- i) "Wickedness is reaching a height never before attained. . . But God's faithful messengers. . . are to advance fearlessly and victoriously, never ceasing their warfare until every soul within their reach shall have received the message of truth for this time." (White, AA, p. 220)
- j) Phil 1: 21.
- k) They shared their influence with one another to fulfill Jesus' calling or purpose in their lives.
- l) Acts 16:25 – Paul and Silas trusting in God assurance during persecution
- m) Paul's witness in *Berea* (17:10–15).
- n) After, Paul shared the message to His Jewish brethren, some responded to the unifying Salvation of Christ, others did not. Paul, had to leave Berea, even so God used Paul to plant seeds and for Timothy and Silas to water them, because it is God who works the growth. (Acts 17:15).
- o) 1Cor. 3:6 "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."
- p) To the church In Corinth (Read Acts 18:1-4)
- q) Aquila and Priscilla
- r) A missionary team was being prepared to produce other missionaries.
- s) Acts 18: 18,19
- t) God opened the eyes of Paul and affirmed him that God has a people to spread this message.
- u) Earlier Paul was reminded by God in Acts 18:9-10 that he once was blind, but now he can see.
- v) "Before his conversion he had been confident in a hereditary piety, a false hope. His faith had not been anchored in Christ; he had trust instead in forms and ceremonies. His zeal for the law had been disconnected from faith in Christ and was of no avail. While boasting that he was blameless in the performance of the deeds of the law, he had refused the One who made the law of value. (White, AA, p. 228)

Conclusion

- w) "Paul set forth the great truth of human brotherhood, declaring that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of earth.' In the sight of God all are on an equality, and to the Creator every human being owes supreme allegiance. . . . 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being,' he [a local poet of their time] declared. (White, AA, p. 238)
- x) We find who we are in Christ, as Paul did, and we are ambassadors as Barnabas was to guide others to their calling in Christ.
- y) Paul's mission broke down prejudices and segregation, and encouraged the believers of God to take action as they Co-operate with the Divine

Invitation

- bb) How do we Co-operate with God, and walk alongside others as Children of God? How do we help our teenagers find their identity in Christ? How do we show our spouses we value them as a person? So, it is through these building blocks of authenticity and community of interdependence.
- cc) Perhaps you are longing for a meaningful relationship? Join us on Feb 16 to kick off Peer Coach Training, followed by a five-week experience in relationship building! In this seminar, you will match up with a peer partner and begin meeting each week to share your lives, pray together and help each other grow in Christ.
- dd) Along the way, you'll learn coaching skills like asking powerful questions, developing growth goals, and more. I don't know where this will take you, but I know it will change you if you are willing to trust God to refine you in the process. So Let's Co-operate with the Devine in expanding our influence for Christ.
- ee) Contact Pastor John Strehle 562-863-6156 or norwalkcreations@gmail.com for more information and reserve your spot.

Sermon Three Outline: Coaching Them to Take the Call of God

Feb 16, 2019

Outline

Recap Summary

- a) Sermon 1: Through a step of vulnerability, God revealed to Paul's heart identity and the value of community to partner with God. People's value and influence are a great resource to aiding one another to fulfill Jesus' calling.
- b) Sermon 2: Let's Co-operate with the Devine in expanding our influence for Christ. He empowered others to make missionary disciples--Aquila, Priscilla, Apollos.
- c) Missionary 3: It is not by a man that salvation comes, but through God and the power of the Holy Spirit. People are called into their truest, deepest identity by recognizing God's work in the community, a holy light. He coached them to lead people to build followers that build disciple missionaries.

Introduction

- d) Story: We only have as parents limited time with our kids before college. How are we planning, engaging, affirming, and mobilizing people today?

Body

- e) Paul's Third Missionary Journey - He goes back through a second time in Ephesus
- f) Acts 20: 17-38
- g) Two years prior Paul planted a school with Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-9).
- h) Paul met with them to ground them in the assurance of God, and that God is always in community.
- i) We are going to train missionaries to train missionaries...
- j) Acts 20: 17-21
- k) Paul as a mentor/coach reminds the Elders they are a living testimony for Christ.
- l) Paul accepted Christ, he received the Holy Spirit's refining fire, and he served God.
- m) "The natural life is preserved moment by moment by the divine power; yet it is not sustained by a direct miracle, but through the use of blessings placed within our reach. So the spiritual life is sustained by the use of those means that Providence has supplied. (White, AA, p. 284)
- n) *When we find our truest identity in Christ, and walk in that hope, then it stirs in the heart service.*
- o) Acts 20:22

- p) We are drawn by the supernatural calling of the Holy Spirit that God endorsed.
- q) Acts 20:25-28
- r) Jesus is “the good Shepherd,” John 10:11
 - 1Pet 2:24-25
 - The true shepherd knows no dividing line, no factions, loves every sheep, especially the weak and the needy. The lambs as well as the sheep—how often these are neglected! Paul is coaching them to continue to be ready to embrace "all of the flock".
- s) Acts 20:29-32
- t) The Message in the Word is able to do two things: 1) to build us up spiritually in this life, and 2) to give us the inheritance in the life to come.
 - Rom 1:16
 - Titus 3:7
- u) E.g. When one makes a photocopy from another photocopy the quality is slightly reduced. Every new copy contains all the flaws of the previous, and adds its own unique blemishes. The solution is to make all our copies directly from the master Himself.
- v) If a disciple learns to live their life a certain way just to please the one who they are following/apprenticing, their Christian life will not reflect the power of the Lord, nor will it last through the long haul.
- w) Acts 20:32 - "Sanctified"
- x) 1 Pet 1:16; Lev 19:2
- y) We are to be holy in all that we do. We are to become more and more like our Lord, and we are to live as He lives. His holiness should increasingly replace our natural character of lust and evil appetites. A spiritual transformation needs to occur, which displaces our sin nature by His character of holiness. He longs to donate a new heart to us.

Conclusion

- z) Paul was coached by God in learning the building blocks of community through authenticity and interdependence. Even a flock of geese apply these building blocks.

“The entire flock gains more than seventy-percent greater flying range than one goose flying alone. From time to time, the lead goose falls back from the point position, and another assumes the lead without breaking the formation. Every goose takes the lead during a long migratory flight. Each contributes his or her unique talents to the overall effectiveness of the flock. It should also be noted that the geese who are following honk to encourage the one leading” (Toler and Gilbert, 2013, p. 19).
- aa) Join me in learning better how like Paul following the example of Christ, who coached him, and Paul coached others in nurturing these building blocks of finding our truest, deepest identity in Christ through the Church family. Jesus built us to shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt 5:16).

Invitation

- bb) Today kicks off Peer Coach Training, followed by a five-week experience in relationship building! In this seminar, you will match up with a peer partner and begin meeting each week to share your lives, pray together and help each other grow in Christ.
- cc) Along the way, you'll learn coaching skills like asking powerful questions, developing growth goals, and more. I don't know where this will take you, but I know it will change you if you are willing to trust God to refine you His calling in the process. So Let's Co-operate with the Devine in expanding our influence for Christ.
- dd) Join us across the room to begin the kickoff today 1:30 pm.

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Education:

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2008 Certification as a Christian Life Coach (NADEI, CoachNet)

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2002-2004 Bachelors in Christian Leadership, Azusa Pacific University

1996-1998 Associate in Physical Therapy, Loma Linda University
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2012 Ordained Minister

Experience:

2021- Lead Pastor of the Camarillo Seventh-day Adventist Church (Camarillo, CA)

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2008-2014 Natural Church Development Coordinator for Wisconsin Conference

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