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Wholistic Stewardship Revitalization Strategy at Pueblo First Seventh-day Adventist Church Rocky Mountain Conference

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ABSTRACT

WHOLISTIC STEWARDSHIP REVITALIZATION STRATEGY
AT PUEBLO FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

by

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Adviser: Tom Evans

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Title: WHOLISTIC STEWARDSHIP REVITALIZATION STRATEGY AT PUEBLO
FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ROCKY MOUNTAIN
CONFERENCE

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Problem

During the last decade, I observed, in my role as pastor and director, that many
churches were overcome with a low level of members-involvement throughout the
Conferences I served, especially in the current local churches I pastor, reflected in
spiritual discouragement, indifference, and apathy. Upon closer observation of the Pueblo
First local church members' relationship and collaboration, I found that only the worship
service and two Bible study groups were functioning, with about a dozen individuals in
total attending. Some other ministries were also functioning, like the ACS and ACS
Disaster Relief, in addition to the church building and grounds upkeep.

The local church board accepted a policy that they could function without a board majority because, as they excused themselves: "Anyway, nothing is happening." Subjectively speaking, I had observed that the major underlying issue for the state of the local church at that time was distrust based on past hurts, which the leaders and members also expressed. This led to dysfunction in the leadership team and a low commitment level. The leaders offered the following remarks: "We have a history," "It is hard to move on, after…," "I will not come back until … are present," and similar comments. One of the main issues the church faced was lack of trust and forgiveness. In addition, the church leadership and the congregation had no vision for church growth and its future and, as they stated, they were not directed to have one.

Burrill's (1996) ascertainment that "the problem of Seventh-day Adventist Church today is that too many members believe the doctrines but have never really given themselves in total allegiance to the Lordship of Christ in their lives" (p. 120) was tangible in almost every congregation. This state of mind and spirit of the church members needed revitalization and new investment in God's economy through the lives of the church leaders and in the lives of all the believers. The church leaders lacked the abilities and tools to bring forward any change and renewal in the church environment; hence I as local pastor, had to engage in leadership empowerment through coaching and by using wholistic stewardship principles.

Method

This research was assessed with a clear goal of measuring the impact that coaching church leaders for revitalization would have on the local church leaders' quality of leadership and engagement with the broader church community for increasing church

attendance and loving relationships. The volunteer leaders received the book, *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way you Lead Forever* by Stanier (2016). I coached them and trained the other individual ministry leaders simultaneously. Besides my qualitative assessment of the local church leaders using the 3 Colors of Leadership® Empowerment Test® to determine the leader's influence tendency, an additional qualitative and quantitative assessment of the congregation through the Natural Church Development (NCD) Survey® and GALLUP® Member Engagement Test® ME25® comparison showed the effectiveness of the empowerment coaching method. In addition, I have developed the phrase "steward coaching," which is similar to Stanier's "empowerment coaching" (2016) in apparent vulnerability of the coach, in feeling the lack of usefulness and conversational control. The Lordship of the Godhead and the recognition of Their ultimate will are the main differences, so the coaching process becomes a walk along with the coachee as he or she discovers how to find and listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Webb, 2015).

Results

The research verified that coaching local church leaders helped qualitatively improve their spiritual maturity, resolve personal issues that were disabling them from functioning as spiritual leaders, and consequently, empower them to lead and coach others. It categorically proved that the leaders could complete the renewal and revitalization process during the COVID-19 pandemic by using innovative methods of communication for coaching and training. By empowering the coachees, they could find new methods outside the traditional church function to organize associates and church members to function and grow ministries, participation, and church attendance.

COVID-19 affected in-person church attendance due to national and state lockdowns; however, through empowerment coaching and leadership, the church leaders' entrepreneurial spirit, new approaches, and methods were implemented to regain overall attendance, grow it, and expand member-involvement. In addition, the leaders' influence tendency according to the 3 Colors of Leadership® Empowerment Test®, was overwhelmingly empowering since, except for one individual, all of them had natural empowering leadership skills. I found that the leaders' predisposition also contributed to successful church revitalization.

Conclusions

Coaching local church leaders proved to be a multifaceted tool for healing the leaders that can heal and grow members and increase the churches' ability to revitalize and grow qualitatively and quantitatively. Besides the anticipated findings based on the literature review, I found that in most cases, the church leaders could not function as empowering leaders due to unresolved spiritual, personal, relational, and professional issues. Once these issues were addressed, the leaders' readiness and enthusiasm for addressing church-related ideas grew exponentially. These findings behoove church revitalizers, pastors, administrations, and even seminaries to pay closer attention to a wholistic approach to local church leaders' empowerment, not only to a methodology for the quantitative outcome of any initiative or program. Furthermore, the church organizations, administration, and educational institutions alike must provide a wholistic approach to church leadership and ministry equality in caring for the leaders and the

quantitative outcome. As much as the local church needs a pastor-revitalizer, lasting

results, and health, it will happen if its local leaders are empowered and trained to be

steward coaches.

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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AT PUEBLO FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
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A Professional Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

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August 2022

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Based on their study between 2000 and 2020, Barna Group (2021) indicated that

the number of practicing Christians has dropped from 45% to 25%. According to the

same study, the weekly attendance dropped from 42% to 29% during the same period. In

GALLUP's® 2021 study, Jones (2021) argued that for the first time since the founding of

the United States, church membership has fallen under half of the population to 47%. The

Lifeway Research (2019) report summarized that 70% of the evangelical churches in the

United States were either subtracting (declining) members or were plateauing. The study

found that only 30% of the churches were adding membership, and of these, only 7%

qualified to be reproducing and 0% were multiplying. Other studies and church

revitalization authors like Croft (2016), Henard (2015), Malphurs (2013), Malphurs and

Penfold (2014), Olson (2008), Reeder (2008), and Stetzer and Dodson (2007) have

pointed out the grave necessity of church revitalization based on the fact that 70-80% of

North American churches are stagnant and are declining, and 3,500 to 4,000 churches are

closing yearly.

The COVID-19 epidemic that reached the United States of America in March of

2020 and paralyzed the country numbed the social, educational, and religious

organizations and further decreased the number of in-person attendance and engagement

in the church setting. Brenan's GALLUP® research from May 2021 suggests that

religious attendance throughout the religious horizon dropped to its lowest since the beginning of data collection in 1939. The research shows that at the beginning of the pandemic, in-person attendance had dropped to a mere 3% (May 2020), while at the same time, the number of those who joined the services remotely increased to 28%. However, this number did not exceed 31% in total. The study further pointed out that as of May 2021, the in-person numbers had not recovered. The in-person attendance was only 20%, an all-time low. While the combined numbers might indicate that attendance generally did not change from the yearly average before the pandemic (34%), member-disconnect and church ministries engagement have dramatically decreased (Brenan, 2021).

All this negative change happened in and with the Christian denominations (Ogunwole, Rabe, Roberts, & Caplan, 2021) while, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the populations increased by 17.1%. Christian churches did not only fail to keep up with the rising population by fulfilling the great commission, but also noticeably declined quantitatively and qualitatively (Dickerson, 2013; Surratt, 2009; Whitesel, 2004). The issue is even more perilous if we consider the study done by Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1994) who researched the trends in the church from the 1960s and discovered that the stagnation and decline of the churches were genuine; however, no attention was given to remedy the situation except for an emphasis on quantitative church growth.

According to Burrill's study, the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the turn of the century matched up with these numbers, having 80-85% of the churches plateauing or declining (Burrill, 2004). These numbers are alarming for Seventh-day Adventists as well as the whole Christian community. A different, radical, and wholistic approach is necessary to turn the tide. Church revitalization and renewal happen if qualitative

changes are introduced in the believers lives to bring quantitative and tangible results. This research offers a solution to this problem through wholistic stewardship. Stetzer and Dodson (2007) explained: "Revitalization is not just about evangelism; it's also a stewardship issue" (p. 34).

Could wholistic stewardship be the foundation for a successful revitalization of local churches based on individual healing and maturing? Is wholistic stewardship's profoundly spiritual and relational nature the solution for the church's crisis (Hall, 1990; Rodin, 2000, 2010; Vallet, 2001)?

This chapter aims to portray the challenges the local church is facing in its decline and death slumber. The ministry setting is presented as the context for the research. The project is detailed, and the problem is outlined. The process of the project is presented exhaustively while setting delimitations for the whole plan.

Chapter 2 encompasses a thoughtful OT and NT theological reflection on the subject, followed by a relevant literature review explaining the appropriate solutions in chapter 3. The next chapter lists and lays out the details for implementing the initiative via ten progressive steps to revitalize the local church by engaging in empowerment coaching of the volunteer church leaders. The fifth chapter contains the narrative of the project implementation, while the last chapter incorporates the benefits, lessons, and recommendations I found. In addition, definitions of terms and phrases are also provided.

Description of the Ministry Context

Pueblo First Seventh-day Adventist Church (PSDA) of the Rocky Mountain Conference (RMC) was established in 1889 as the first Adventist church in southwestern Colorado. In 1919 the church started the Daystar Christian School for their children,

based on Adventist education principles. Around 1920, due to remarkable growth, the church multiplied, and Pueblo Second (later called Clermont Church) was organized in the downtown area. Pueblo West was the congregation's next target for further growth, and in 2001, a new church was organized. Guided by a strong mission spirit in 2014, PSDA has started a low-power FM radio station—Hope Radio—that covers the whole city and beyond with the Advent message. The mother church for both of these church plants and organizations was PSDA; however, PSDA, through the years, weakened in vision, attendance, and funds, and so did the church plants and the organizations.

Today, Clermont still exists with a few members who occasionally have worship services, while Pueblo West, after over a decade of existence, ended in 2014. The Daystar Christian School closed its doors for the first time in 2013. After a great effort, it reopened in 2015, but closed down again after four years. Furthermore, the retention of the newly baptized members in the last decade, according to a tally by e-Adventist, was just over 13% (77 were baptized but only 18 were still involved), including one group who was unable to attend for health reasons but still supported the church, and another group who attended the church at least once a quarter. Before moving to Pueblo on May 1,2019, I worked as a pastor, church planter, and stewardship director in the Greater New York Conference. I accepted the call to revitalize the church by implementing the theology, methods, and concepts of revitalization found in the Bible and in Christian literature. Although the history and previous growth and achievements of the church were impressive, the reality of the ministry setting could not be further from the past glory. The previous pastor retired and left a vacuum in leadership. For over six months, the church board hardly functioned and only attended to essential issues. More than half of

the leadership team, including elders and ministry leaders, resigned following my arrival, claiming they were "voluntold" and never asked to serve. The Hope Radio president resigned, and the Day Star school's principal decided to move just before my arrival. The worship service attendance was about 40-50 members out of 298 on the membership list.

The local church leaders sounded their utter dissatisfaction with the positions they filled. "I was voluntold" was one of the main complaints I received from them. There were complaints such as the following: "This is not my cup of tea," "I am not a leader," "My gifts are not in this ministry," "I was never trained," and "I don't know what I'm supposed to do." Others also complained that they held too many ministries and felt burned out, so they just resigned.

Pueblo First was in the category that Ross (2013) called the disintegrating church. From personal conversations with people and observations, I sensed the church had a deficient commitment level, with a high level of indifference to any ministry and deep apathy in most members' spiritual lives. The spiritual crisis, relational predicament, and emotional hurts had metastasized and brought the church body to its death bed. No attempts were made and no honest church health evaluation such as the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey had been attempted. Furthermore, the church was never intentionally put through a methodical revitalization process as this research and initiative intended to do.

Statement of the Problem

In my role as an evangelist, church planter, pastor, and director in many conferences and on two continents, I observed many churches overwhelmed with a low level of member involvement, reflected in spiritual discouragement, indifference, and

apathy. Burrill (1996) stated that "the problem of Seventh-day Adventist Church today is that too many members believe the doctrines but have never really given themselves in total allegiance to the lordship of Christ in their lives" (p. 120). Pueblo First fell into the category of churches Burrill described in his statement; furthermore, PSDA corresponds to the 80-85% of Seventh-day Adventist churches that, according to Burrill, are either stagnating or declining. With attendance at an all-time low with only 15-16% of the membership, only 5% involvement, and even less engagement, there was no vision and purpose, plans or development projects were not in place, and few or none of the remaining leaders served in their strengths or gifts. There was no trust, compassion, stability, or hope as Rath and Conchie (2008) delineated, but rather, as Brunson and Caner (2005) explained, fear, depression, hard hearts, and nearsightedness with shrunken faith were present. The church desperately needed a radical turnaround. The remaining leadership team and most of the attending congregation were looking for a change. They did not know where to start or where they wanted to go. Revitalizing and empowering the leadership team and projecting a new vision to the broader church was the high priority for survival.

Statement of the Task

First, I recognized that the Lord assigns and gives growth (1 Cor 3:5-7), and the Holy Spirit brings rebirth and renewal (Tit 3:4-5) to individuals and congregations. Besides recognizing the Lordship of Jesus Christ, who changes our innermost self with this love, and embracing the Holy Spirit's power of renewal, this assignment developed and piloted a wholistic stewardship church revitalization strategy by implementing a local church leaders' coaching project. The project was implemented at PSDA. The church was

evaluated by tracking the increase of qualitative membership development and quantitative membership engagement. In this process, I empowered the local church leaders towards revitalization, which was reflected in the broader church body through increased attendance, engagement, and ministry innovation (Bandy, 2000; Creswell, 2006; McGervey & Cosby, 2011; Miller & Hall, 2007).

Delimitations

The setting of this project was outlined and defined in several ways. First, the focus of this project was on PSDA. Second, I was limited to not less than six or no more than eight volunteers from the local church leaders, about one-third of the leadership group. Third, I worked only with willing volunteers from the local church leadership team. Fourth, the church had to have concrete signs of decline or disintegration (Brunson & Caner, 2005; Burrill, 2004; Dale, 1981; DeGroat, 2020; Simpson, 1999; Surratt, 2009). Fifth, I was limited to implementing empowerment coaching in the church setting for six months using the simple coaching method presented by *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way you Lead Forever* (Stanier, 2016). Sixth, I was limited to one-on-one, tailored-to-fit coaching sessions with the volunteer leaders. Seventh, in the scope of the time limitation, the project served only as an initiation for the process of revitalization. Finally, the unexpected COVID-19 epidemic and its impact on social gatherings, religious services, and people's mental and physical well-being limited this research in unforeseen ways.

Description of the Project Process

The revitalization project was comprised of several distinct parts. The project's

main components were a theological reflection, examination of the relevant literature, developing and implementing a plan of revitalization action, assessment of the research results, and presenting conclusions and recommendations for additional studies.

Theological Reflection

Due to the nature of the project initiative that was done in a highly malfunctional and declining Seventh-day Adventist church, it was appropriate to look for deeper insights in the Word of God. I found that the OT story of Joseph at Potiphar's household would be the best representation of God's Lordship as the foundational part of wholistic stewardship (Gen 39:1-9). Furthermore, the importance of God's presence, being part of, and managing the household, personnel, and possessions alike were examined as principles of wholistic stewardship and God's economy. In addition, the parable of the talents as presented by Jesus (Matt 25:14-30) shed light on principles of the Lord's investment in His stewards through His gifts. This investigation further connected God's economy with church renewal through empowering others in ministry.

The biblical reflection gave the necessary support for forming a valid and tangible approach to address the decline and disintegration of PSDA.

Literature Review

Following the findings of the biblical reflection, the literature review examined the scholarly literature that helped coach leaders to individual renewal and led declining churches to corporate revitalization through wholistic stewardship. The areas studied for this research were (a) the effect of wholistic stewardship; (b) the relationship of steward leadership with coaching; (c) the significance of Lordship, His economy, and household

in the scope of the steward's engagement; (d) revitalization as the steward's empowering ministry, and (e) E. G. White as part of the Adventist tradition on wholistic stewardship. The areas of literature study assisted me to have a more balanced and wholistic approach to the church revitalization process and develop a strategy for discouraging PSDA decline through coaching local church leaders.

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Development of the Strategic
Implementation Process

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The implementation process expanded from the years of church planting and revitalization and from my experience working as Stewardship Director for the Greater New York Conference. While visiting churches, organizing stewardship emphasis weekends and steward leadership seminars and training, and participating in camp meetings, I observed a need for presenting stewardship in its wholistic capacity, not in its truncated form. The event's participants changed, the local churches' attitudes shifted, and spiritual zeal was visible after only one weekend series or seminar. Except for a few Seventh-day Adventist authors like Ben Maxon, John Matthews, Erika Puni, LeRoy E. Froom, I did not find many reference materials on the related subject. I consulted other Christian writers such as R. Scot Roddin, Douglass J. Hall, Randy Alcorn, Wesley K. Willmer, and Amy L Sherman on the subject. A local church leaders' revitalization strategy was developed that would bring renewal and direction to a multiplication process.

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Structure of the Project Implementation

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The project implementation strategy included four phases: preparation, development, implementation, and evaluation of the process. I divided the phases into ten

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steps of the implementation strategy. The first step was to share the project and get the consent of the RMC of Seventh-day Adventists for researching their territory. The second step was to get local church leadership consent for researching the church. The following step was to find volunteer local church leaders for participation in empowerment coaching.

I also considered having a volunteer "research support group" from the local church leadership; that was the next step. Step five was for the volunteer leaders to do the Empowerment Test to assess their leadership style. Step six further assessed the health level of the local congregation through a qualitative assessment tool, the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey. Step seven was to quantitatively assess the local church's commitment and participation level by using the ME[25].

During step eight, I introduced and gave the coaching book *The Coaching Habit, Say Less Ask More and Change the Way you Lead Forever* (Stanier, 2016) to each coachee. The next to last step comprised one-on-one empowerment coaching and modeling the volunteer church leaders based on Stanier (2016) for revitalizing the leaders. The last step was to start the process of multiplication of the revitalization process by training the volunteer coachees in basic coaching. This order was my preference, and it could have varied based on the anticipation of the project's development, implementation, and evaluation.

<div align="center">Research Methodology and Protocol</div>

The effect of this project was to measure the impact of empowerment coaching by using wholistic stewardship principles that would support and emphasize the wholistic development of the local church leaders and their life and ministry. The leaders' coaching

and development led to ministry multiplication affecting all ministries by revitalizing the leadership and, consequently, the whole church. The qualitative and quantitative measurements were not comprehensive but rather informative and were used as guidelines for change-making. I obtained statistics used in the research since I had received administrative access to eAdventist from the RMC administration. The data served as a piece of historical evidence for the PSDA's present church health determining factor. The research demonstrated an increase in qualitative areas of church life (NCD) and quantitative involvement and engagement in church ministries (ME^{25})$^{®}$. However, I also wanted to determine what leadership style and personality could best bring church revitalization by requiring all volunteer leaders to do the Empowerment Test (ET).

Due to the sensitive nature of the research, the participants' identities were kept private. Notes were kept from every coaching session, and reports were communicated to the individual coachees.

Definitions of Terms

Some recurring terms and phrases are pivotal to the whole document in the paper, and their clear understanding is crucial. Although some of the terms and phrases are explained more closely in the research paper, the definitions below cover the meaning of the terms in the context of this research.

Church revitalization: This means turning churches around by the power of the Holy Spirit and a renewal strategy of a spiritual leader to lead a plateauing, declining, or disintegrating church to renewed vision, healthy relationships, functionality, growth, and mission.

Coaching: This means coming alongside people to help them discover how to use more of their potential, gifts, and ideas strategically. Creswell (2006) defined it as "[putting] your valuable skills, gifts, talents, and personality to work—maximizing your strength to do what God wants you to do" (pp. 15-16).

The Economy of God: This is the distribution of God's righteousness in His world, the power of His being and doing. Meeks (1989) defined the economy of God as "God's power for life" in his struggle with death (p. 77).

Empowerment coaching: This is coaching that focuses on giving the coachee power, support, and authority to develop his or her talents, ideas, projects, or even life situations through insightful coaching questions in a confidential setting. Stanier (2016) explained: "You might feel less certain about whether you're being useful, the conversation can feel slower, and you might feel like you've somewhat lost control of the conversation (and indeed you have. That's called 'empowering')" (p. 25).

Member Engagement® (ME^{25})®: This is a survey developed by GALLUP® that is a quantitative measuring tool for determining the level of member's engagement while making a difference between involvement and engagement.

Natural Church Development® (NCD): This is a qualitative church health measuring tool developed by Schwarz (1996) that evaluates eight vital areas of the church and Christian life: (a) empowering leadership, (b) gift-based ministry, (c) passionate spirituality, (d) effective structures, (e) inspiring worship services, (f) holistic small groups, (g) need-oriented evangelism, and (h) loving relationships.

Steward: This is a person who has a Lord and Master to obey, a household to preserve and grow, and a mandate or commission to follow while not being an owner and

not having any selfish interest but constantly living in the "confidence of God's abundance" (Basinger, 2012, p. 91).

Steward coaching: This is coaching that embraces all the parts empowerment coaching has to offer. In addition, it has a consistent vertical dimension, recognizing and submitting to the complete lordship of the Godhead (Collins, 2009).

Steward leaders: This refers to those who listen primarily to the Master and are free from any ownership; they base their identity on godliness and faithfulness. Steward leaders cultivate culture, harness and empower people's gifts, care for and develop the household or community, and create organizational reliability and witness (Rodin, 2010).

Stewardship: This is the steward's intimate life and relationship with his Lord as part of his household and economy. Stewardship turns his Lord's will into an active mission moved and fueled by agape love to respond to the Lord's commission. Hall (1990) expounded: "The word (stewardship) not only reveals, it also conceals meaning. The idea is larger than the word" (p. 41).

Truncated stewardship: This is limited stewardship either willingly or through ignorance that speaks only of the financial side of stewardship. It is a failure to see and address the debt we find ourselves in due to Christ and His sacrifice on the cross that should take priority and preference over any materialistic approach to stewardship (Maxson, 2010).

Wholistic stewardship: This is stewardship that is comprehensive, all-inclusive, and not compartmentalized. It expands from the spiritual sphere, including grace, gospel, and relationships through managing the gifts and mission of the Master to the

stewardship of possessions and money. Wholistic stewardship is more than what the steward does; it represents the steward's identity rooted in generosity (Mikell, 2013).

Summary

This chapter has presented the indisputable need for the revitalization and renewal of Seventh-day Adventist local church leaders and local churches at large. The numerical increase of minimum factors (NCD) measured the qualitative and local church's involvement, and the engagement level (ME^{25}) $^{®}$ measured the quantitative impact of the revitalization project. In addition, I evaluated the volunteer leaders' tendencies and skills to empower others to understand the significance of personality in the revitalization process. I hope that the project I undertook will serve as a model for revitalizing stagnating, declining, or disintegrating churches. Furthermore, I hope it will give a simple path for those willing revitalizers and church leaders to be faithful stewards of church vitality and lead local churches and the organization to health, growth, and multiplication.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

This theological reflection examines the principles of wholistic stewardship as found in (a) the Old Testament narrative of Joseph, (b) the New Testament parable of the talents of Matthew, and (c) the consideration of Ellen G. White's comments on these passages concerning God's sovereignty and lordship. The theological examination helps to establish a biblical foundation for a steward-Master relationship. Furthermore, it is fundamental in preparing a strategy and a model for engaging the church in qualitative and quantitative revitalization.

The Old Testament Narrative of Joseph

Revitalization and growing God's economy is a complex, multifaceted, and wholistic work and ministry. It requires more than the person's willingness and energy and more than training in many cases. The narrative of Joseph in the OT provides some principles for empowerment coaching that can lead to complete revitalization and wellness of local church leadership and membership. The following few pages contain the result of this investigation.

God's Lordship and Joseph's Stewardship

The Old Testament Genesis narrative of Joseph as part of the *tolethoth* (Ross, 1988) stands out and conglomerates narratives and themes like "the expectation of the

seed" (Gen 3:15; 30:24; 45:5), unfolding the Abrahamic promise of all nations being

blessed through Abraham's descendants (Gen 12:2-3; 39:5; 46:3; 41:49, 57), growing and

multiplying the wealth and the numbers of God's people (Gen 12:2; 39:2-3, 22; Ps

105:24), and faithfulness to the revelation and the words of God (Gen 39:9; 41:16;

50:20). The central motif that holds together all the rest of the themes and holds them

together as a unit is God's sovereign purpose and Joseph's steward relation to YHWH's

gifts. As Mathews (2005) explained, "the chief ideas are the divine promise and

sovereign purpose, family inheritance, and personal moral transformation" (p. 1338).

The focus in this reflection is limited to Joseph's arrival, especially his first ten

years in Potiphar's household as a slave, and later, as steward and manager of his estate

(Gen 39:1-9). The principles we can unearth could be used as a biblical foundation for

implementing a healthy steward approach to repurpose, grow, and prosper a local church

and organization on one hand, and worship, honor, and revere the living God as the

ultimate owner on the other.

Before *Mitsrayim* (Troubles)

The artistic narrative (Arnold, 2003) of Genesis 39 is filled with linguistic

dynamics that account for excessive importance in the general theme of the "expectation

of the seed" and YHWS's providence and assurance of redemption (VanHoozer, 2005).

The name Joseph, יוֹסֵף, originates in the word "to add, increase, do again" יָסַף, (Gen

3:24) or "adding," (Banner, 2007) through the power of Elohim and by the presence of

YHWH. Rachel stated at Joseph's birth, "may the Lord add" (Gen 30:24), inviting "the

sovereign grace of God which magnificently anticipates God's providence for his people"

(Harris, Archer, & Waltke, 1980b, p. 386) to be repeated over and over in and through the life of her son.

The narrative follows the pattern of the story of Judah (Gen 38) who, after conspiring to murder Joseph with the rest of his brothers (Gen 37:18-19), proposed selling him for "profit," "dishonest gain," בֶּצַע (Gen 37:26; Banner 2005). This idea stands in complete opposition to Joseph's narrative of his being prosperous, profitable, and successful צָלַח, (Gen 39:2-3). The Bible indicates that any leader (Exod 18:21) who had tendencies toward taking a "cut," בֶּצַע (Banner, 2005) or accepted a bribe for personal gain and had a lustful and covetous heart should not be elected. Harris et al. (1980b) explained, "It is very easy for the acquisition of personal gain to become the ruling motive of one's life, obscuring duty, honesty and the rights of others" (p. 122). Furthermore, Botterweck and Ringgrenn (1997) suggested that Reuben appealed to "shed no blood" (Gen 37:22); while avoiding spilling physical blood, they expelled Joseph and caused his death as indicated "by using the word *dam* for putting a person to death maliciously even when no blood is shed (Gen 42:22)" (p. 242).

In comparison, according to Sarna (1989), it is not clear whether "Judah's suggestion is a desperate compromise" or "an expression of sordid hostility" (p. 260) toward Joseph. O'Day and Petersen (2009) further ventured to explain that according to Jewish tradition, Judah had the intention to "intervene to save Joseph's life" (p. 74).

Further exploration of the use of the linguistic characteristic, exegesis, and theological context of the words has proven that those leaders of Israel and Judah who were corrupted by taking a "cut," בֶּצַע, ruined not only their integrity, but also the whole nation (1 Sam 8:3; Isa 56:11; Jer 8:10; Jer 22:17; Ezek 22:27), just as Ross (1988)

pointed out: "Those who disregard God's plan and pursue a life of self-gratification, God, will correct, often using talionic justice in the correction" (p. 619).

It is safe to conclude that Judah's intentions were not honorable since the linguistic analysis shows the subtleness of his heart, and once he faced the reality of his ways, he acknowledged that "God has found out the guilt of your servants" (Gen 44:16). The noun guilt, iniquity, or punishment for iniquity, עָוֹן (Banner, 2007) depicts the state of sin or what some Bible translations render as "'iniquity' (KJV, NKJV), essentially meaning to bend, twist, and distort" (Banner, 2007), The theological notion of the root is to cause infractions, crookedness, and perversion for selfish reasons (Harris, Archer, & Waltke, 1980a).

Joseph's pre-Egypt (*Mitsrayim*) experience with his household indicates that God was preparing Joseph to "preserve life" (Gen 45:5) and to keep the promise to Abraham alive. Through the hate, jealousy, and animosity of his brothers (Gen 37:4-5, 8, 11, 18, 20) and Joseph's alienation of his family (Gen 37:2, 6, 9) on the one hand "stripping him of his robe," his "pit" experience (Gen 37:23-24), and the ultimate enslavement on the other, Joseph was maturing (Augendre et al., 2010). Joseph was stolen from his land and household (Gen 40:15) and sold (Gen 37:28) into slavery by his brothers and was bought (Gen 39:1) as a new addition to the household of the Egyptian master, a servant and a slave (Gen 39:17).

"The Lord was With Joseph"

The Coram Deo's (Riswold, 2006) theme is overwhelming in this episode of Joseph's life. Most Bible commentators focus in this passage on the sexual temptation and Joseph's moral victory. However, we find the phrases "The Lord was with Joseph"

(Gen 39:2, 21) and "the Lord was with him" (Gen 39:2, 23) two times in this short narrative and four times in the whole chapter. Joseph lived his life not only in the knowledge of God, but also in the vision of his physical presence. Turner (2000) argued that this statement "reveals more about Yahveh than it does about Joseph" (p. 169). That underlines the basic idea of the Kingship of God and His sovereignty in his economy of salvation and "distribution of His righteousness" (Meeks, 1989, p. 77). That means at least three things: ownership, authority, and control (Ferguson & Packer, 2000).

The idea of living in the presence of God, in a constant encounter with God and in the sight of God, is known as Coram Deo (Lawrence, 2018; Riswold, 2006). The Coram Deo had a significant influence not only on Joseph's life, but also, through Joseph's life, on the people he served and governed. Turner (2000) noted, "Let us thus think often that our only business in this life is to please GOD, that perhaps all besides is but folly and vanity" (p. 18). It is likely the reason why, when tempted with sexual promiscuity, Joseph exclaimed: "How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). It is as if Joseph has two masters, but one is much greater than the other. God the Lord takes precedence over Potiphar, his Egyptian master. Furthermore, the heavenly Master who created him for his presence made him a blessing in all that he was and did for his earthly master.

For Joseph, God's presence was more than just a divine authority and mastership. For him, God was like a father, someone he respected, worshiped, and adored. He was not willing to do any wickedness or evil. Joseph's claim contrasts Eve and Adam's choice to "know good and evil" (Gen 3:5, 22). Where the first pair had fallen, Joseph chose to stand because he loved God as a father. Thompson (1960) expounded, "The

sovereignty of God is revealed to be the sovereignty of fatherly love, and the relationship

between the Owner and the steward is seen to be father-son relation" (p. 177). Only a

close and intimate relationship fueled with divine love is the right motivation for serving

as a partner with the Owner. White (1890) stressed that "to engage in His service merely

from hope of reward or fear of punishment would avail nothing" (p. 523).

About this life-giving relationship between the Owner and his steward, Rodin

(2000) stated:

> God's relationship to us in creation is a life-giving relationship. God's dominion is an
> enriching, nurturing, and wholly beneficial dominion. God's love for us bestows on
> us the status of covenant partner, friend, companion and one with whom God delight
> to fellowship and dwell. (p. 73)

Joseph's relationship with God was a "life-giving" relationship in which Joseph

became righteous and a channel of blessing to all the people he served and managed and

in every work he did.

Source of Blessings and Prosperity

At a first glance at this short episode of Joseph's life, we can see a positive

outcome. The words of Paul echo back through centuries: "If God is for us, who can be

against us?" (Rom 8:31b). Because "the Lord was with him," Joseph became a

"successful man" (Gen 39:2); "all that he did, prospered in his hands" (Gen 39:3) and so

he became overseer, steward, and a blessing to his master in the whole household (Gen

39:5).

The writer of Joseph's narrative leaves no doubt where his wisdom, knowledge,

people skills, management skills, and so much more came from. As Sarna (1966)

explained, Joseph was an "unconscious instrument of God's providence and his

behavior" (p. 211). In this narrative, it was not Joseph who discovered his extraordinary talents, but Potiphar. The narration is sure to emphasize that "his master saw… that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands" (Gen 39:3). While on the one hand, Potiphar was excited to see profit, good morals, great working ethics, and clean financial books because of Joseph's God, Joseph, on the other hand, was looking at how God "prospered, rushed, and advanced," צָלַח (Banner, 2005) and did all that through his hands.

In the book of Genesis, we can find the same verb, "to prosper," צָלַח, but this time, in the story of Rebekah's marriage (Gen 24). In both instances, God caused to thrive, to give the ability to lead prosperously, and to succeed in a task. The question that naturally proposes itself is this: Why, in prospering Joseph, did God give prosperity and blessings to a heathen nation through an enslaved, faithful, dedicated, God-fearing, and loving steward of His? The answer to this question is twofold: First, God, who promised to Abraham that he would make him a "great nation" (Gen 12:2), also promised that he and his descendants "will be a great blessing" (Gen 12:2) and that "in you (Abraham) all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Joseph was a direct fulfillment of this prophecy. Second, God saw the big picture. God knows the end from the beginning. Joseph, who never attempted to flee Egypt, even when he became a free man and the governor of Egypt, realized, or perhaps was shown, that a reunion was inevitable. He exclaimed, once reunited and having unveiled his identity, "for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen 45:5).

Calvin (2001), looking at the person as a two-way steward relationship of Joseph, declared: "the entire blessing by which the Lord was pleased to testify his paternal love

towards Joseph, should turn to the gain of the Egyptians. For since Joseph neither sowed nor reaped for himself, he was not at all enriched by his labor" (p. 637). Curiously, Joseph did not work for himself, his own profit, or his own benefit. It was first for his heavenly Owner, and second, it was for his earthly master whom he served; Paul advised that this should be "as done for the Lord and not for your masters" (Col 3:23).

There is a word we do not find in Joseph's narrative which should be there. Solomon, centuries later, wrote, "When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices" (Prov 11:10). The word that is missing from the narrative is "just, righteous," צַדִּיק. Sherman (2011) explained, "When the righteous prosper, their prosperity makes life better for all" (p. 17). Only righteous people are and can be channels of God's blessing to all. If there is a shadow of selfishness in sharing any of God's blessings or gifts, it can no longer be considered acting as righteous, but as unrighteous, and the goal is not anymore to serve the "all," but the "one" or "self." Sherman further explained:

> Because the tsaddiqim view their prosperity not as a means of self-enrichment or self-aggrandizement, but rather as a vehicle for blessing others, everyone benefits from their success. As the tsaddiqim prosper, they steward everything-their money, vocational position and expertise, assets, resources, opportunities, education, relationships, social position, entree and networks-for the common good, for the advancing of God's justice and shalom. And when the people "at the top" act like this, the whole community cheers. When the righteous prosper, their prosperity makes life better for all. (p. 17)

The steward knows where the glory belongs. It is not he or she who is receiving the praise and glory, but God the Lord. How can one receive what does not belong to him or her? Would it not be robbery and greed? Measuring the odds of Joseph's lack of possession, Calvin (2001) observed: "Far better was it for Joseph that Potiphar's wealth should be increased for his sake; than it was for Potiphar to make great gain by Joseph" (p. 637).

Joseph did not own anything while at Potiphar's house. He also knew that his inheritance at his father Jacob's house was questionable or nonexistent. Thus, instead of being a steward who made up his kingdom of stuff (Rodin, 2000), who builds his kingdom of self-praise, self-honor, and self-exaltation, Joseph was committing fully to the Lordship of God. Rodin explained:

> The question is not one of faith but of lordship. The question is not whether we believe in God as strongly in our earthly kingdom, but who is Lord and master here… you cannot be a steward of something that is yours. Ownership and stewardship are mutually exclusive… Where God is not Lord, we are not stewards. (pp. 134-135)

From the beginning, Joseph's narrative is about God and His Lordship, His ownership, and His dominion. By recognizing and humbly embracing this reality, Joseph became a steward and a channel of God's blessings that brought prosperity and success to those he served. Ultimately, he fulfilled God's plan of salvation not only for his family, but also for the human family, ensuring that the "seed's" (Gen 3:15) lineage would stay intact.

"Sin Against God?"

The culmination of the narrative of Joseph at Potiphar's house is simultaneously the climax of the steward theme and the steward heart one needs to acquire (Kidner, 1967). Joseph's honest response to his mistress, Potiphar's wife, represented who he was, not just what he believed. Rodin (2000) explained: "To steward God's creation requires a self-definition that includes the love and the righteousness of the Father" (p. 69). Joseph was on the receiving end of "love and righteousness" that had molded him into the image of his Lord. This image transpired when he asked, "How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). This question implied his faith in Elohim

and his intimate knowledge of and his relationship with Elohim that is unique and special. Frame (1987) clarified, "Knowing God is something utterly unique since God himself is unique" (p. 25). Joseph had something "unique" with his relationship to God; hence he was wholly opposed to "sin against Elohim" (Gen 39:9).

Joseph's knowingly sinning against God, giving in to the temptation, was not acceptable. He asked, "How then could I do this great wickedness" (Gen 39:9). For Joseph, God was not only transcendent, but also imminent in history and reality. God was real, and therefore his life, service, faith, morality, all of his life, all that he had, did, and was, were lived in the consciousness of the divine presence (Skinner, 1910). Joseph was concerned and even afraid to "do this great wickedness," עָשָׂה (Gen 39:9). While the verb "to do, make, fashion," עָשָׂה (Banner, 2005) is rendered with different words of action in the Old Testament, it has been associated from the beginning of the book of Genesis with the creation and the idea of "making" (Gen 1:7, 11, 12, 16, 25, 26, 31; 2:2, 3). English renditions use words like "make," "made," and "yielding" in the creation account to touch on the depth of Elohim's action. In the Joseph narrative, the same metaphor is depicted and used when Joseph asked, "How can I make, how can I fashion" Elohim's creation and order? How can I "make, fashion" a different reality and bring death (sin) upon myself? Joseph saw the temptation as an attack on his relationship with Elohim who was the source of prosperity for him and others (Gen 39:2, 3), the source of blessings (Gen 39:5), and the source of identity (Gen 39:9). Hall (1990) saw this resentment to sin as a clear choice between "being-with" and "being-alone" or "being-against":

Our very being as human beings, as God intended it, is a being-with. The distortion of our being (sin) is nothing more nor less than our alienation from all we are created to

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be with. Sin, we could say, is a resolute "being-alone," which implies "being against." (p. 209)

Joseph saw the temptation as an opportunity to share his Kingdom values. He did not run away immediately, but for a considerable time, "day after day" (Gen 39:10), he not only withstood the temptation, but he also saw himself as the steward of moral and ethical values coming from his close, "being-with," relationship with Elohim, his Master. Sarna (1966) suggested that it could have been a "fast track" opportunity for Joseph to reach his ambitions if he had any: "the ambitious Joseph might well have considered that the importuning wife of his master had presented him with a rare opportunity, worth exploiting, to advance his personal and selfish interests" (p. 211).

Some commentators have seen the young life of Joseph (Moberly, 2013) as not entirely irreproachable but with character flaws like immaturity, being unwise, boastful, extremely talkative, and even being a brat. Other theological observations appear to be almost humanistic when suggesting that Joseph, by his rejection of his youthly behaviors, rose to a wise man's status. This approach finds its direct source in fallen and corrupt human nature, but it also forgets the special gift Joseph was from God to Rachel and Jacob. White (1889) referred to the young life of Joseph in a similar tone, looking at him as an example of true godliness, character, and principle:

> Joseph was a youth of firm principle, whom God could use to carry out His purposes … Joseph met with a variety of experiences, experiences that tested his courage and uprightness to the fullest extent. After being sold into Egypt he was at first favored and entrusted with great responsibilities; but suddenly, without any fault on his part, he was unjustly accused and cast into prison. But he is not discouraged. He trusts in God; and the purpose of his heart, the purity of his motive, is made manifest. (p. 321)

White (1889) did not give a reason for us to believe that Joseph's young life at Jacob's house or later was in any way corrupt or mischievous. Instead, she emphasized

that Joseph's life was "without any fault." This remark is in line with Joseph's argument about his unwillingness to give up an existing relationship with Elohim as Owner and Lord and that he was unwilling to sin and take away what was not his (his master's wife), but to maintain and steward his relationship with YHWH. Joseph was burning with a determination and conviction that was awakened in him by God many years before. As Augustine (1980) said: "Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it reposes in Thee" (p. 4). At the same time, Joseph was content and at peace that his Master, who gave his life meaning and purpose, was "with Him" (Gen 39:2, 3).

Stewards of the Household

Joseph's narrative further reveals another development that is significant for this study. While most commentators focus on the moral aspect of Joseph's story (Freedman, 1998; Moberly, 2013; Ross, 1988; Sarna, 1989; Skinner, 1910; Wenham, 1994), only a handful of them even mention Joseph's transition from one household, Jacob's (Gen 37), to the other household, Potiphar's (Gen 39:1-9). At the same time, the transition to the jailor's prison (Gen 38:21-23) and the Pharaoh's "Great House" (Gen 41:37-44) is not referred to as a comparison in any consulted commentaries. This dynamic is pivotal in our study of the wholistic work of the steward.

Joseph's arrival to *Mitsrayim* connects him to the household of Potiphar by being bought or given to Potiphar, whose name translates as "he whom (the god) Re has given" (Gen 39:1; Hamilton, 1995). While free and at his father's house, the household of Jacob, he was considered to be a "helper" or "the young man," the "assistant" of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpha (Gen 37:3). Hamilton (1995) further suggested that the syntax of the

Hebrew text allowed Joseph's work with his brothers to be translated as "Joseph was shepherding his brothers," which would suggest that "what Joseph [was] doing during his teen life [was] exactly what he [would] be doing in his adult life" (p. 324). In other words, in the household of his father Jacob, the relationships, tasks, dramas, favoritism, and spirituality had contributed significantly to the development of Joseph as a servant and steward. Joseph was discipled and disciplined into stewardship. Vanhoozer (2005) argued that "the main concern within the lengthy account of Joseph and his brothers is explicitly divine sovereignty over human willfulness and malice" (p. 1030).

At the center of Joseph's early narrative, we find an obedient servant and son eagerly listening to his Father's will (Gen 37:13). Likewise, as an entirely silent servant and brother, he was hated, conspired against to be murdered, stripped of his clothes, thrown into a pit, and sold to the Midianites (Gen 37:18-36). This narrative describes Joseph as being disjointed, separated, and torn from his family and household. While the evil intention of his brothers was permanent and morbid, "You sold me here," God's intentions were temporary, wholesome, and redemptive "God sent me here" (Gen 45:5). Arnold (2003) explained:

> The words "you sold me... God sent me" offer one of the Bible's greatest statements of the sovereign love and care of God. In the biblical worldview, one needs to look at both aspects of every event: the human dimension, which is often skewed and misshapen, and the divine dimension, which graciously works for our good. (p. 159)

Joseph's narrative portrays this God-likeness or godliness of the "sent" in every aspect of his life as part of his father Jacob's household and Potiphar's household. As a steward, the aspect of God-likeness was vital not only to Joseph's moral behavior (Gen 39:9), but even more to his daily management of Potiphar's household through his leadership role with the servants and multiplication of his master's capital. Joseph was

practicing vocational stewardship, that is, according to Sherman (2011), it is "not only about doing, it's also about being . . . believers must possess a character that handles this power humbly and eschews its misuse" (p. 121). It is safe to conclude that Joseph, through his father's love and his brothers' hate, grew up determined to be who he was in his new household.

Joseph became a member or servant/slave of his new master's household by being brought down to *Mitsrayim* and purchased by his new master (Gen 39:1). The narrative makes sure to emphasize that Joseph's next family was not only south of or "down from" Canaan, but it was also as if he was having a second "pit" or *sheol* (Janzen, 1993) experience (Gen 37:22). Despite this linguistic reality, the narrator made sure to emphasize that even "down" in *Mitsrayim*, "YHWH was with Joseph" (Gen 39:2, 3, 21, 23).

This new household must have had a real significance because it is mentioned seven times (Gen 39:2, 4, 5, 8, 9) in this short narrative of Genesis 39:1-9. While other significant themes, like the moral challenge, take up one-third of this narrative, only once is the verbal temptation, "lie with me" (Gen 39:7), recorded. One may ask why the theme of the household and its prosperity under Joseph's stewardship, leadership, and management went unnoticed by Bible commentators. It is probably because, as Hamilton (1995) principally argued, "nowhere is Joseph given titles or duties that were characteristic of the Egyptian vizierate" (p. 402). This argument does open an avenue to look at Joseph's position "over his house" as God's steward who is practicing vocational stewardship for multiplying and growing his earthly master's goods, but for the glory of YHWH. This economy is not a moral obligation, but an expression of gratitude

(Thomson, 1960). Janzen (1993) noted, "For Joseph stewardship is a responsibility that ultimately is received from God, even when one is a bought slave, and the master is an Egyptian" (p. 157).

The theme of the house and household, בַּיִת, and its relation to the whole theme of wholistic stewardship cannot be fully explored here due to this research's constraints and limits and needs further examination and development. However, it is safe to conclude, based on the two households analyzed in this subchapter, that first, stewardship exists in a household context. There are vertical and horizontal dimensions to stewardship in the household. Second, for practicing wholistic stewardship, there has to be a heavenly LORD and an earthly master. Only with both in view can one multiply and grow the economy of both without a personal interest. Third, any kind of ownership exploits and disables stewardship. Only because of freedom from ownership (positional, material, possessional, etc.) in the household could Joseph concentrate on the household's and the family's corporate good and growth. Fourth, only will those who have gone through the "pit" of self-denial be honestly devoted to the life of a steward. Fifth, there are only two ways to become part of a household: birth (Gen 30:24) and purchase (Gen 39:1). Sixth, one becomes a steward in a household only if he or she is "made" or "sent" (Gen 39:4; 45:5) to be a steward, either by divine or human discipleship and commission. Finally, if we take the LORD out from any stewardship, it will only serve human purposes. This is why economic, environmental, and other humanistic stewardship initiatives end up being ideologies and philosophies that serve and are served by sociopolitical, economic, and cultural developments. However, as Kantonen (1956) explained, "God compels even

godless men to serve one another and thus restrain the powers of evil which would otherwise destroy his creation" (p. 37).

This OT narrative of Joseph at Potiphar's household has provided a rich foundation for a wholistic stewardship approach to church revitalization, growth, and multiplication through empowerment, coaching, care, and faithfulness. Several underpinning principles were found that could serve the wholistic approach to church renewal. The most significant discoveries were the Lordship of God in the prosperity of His economy and the role of the household in the steward's work. In continuation, I will examine the NT reflection of empowerment coaching in a stewardship setting.

The Future of the Stewards

The parable of the talents is only one of four parables Matthew recorded to be part of or at least connected to Jesus' eschatological address in chapter 24. In addition, there are the parables of the faithful and unfaithful slave or steward (Matt 24:45-51), the parable of the ten bridesmaids (Matt 25:1-13), the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), and the parable of the judgment (Matt 25:31-46). Besides stressing the *parousia* and final judgment (France, 2007), all of these parables of Jesus speak of and connect the stewards to a specific area of life they care for and manage watchfully. Matthew was also sure to emphasize the reward for each "blessed," "wise," "well done" steward task, or to present the consequences and judgment.

A close inquiry of these parables suggests several essential principles that point to the parables' coherent unity and give a unique place to the talents' parable.

Gifts Received to Administer

In all the parables, the stewards (Matt 24:45; 25:1, 14, 32) have received

something or someone to care for and manage for the master's sake. It was the people of

the household θεραπεία, the stewards, who received the charge and were put over

καθίστημι (Matt 24:45) to care for in the parable of unfaithful steward. The bridesmaids

all had to have oil to steward. Keeping it burning throughout the night and having a

sufficient supply was their task (Matt 25:3) and their pass to the groom's wedding

banquet (Matt 25:10). The stewards of "the talents" parable were given their masters

possessions, his substance ὑπάρχοντα (Matt 25:14), that were divided among them

according to their ability and inherent power δύναμις (Matt 25:15). The nations (Matt

25:32) in the last parable are all the people who have received opportunities to shepherd

ποιμήν, manage, and direct other's immediate needs, or "the least" (Matt 25:40, 45) in

authority, importance, as if done for the Son of Man (Matt 25:31).

Gifts Received to Give Account

All the parables stress the return of the owner, groom, man, and the Son of Man

that is immediately followed by giving an account (Matt 24:46, 19), letting in (Matt

25:10), and separating (Matt 25:33). This action indicates that all that the subjects have

done and have received will be accounted for. In addition, it suggests that they are owned

(1 Cor 6:19-20), and all they do is not for their glory, advance, and prosperity, but for

their master's, the groom's, because all the steward's doing, caring, and multiplying is

rooted in doing for the master's profit and the kingdom's growing.

Stewards for Eternity

All four parables indicate that the faithful steward's work would not end at the master's return, the owner's homecoming. The steward would be rewarded with more and more significant opportunities to serve, care, and shine in the kingdom and household of their master and groom. They would be in charge of "all of his possessions" (Matt 24:47), would be recognized as someone he knew (Matt 25:10,12), would be "put in charge of many things" (Matt 25:21,23), would "inherit the kingdom" and "go into eternal life" (Matt 25:34, 46).

The continuation of the steward's engagement in the owner's, master's, and the groom's business should be in agreement with what we were created for and were engaged with before the fall. The creation account uses the words "to rule, have dominion," רָדָה, and "subdue, to subject oneself," כָּבַשׁ (Gen 1:26, 28). However, words are imperative to describe the relationship of humankind, 'adam, אָדָם, to the rest of the creation. We should be aware that this command was given before the fall, meaning that 'adam lacked all the ills of ownership, egotism, and selfishness, but he rather fully reflected the *Imago Dei* (Ps 8:40-48). This would imply that 'adam could relate to the creation only as Elohim was relating to them. Dedicated care, unwavering love, and firm selfless determination to give were the sole purpose of 'adam, including male and female. Hall (1986) explained:

> If we take it seriously that the God actually described to us in the continuity of the Testaments is a serving, loving, suffering God, and no potentate than we might well reclaim a genuine and indeed an apologetical provocative ("jarring") connection between *imago* and *dominium*. (pp. 71-72)

The *Imago Dei* that is recreated by the new rebirth (John 3:3-6; 1 John 5:1; 2 Cor 5:17) and by our dual relation to Christ: "I in Christ" and "Christ in me" (John 14:20;

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15:1-11) sets the heart of a person to do something for the Master and His creation at present and throughout eternity.

The Parable of the Talents or the Unprofitable Servant

After observing the four parables Jesus used to stress the importance of the steward's relationship to the master and creation, the steward's way of handling all the gifts, and the indefinite future of the steward's office, we will now engage in the detailed examination of the parable of the talents to define the principles of wholistic stewardship.

Kingdom Relationship

Transitioning from the previous parable, that of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1-13), takes place with only the words Ὥσπερ γὰρ" (Matt 25:14), literally "for just as" or "for even as" (Thayer, 1997). This language indicates a flow and perpetuation from the previous parable and an extension of the idea that runs through all four parables that Matthew lined up after Jesus' eschatological speech. Matthew was sure to keep the Kingdom of Heaven's theme right at the center of his gospel. He used the theme of the Kingdom of Heaven more than any other gospel writer. All 55 uses have a unifying effect on the whole message he portrayed about the impact of Jesus on the present age and the age to come. Pennington (2008) described this intention of Matthew's using the theme of the kingdom as "the apocalyptic and eschatological contrast between heaven and earth" (p. 46).

The establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven is why "a man" took a journey. Luke insisted in his similar version of the parable (Luke 19:11-27) that it was a "nobleman" or a "descendent from a royal house" who took a journey to "get royal

power." Scholars widely agree that this was not the church in formation, but rather that the church is only a mere tool in the hands of servants or stewards to multiply the received gifts from the master. Ladd (1993) went even further in his analysis, developing a clear distinction and at the same time establishing a relationship between the kingdom and the church:

> The Kingdom is God's reign and the realm in which the blessings of his reign are experienced; the church is the fellowship of those who have experienced God's reign and entered into the enjoyment of its blessings. The kingdom creates the church, works through the church, and is proclaimed in the world by the church. There can be no Kingdom without a church — those who have acknowledged God's rule — and there can be no church without God's Kingdom; but they remain two distinguishable concepts: the rule of God and the fellowship of men and women. (p. 101)

Even though the "man" was going away on the journey, his ownership and governance of his property (realm) were still binding. His relationship with his bondservants or slaves had not changed. These servants were born into slavery; their life and relationship permanently rested in the master's hand. Furthermore, their will was swallowed up in their master's will, and they would disregard their interests in light of their master's interest (Wuest, 1945). France (2007) made sure to emphasize the magnitude of the new task the servants were getting when he pointed out that "this is not about domestic management, but about high-level commercial responsibility" (p. 762).

The question we need to ask is, what made a slave become a steward. Were all the slaves stewards? The answer is twofold. On the one hand, the owner and master first took the risk of complete trust in his slave. He "entrusted" or "delivered" παραδίδωμι (Matt 25:14); he "handed it over, surrendered" (Freeberg & Freeberg, 1994) to the slave what he owned and possessed. This would not have been possible unless the master (John 10:14; 1 Cor 8:3) intimately knew his slaves and counted on their devotion and undivided

commitment. On the other hand, these slaves had to know the master (John 8:32) if they wanted to serve him since their whole desire was to do everything for the master. They became the disciples of their master, and by stewarding the goods of the master, their discipleship could be measured. Their business was to know their master, represent their master, and increase their master's wealth. Hence the change in their status and relationship from a slave to a steward.

Although the verb "to lean" or "to appraise," μανθάνω (Thayer, 1997) is not used in the parable to describe the stewards and their learning related to the master, the context gives reason to believe that a steward was a learner. Speaking of this steward/disciple— master relationship, Ladd (1993) stated,

> Discipleship to Jesus was not like discipleship to a Jewish rabbi. The rabbis bound their disciples not to themselves but to the Torah; Jesus bound his disciples to himself… Jesus required his disciples to surrender without reservation to his authority. (p. 109)

It may be easily presumed that in the parable Jesus presented, the master's character was to be reflected in his stewards. Since Jesus was an "apostle of progress" (Jeremias, 1963, p. 19) for the Kingdom of God, His stewards/disciples were sent to become entrepreneurs, investors, and business CEOs of Kingdom commodities (Meeks, 1989).

Second, as part of the risk, the owner was willing to lose and be at a loss just for the sake of allowing the stewards to use their heart, mind, soul, and strength in their service for him. In other words, the owner was generous, and he was the model steward and an investor whom the stewards were to model and whose example they were to follow. Barclay and Law (2010) commented: "In this parable, Jesus tells us that there can be no religion without adventure and that God can find no use for the shut mind" (p. 377). For the master to implement such a work ethic and relationship, he had to show and

be love, ἀγαπάω. We read that the owner gave (Matt 25:15) his possessions. We find that divine giving in the NT implies love (John 3:16; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:25; 2 Thess 2:16). Kraybill (1990) classified *agape* love in several ways. He perceived *agape* love as indiscriminate, bold, inconvenient, risky, time demanding, expensive, and jeopardizing social status. The owner was aware that giving away his possessions took more than just material things.

Some renderings of the word δίδωμι imply "commissioning" and "putting in a position of power and influence" (Nicoll, 1902). In other words, by giving his possessions, the owner empowered, commissioned, and authorized his stewards not only to work for him, but also to represent him and his household as his ambassadors. White (1909) explained: "A steward identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master's stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master's interests become his" (p. 246). This identification with the master was on the life level, meaning that the steward lived for the master with all that he was and had. The gift, trust, love, and opportunity he had received made a slave a "steward."

On the other hand, the slave should prove that he is worthy of the received gift, trust, love, and opportunity. In the parable, Jesus pointed out that each steward had the capacity and ability to do so. The use of the phrase "to each according to his ability," ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν, indicates several things. According to Vincent (1990), the word ἰδίαν, in conjunction with δύναμιν, denotes the person's "own or peculiar capacity" for business (p. 133). Osborne (2010) added that it "refers to the master's evaluation of each one's powers in economic affairs" (p. 1862). Each steward had a

capacity, inherent powers that most certainly were not only developed and learned but were also inherited and received. These abilities and capabilities of the steward were the only things they indirectly owned and possessed. They were developing these traits of character in their mind, spirit, and body for one purpose: to serve their owner better and to grow the owners' possessions better.

Speaking of the stewards' service to the master, White (1961) stated: "We must use the intelligence that God has given in order that we may be perfect in body, soul, and spirit, that we may have a symmetrical character, a well-balanced mind, and do perfect work for the Master" (p. 265) (See Table 1).

Table 1

Inherited and Developed Gifts

Inherited and developed gifts	Intelligence
	Body
	Soul
	Spirit
	Symmetrical Character
	Well-balanced mind

The success of the steward's service and the master's enterprise depended on how they developed themselves, how much time, energy, and intention they invested in their physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, social, and professional development to increase the master's kingdom, his honor, his enterprise, his influence, and his name.

Based on this pool of abilities or power, the owner bestowed his possessions on them. The noun δύναμις denotes power residing in a person or a thing by virtue of its

nature or which a person or thing exercises and puts forth. When the noun is paired with the preposition κατά (according to, to) as in the case of Macedonian generosity, 2 Corinthians 8:3, in the NRSV, translates the κατὰ δύναμιν as "according to their means," mainly focusing on their physical possessions; the more literal translation of the KJV renders the phrase as "to their power," which transcends the mere physical aspect of δύναμις and focuses on the more wholistic aspect of the word. In 2 Timothy 1:8, Paul used the same composition κατὰ δύναμιν concerning God and our reliance on him as we go through afflictions and trials of the Christian life. The last use of this phrase in Hebrews 7:16 is related to Jesus as of the order of Melchizedek where the κατὰ δύναμιν is again in conjunction with the divine act, this time of eternal or indestructible life. In all these examples, what transpires is that δύναμις, the power, ability, and capability, is of a divine nature that is received (John 1:12; Acts 1:8; Heb 11:11).

The talents (Matt 25:15), the weighed bags of gold or silver that the stewards received, put them in the position of stewards (Uytanlet, 2017). The gifts, not the wages, make a steward. All commentators agree that all three stewards received a fortune to steward. The amounts vary, but they propose amounts from 20 years of salary to several lifetimes of earnings in those moneybags they received. Investing and advancing their master's kingdom, influence, and ownership was their primary purpose. Every steward was dead to self and self-interest. White (1896) observed:

> Only the one who will keep the way of the Lord can be trusted to do the work of the Lord; for he alone will be a faithful steward… Self and selfish ambition has no place in the mind of him who is daily converted to God. (para. 4)

The given meaning of the word τάλαντον, "talent" in English, could be somewhat misleading. Merriam-Webster speaks of the word as "a special often athletic, creative,

or artistic aptitude, general intelligence or mental power, and as the natural endowments of a person" (Talent, n.d., paras. 1–2). The word's implication in the present culture and understanding seems to be related only to naturally inherited, borne with abilities, intelligence, and capabilities, limiting the meaning of the word and discarding its origins in weighing practices of ancient times. In comparison, Webster derived his explanation from the word's Greek and Latin origin. It emphasizes its use in the parable of talents from where the broad, more wholistic meaning and divine origin is attributed to the word (History and etymology section, para. 1).

The scriptural use of the word talent in the NT is found in two parables. Besides the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) where it appears 14 times, the other single use of the word is found in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt 18:21-35). In both parables, the word is used to express amount, value, extreme wealth, or its lack thereof (Matt 18:24). However, in either case, the contextual meaning of τάλαντον transcends the mere monetary and weight value of the silver or gold it represented. These were the received gifts (Table 2).

Table 2

Received Gifts

Inherited and developed gifts	Intelligence Body Soul Spirit Symmetrical Character Well-balanced mind	Received gifts	Talents

The Owner's Absence

The parable is silent about any instructions, directions, or expectations of the owner. The master did not order them or tell them what to do—whether they should invest the money, take it to the bankers, open their own business, or dig a hole in the ground and bury it. So how did the stewards know what to do with the fortune they received?

First, they had observed the owner's business practices. They knew the owner and that the owner was all about profit, growing, and multiplying his enterprise, his realm, and his influence (John 10:10; Luke 12:15; Luke 14:33). As stressed above, they were already committed by all their being to the master's wealth. As they received a portion of it to steward and care for, they became the embodiment of "what *they* have heard, what *they* have seen with their eyes, what *they* have looked at and touched with *their* hands" (1 John 1:1, italics supplied). They became witnesses of their master in character, goals, desires, aspirations, and administration of all of his gifts which they then inherited, developing on the one hand and receiving on the other.

Second, as they have received the gifts, so they should give (Matt 10:8); Matthew was using the word δωρεάν, rendered as "freely, without a cause," which is derived from the root adverb, δωρεάν, meaning "gift" (Thayer, 1997). This is significant since the stewards did not deserve, earn, or merit this high trust, but they received it without a cause, freely because it was the owner's will (John 4:34; 5:30; Matt 7:21; 1 Pet 2:15; 1 John 2:17).

In the owner's absence, implying the owner's work ethics, caring for the wellbeing and growth of the owner's wealth, having love for the owner, not forgetting

him, and by the inherent abilities and power, they profited the owner 100% except for the one steward who hid the received talent and did not accept the steward role.

<center>The Wicked and Lazy Slave</center>

On the day of the owner's return, the stewards of the owner's goods were summoned. Barclay and Law (2010) believed that this lazy slave was at the center of the whole parable. They stated: "The whole attention is riveted on the useless servant" (p. 377). His interaction with his owner reveals not just what his character was like, "lazy and wicked" (Matt 25:25), but also his relationship to his master, his possessions, his opinion of his master's character, and his inner feelings about the whole contract and commission.

The steward who had received one talent of gold or silver argued: "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours" (Matt 25:24-25). Like the rest of the stewards, he called his master Κύριε or Lord, indicating that he recognized his place, position, and responsibility to the owner. However, beyond recognizing him as Lord, all he said and embodied was in complete contrast to what he acknowledged.

As a steward, it seems that he never gave himself up entirely to his master and owner. It seemed logical to him to do what was "best" and "safest" for himself, which made him see his generous, trusting, self-sacrificing and loving owner in a terrifying way. He was "afraid" φοβηθεὶς from φοβέω (Matt 25:25; Luke 19:21), meaning that he was terrified, paralyzed with fear to do something (Thayer, 1997). The logical question is why he would be so terrified of his master and owner. The Scriptures do not give us much

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information. We do not know if the master unfairly treated him any differently than the other stewards. What transpires in the parable is that this steward's perception of the owner was very likely influenced by jealousy and envy since he received "only" one talent of gold and not more than his counterparts. There could have been some unresolved hurts and grievances he had from an injured ego.

The central word in his defiant speech was ἔγνων, from γινώσκω, meaning "to learn to know," "to come to know" Thayer, 1997). The LXX would have the word יָדַע, (yada) translated as γινώσκω, hence adding to its meaning a deep intimate knowledge of another person (Freeberg & Freeberg, 1994). The steward thought he knew the master, but he did not. He perceived and knew the master as "a harsh man" (Matt 25:24) or as a fierce, stiff, and hard-hearted owner who was only after profit, expansion, and gain. Quoting Bonnard, France (2007) pointed out that there was even more to this misconception of the master: "His failure is due not so much to laziness as to a sort of religious and oriental fatalism," which according to France was "underlying this was his view of his master" (p. 357). This steward had received a great honor to grow his master's wealth. However, he chose to be passive and idle. He did not reflect in any way his master's character and desire to grow and expand his master's prosperity and name. Froom (1929) explained that "stewards are representatives as well as servants" (Economy result of stewardship for God section, para. 1). The narrative shows that the relationship between the steward and the master broke down, leading to misrepresentation and misperception, and to the steward's having a wicked and lazy condition (Matt 25:26).

The steward's condition at his master's return was of great concern. During his master's absence, he became wicked and lazy (Matt 25:26). The wickedness of this

steward originated in πόνος, pain that was based on πένης, being poor or in poverty

(Nicoll, 1902). This evil was not based on the flawed and destructive nature and character

of the steward's laziness; he had the ability and power to handle the talent correctly. The

evil was not a rotting away or corruption of his previous good behavior, either. The evil

and wickedness of the steward were in his effect and influence on those around him and

under his care. Matthew 25:30 further strengthens this point, presenting the steward as a

worthless and unprofitable steward. The adjective is the negative form of χρεία, rendered

as "valuable, necessary, needed"; according to Nicoll (1902), "the range of meaning

includes 'doing harm.' Doing nothing is doing harm" (p. 209).

The parable makes it clear that the paralyzing force for doing harm was fear. The

phrase "I was afraid" (Matt 25:25), from the verb φοβέω, has the meaning "to fear, to be

afraid, to put to flight by terrifying" (Thayer, 1997) The one-talent steward claimed that

he was moved to the action of hiding the talent by fear, by running away from his

responsibilities, while the other two stewards went at once or immediately (Matt 25:16)

to attend to their owner's commission to grow the kingdom.

The one-talent steward was mindful of preserving and keeping his master's talent

intact. He never intended to risk, invest, or take the initiative with it. Nevertheless, he did

go through the trouble of looking for the perfect spot to hide the treasure, dig a hole, risk

being seen, and lose his master's gold to thieves. Uytanlet (2017) pointed out that the

climax of the third servant's behavior was not the burying of the received talents, but

rather, the return of the whole amount that was received. For a Jewish listener, this

gesture referred to keeping the law and legalism. France (2007), being aware of the

legalistic nature of the steward's hardiness, quoted Schweizer, who saw the religion of

the third steward as "a religion concerned only with not doing anything wrong" (p. 942).

Reward and Wholistic Stewardship

The reward of the stewards and the punishment of the one-talent steward are in great contrast. The parable is silent about the period of the owner's absence. France (2007) pointed out that the *Parousia*, though imminent, would not be immediate (p. 1362), so the stewards had the chance to grow the influence of their master through increasing his talents by trade. The day of reckoning and settling of accounts, like in Matthew 18:23-24, brought to light in Matthew 25:19 the results of the stewards' work of putting the received talents into use.

The first two stewards received the same recognition based on the proportion and not the portion (Wiersbe, 2008). The master addressed them, not by their names, but by their social relation to him and their character. The combination of the Greek, ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ, "good and faithful," is only found in this parable (Matt 25:21,23). In comparison with Luke's parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27), we find that both adjectives are present; however, they are not joined in a phrase. They give praise to the steward, calling him ἀγαθός, "good, devout" (Luke 19:17; Thayer, 1997), signifying the quality of the steward's *character*, while the quality of his *service* concerning the trading and his master is expressed through the words "you have been trustworthy" (Luke 19:17). That is, in the English rendering, identical to the expression used in Matthew 25:21, 23, the continuous and uninterrupted nature of the steward's nobility and devoutness is emphasized. The Greek text in Luke 19:17 reads, πιστὸς ἐγένου, having the verb γίνομαι "to be" in the aorist tense, indicative of mood, depicting that the πιστὸς, "trustworthiness" (Nicoll, 1902) happened in the past through the actions and

relationships of the steward to his task and his master.

As much as he was concerned about the interest and profit he received, the parable specifies that the owner was even more interested in the quality of his stewards' inner and outer relation to the task and the owner. Witherington (2006) pointed out about the third steward that "he had not personally invested himself in the task" (p. 464). The other two stewards invested themselves entirely to make their master's gifts profitable. They did not withhold any part of their abilities, possession, time, or opportunities (Matt 13:44, 46; 21:19; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22) to profit their master's business and wealth without any thought of personal benefit or personal interest, but wholly trusted and relied on what they had received.

The final reward of the stewards in this parable is twofold. First, the owner designated, "I will put you in charge of many things" (Matt 25:21, 23); the future indicative active form of καθίστημι, rendered as "to make, appoint, ordain," in the first person singular, indicates that the owner and the Lord would repeatedly and progressively continue putting his "good and trustworthy slaves" in more responsible positions (Nicoll, 1902). The owner did this out of his will and love. These were not wages that the slaves received. Their greatest reward was to serve the master and be in his presence. The Westminster Short Catechism (Westminster Assembly, 2014) expressed that desire this way: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever" (p. 4).

Second, the invitation to "enter into the joy of your master" (Matt 25:21.23) takes the active aorist imperative of the verb εἰσέρχομαι. "To enter" implies an invitation at the least, and a command at the most (Nicoll, 1902). The parable presents "the joy of the

Lord" to be the ultimate goal of any steward. It is not the change of the slave's status that

the slave was looking for but being even closer to the master by doing even more for the

master because his master's joy was his joy. Turner (2008) explained:

> Entrance into the master's joy probably portrays entrance (Matt. 18:3) into the
> eschatological feast (8:11; 22:2; 25:10; 26:29) that inaugurates the reign of Jesus on
> earth. The greatest joy of a follower of Jesus is to share in the joy of Jesus (cf. Heb.
> 12:2; Rev. 19:7). (p. 939)

This joy was only possible if the steward looked at the idea of reward as a gift and kept

"this idea in strict subordination to the two higher principles of the divine sovereignty and

the divine grace, in other words to the divine kingship and the divine fatherhood" (Vos,

1998, p. 123). White (1903) also captured the idea of transcending joy (Table 3) when

she wrote about wholistic education:

> It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to
> man… It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher
> joy of wider service in the world to come. (p. 13)

Table 3

Received Joy of the Master

Inherited and developed gifts	Intelligence Body Soul Spirit Symmetrical Character Well-balanced mind	Received gifts	Talents	Received Joy of the Master	Many things

In this respect, the parable's stewards were lifelong students, disciples, and by

relationships, they were slaves, servants, and stewards of their master.

Through the crude reality of his days, the wide socio-economic gap, and slavery,

Jesus portrayed in this parable of the talents the wholistic stewardship that is more than carrying and just using the received gifts. All the gifts of heaven in every life are many coins of opportunity and investment prospects. First, each steward must understand that he/she has no individual will or say in receiving the gifts from the Master and Lord; they receive it according to their inherited and developed abilities. Second, the primary purpose of what the gifts should be used for is also not a matter of discussion or dialogue. The Lord has determined that it is in the growth of His influence and His Kingdom that every steward should invest all his abilities and received gifts to grow until the day of reckoning. That day ends the testing period for every steward. As Turner (2008) explained, "God will call disciples to account for the stewardship of their abilities (Matt. 25:15), nothing more and nothing less" (p. 602). The master expected a return on his investment that was more than quantitative. Both stewards achieved a 100% investment increase, but both desired the "joy" in the master's presence in his kingdom more. Those who do not know the master or who have a corrupt image of him will fail because stewardship is about deep intimate knowledge, bond, and relationship with the master, something no one can steal. It cannot rot away or be forgotten even "after a long time" (Matt 25:19).

The driving force for every steward is to make unselfish investments and use all the abilities combined with the received gifts to grow the master's kingdom. Since the Master entrusts his whole property (whole household) to his chosen slaves (stewards), the property involves more than the bare financial aspect of the household's administration. Hence, when we speak about stewardship, it must be wholly interwoven with relationships, multiplication, spiritual economy, not only finance, tithes, and offerings.

Conversely, if the focus of a person is only related to individual, corporate, or not-for-profit financial gain for any personal or institutional increase and the motives are not primarily for the Master's Kingdom's increase, the person or the governing body of the institution could become the owner, and consequently, their focus becomes self (Blomberg, 1999; Girao, 1988; Maxson, 2010; Rand, 1964). Moreover, the main reason for the master's investment and exponential growth that makes the master happy and brings the reward of "joy" for each steward is the received and given agape. Kraybill (1990) called this agape "a norm of excess" (p. 192).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this theological investigation was to establish a proper biblical model for "steward" that led to developing a wholistic strategy that could address the current need for church revitalization. The study established the advantage of the steward relation toward local church leaders as vital for empowering them to renew their spiritual walk and leadership through coaching. This examination has enhanced my understanding of the wholistic stewardship principles as emphasized in the OT Joseph narrative at Potiphar's household through Joseph's management of the household economy and moral uprightness. Furthermore, the NT parable of the talents has brought further insight into the steward-Lord relationship as a foundational principle for a successful steward empowerment process or coaching.

In both narratives that were under consideration for the development of a church revitalization strategy, I observed a clear connection between the characters (Joseph and the stewards) and their involvement and empowerment of others as they managed, invested, and grew their master's wealth and economy. The empowerment of others for

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the growth of the master's economy served to release divine potential through human vessels, and that is empowerment coaching (Bandy, 2000).

While this investigation has given sufficient evidence to the value of wholistic stewardship as an empowering lifestyle and practice for church renewal and healing, it has also opened other areas of study that this research could not cover due to its limitations. The research found that the OT and NT focus on stewardship focuses on growing God's economy and His Kingdom, which is first, qualitative, and second, quantitative. I believe further investigation into the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the spiritual gifts in the Pauline literature regarding their relation to stewardship would open new and efficient aspects to church revitalization, church growth, and multiplication.

A literature review of wholistic stewardship and revitalization will further examine in the most relevant, recent, and more comprehensive literature the aspects of empowering local church leaders through coaching for turning around declining local churches. This investigation will be done in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Through this literature overview, I seek to discover how a wholistic approach to stewardship can improve the present health of the church and how it could help improve, grow, and multiply the church. With this gathered insight, I was able to (a) refocus the local church leadership from a reductionist stewardship view to a wholistic view, (b) implement an empowerment coaching method and leadership style to evaluate its impact on church revitalization, (c) establish how reductionist stewardship can be exploited for maturing and growing wholistic leaders, and (d) devise a wholistic approach to a church leadership revitalization that will renew the congregation. These findings enabled me to create a local church environment strategy to address the lack of church health and its decline.

Reductionist Stewardship

Although most of the stewardship-focused literature touches upon the wholistic nature of stewardship, the focus is mainly on only one aspect of the steward's responsibility—finances. Titles like "Whose offering plate is it? New strategies for financial stewardship" (Christopher, 2010), "Passing the plate—why American Christians do not give away more money" (Smith & Emerson, 2008), "Behind the stain-glassed windows—money dynamics in the church" (Ronsvalle & Ronsvalle, 1996), and "It's

your money! Isn't it?" (Reid, 1993), to mention just a few, associate stewardship almost exclusively with finances and its practical implication in church life and ministry. The authors usually sum up the subject of wholistic stewardship in three or four "T's: time, talents, treasure, and temple. They concentrate mainly on giving and contributing to what we as individuals have received from the Giver. In most cases, their purpose is to influence, control, manipulate, and sometimes inspire their readers to improve, change, or develop patterns and habits to support the Christian cause, tradition, and in many cases, the church's cause (Hall, 1990; Willmer, 2012).

This research has found that a reductionist approach to stewardship as a biblical discipline does not only lessen and minimize the theological footprint and practical application of the subject, but such an approach also directly hurts the church organization and encourages the plateaued and declining churches in their condition. These churches become more "need-driven" than "spirit-driven." The theological reflection on the subject established that a wholistic theology of stewardship and a wholistic approach to its implementation could not only lead to an unimpaired and functioning theology of stewardship, but could also revitalize and mature individuals, church communities, institutions, leadership structures, and the whole church organism to the point of becoming a movement again.

This review of relevant literature first examines the current view of stewardship in Christian church organizations. Next, it focuses on deterrents and wholistic stewardship in the local church revitalization context. For the Adventist context, Ellen G. White's literature study will be conducted about the steward's call, which is followed by an investigation of the significance of lordship and the motive of the household in which

stewardship is conducted. The wholistic nature of stewardship requires a specific

leadership style, which the following subchapter focuses on. Finally, the investigation

concludes by examining church revitalization in the context of wholistic stewardship.

Stewardship Now

Observing the present state of the Christian church organization, Bloomberg, as

cited in Willmer (2008), remarked: "I often wondered why Christian ministries that are

raising money do not stress the central biblical truth that giving is part of the whole-life

transformation, that stewardship and sanctification go together as signs of Christian

obedience and maturity" (p. 45). Hall (1990) argued that the stewardship concept has

been truncated in the Christian church today: "What we have by way of stewardship in

our churches is, in fact, a drastically reduced version of the biblical concept… a purely

functional appropriation of the biblical metaphor" (p. 12). Hall (1990) also observed that

based on this truncated concept of stewardship, churchgoers rationalize that stewardship

is "about the acquisition and management of ecclesiastical monies and properties" (p.

12), meaning that stewardship is reduced to a narrow business model in its not-for-profit

management of church organization. Speaking in an even more tangible way, Rodin and

Hoag (2010) illustrated the difference between being a steward and doing stewardship:

> More than any other area of ministry today, we are measured in this work by what we do. The development department makes its reports by using charts and graphs. We talk about our work in terms of dollar goals, percentages of participation, average gifts, and pledge totals. From thermometers in lobbies to annual reports mailed to our entire databases, everybody knows exactly if we are successful or not. Ours is a highly measurable profession where we are evaluated almost solely on what we do and how much we raise. There is something fundamentally wrong with this picture. (pp. 7-8)

Two Major Deterrents

According to Willmer (2012), the Christian organization has arrived at the current

reductionistic view of stewardship due to solid socio-economic influences from society.

One significant factor was the introduction of philanthropy, enabling people to give for

political and socio-economic reasons. He explained:

> When philanthropy is motivated to help only people who are good business
> investment, charity becomes a form of exploitation… (they) forsook the common
> good of the needy for the selective good of the worthy and twisted the ethics of
> responsible prosperity into charity as a cost-benefit. By secularizing the process of
> giving, the seeds of its own decay were sown. (pp. 8-9)

Philanthropy (love of humanity) as a secular form of charity and promotion of human

welfare has been on the front line of influences similar to, but also different from,

stewardship.

Philanthropy had its ideological roots in the Social Darwinism of the end of the

19th and the beginning of the 20th century. According to Willmer (2012), it brought to

the Western Christian world a social reconstruction that credited the acquisition of wealth

as a result of good fortune, rather than as a gift from God. According to this philosophy,

charitable donations focused on selective groups, rather than on all. He also explained:

"Rather than helping succeed in society with charity, the focus shifted to remaking

society and serving as a catalyst for political, economic, and social change" (p. 7). One of

the leading proponents of early philanthropy, Carnegie (2006) believed in the

"administration of surplus wealth" (p. 105) to prevent society's social ills, primarily

referring to the economic differences between millionaires and ordinary workers.

Philanthropy is a balancing power for the highly materialistic society we live in. It

takes away the edge of the money-earning and consumeristic society by introducing what

I call a controlled "administration of the surplus" by giving it away. Foster (1985) called

this act of financial giving "the most profane act of all" (p. 61). He explained:

> The power that energizes money cannot abide that most unnatural of acts, giving.
> Money is made for taking, for bargaining, for manipulating, but not for giving. This is
> exactly why giving has such ability to defeat the power of money. (p. 61)

While philanthropy as a way of generating funds from donors for different purposes has

been accepted in many circles, for-profit organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and

even Christian religious organizations, it certainly does not reflect the spirit of the

steward's heart.

In analyzing Christian fundraising in the context of growing Bible-based and

Judeo-Christian tradition-based givers among Christians, Jeavons and Basinger (2000)

remarked: "Classical philanthropic tradition derives more from a political and civic

context; it also readily accepts and even legitimizes motives for giving such as pride, and

self-aggrandizement that the biblical tradition specifically rejects" (p. 58). They further

asserted that the "blending of the classical and Judeo-Christian tradition and integration

of civil and religious functions is that the distinction between giving for religious

purposes and spiritual motivations and giving for secular purposes and self-serving

motivations becomes less and less meaningful" (p. 59). The question remains as to

whether secular philanthropy has wrong foundations, to begin with. That is, whether it is

profaning and weakening the biblical stewardship and Judeo-Christian tradition of giving.

If it is not in line with the New Testament theology of stewardship and giving, why is it

accepted, practiced, and fostered in Christian church settings, where it not only truncates

the function of stewardship, but also directly undermines the meaning and practice of

stewardship?

Another element of influence that led the church to the highly reductionistic view of stewardship is a greatly self-centered and individualistic view of life, in general (Willmer, 2012; Rodin, 2010). In the self-addicted society we live in, is it remotely possible that some of the influences have affected the church, or has the church ultimately succumbed to the influence of the world around it? Speaking of individualism in the context of postmodernism and consumerism, Smith (2006) made the following observation:

> In many ways, modernity is characterized by a deep individualism that isolates us from one another, sealed up in our little egos or private spheres… This modern isolationist understanding of the human self has often crept into the church, which has too often valorized a notion of private interpretation (by wrongly appealing to the Reformation principle of the perspicuity of Scripture), suggesting that the meaning of the Scriptures is simply and objectively there—available for the taking. (p. 82)

The notion of individualism brings the freedom of private interpretation that extends how we see and interpret stewardship and motives of the heart.

In addressing motives and means of using possessions, Willmer (2012) stated that "the managerial motive of the fundraising industry became the modus operandi for the development efforts" (p. 11) of the church. The philosophy of "whatever works" was accepted in church circles, and "development," "advancement," and "planned giving" officers replaced or were added to the more spiritual side of fundraising operations, namely stewardship.

Jeavons and Basinger (2000) commented that two major motivational approaches developed in the last century for fundraising. The first one was "exchange" based, the emphasis being on "making a sale" and emphasizing the "services and benefits the organization provides to the donor (or others) that the donor ought to be willing to support because of the measurable value of those services" (p. 63). The other motivation

for giving, they observed, was linked to "affiliation and affirmation." They noticed that affiliation to a like-minded group of Christians motivated people to support the group and spend funds on their affirmation of "shared moral and spiritual tenets and values" (p. 63). In addition to these motivational methods, "most Protestants have relied upon the persuasive powers of certain teachings about giving" (Lynn, as cited in Jeavons & Basinger, 2000, p. 63). The fundraising appeals and efforts have been widely need-driven. This approach widely relies on the individual's willingness and feelings to be manipulated, controlled, and influenced. In the center of this approach is the human being, (male or female), giving power to the individual.

Power to the individual might be appealing to the western mind. Being in charge and having control appeals to non-Christians and Christians, but at what cost to the church members' mission, personal godliness, and maturity? Speaking of freely volunteering our time in ministry in the light of individualism, Wuthrow (1991) pointed out that

> it allows us to carve up our caring in little chunks that require only a level of giving that does not conflict with our needs and interests as individuals. It focuses our attention on individuals in need who sometimes mirror our own insecurities and often provide us with the immediate gratification of emotional fulfillment. (p. 281)

In addition, Willmer (2012) indicated that in this individualistic, self-actualization era, "we volunteer time and give money as a choice that preserves our freedom, meets our needs, and as a convenience that protects our schedule" (pp. 12-13). If all we do when we give is look at how "I am going to benefit" and how "my aspirations and desires are going to be pleased," if our focus is on ourselves and not on the Owner of all things, "we have almost completely separated out how we use our possession from our spiritual life of the soul" (p. 13).

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The question that remains is whether we are fueling the members' individualism by presenting stewardship in a dualistic way by introducing and using commercial, philanthropic, and altruistic methods to present stewardship as a fundraiser for the church organization, or whether we are looking at financial stewardship as part of the wholistic stewardship and as part of the multiplication of God's Kingdom in the lives of people. Rodin (2010), observing the dualistic implementation of stewardship in church organizations, spoke about those directly involved as

> people who are pure personal stewards trying to do development work in the name of Jesus. We have stagnant spiritual people in charge of a ministry of seed sowing. We have transactional people developing plans and strategies for a work of ministry that is wholly transformational. (p. 10)

This analysis raises the question of motives, the lack of deep personal godliness, the absence of personal assessment, and overall, the importance of taking stewardship wholistically or, as Levan (1998) called it, a "concept of human becoming" (p. 13).

Why a "Wholistic" Approach?

An etymological study of the word "wholistic" seemingly presents its origin in a more often used form of the word "holistic." The meaning of both words, according to Merriam-Webster (n.d.) are almost identical. The words originate from the Greek "holus," meaning "whole," and "holism" is defined as "the tendency in nature to form wholes that are greater than the sum of the parts" (para. 2). Hence, the word "wholistic" is a natural evolution of the words "whole" and "holistic," and it promotes the philosophy that all parts of an idea are interconnected and should be observed as one whole, unbroken unit. The origin of the adjective "whole" is further explained, "The English word *whole* does not come from the Greek *hólos; whole* ultimately derives from Old

English *hāl* ("sound, uninjured"). That Old English word is also related to words like *health*, *heal*, *hale*, and *hoy*" ("Holistic" vs. "wholistic," 2021, What does wholistic mean, then? section, para. 2). This definition supports and gives a foundation for using the word in conjunction with revitalization and stewardship that is about health, healing, and wholeness. However, I found that some authors use the adjective "holistic" (Froom, 2021; Hall, 1986, 1990; Rodin, 2000, 2008, 2010) to express the same idea as is apparent below.

Stewardship addresses and covers more than one aspect of Christian life and ministry, bringing health and healing that is wholeness. Froom (2012) explained:

> Stewardship in its larger aspects is the all-inclusive principle of the whole of life. It is not a theory nor a philosophy but a working program. It is in verity the Christian law of living. It forms the Christian appraisal of privilege, opportunity, power, and talent. (Principles of stewardship section, para. 4)

Stewardship, in its entirety, can only serve its whole purpose and be as effective as it was intended to be if it is wholistic. My research on reductionistic stewardship has proven that taking only one aspect of stewardship into account, namely financial stewardship, and overemphasizing it leads to a standard reductionist view of ministry. Even though stewardship leaders and some stewardship books (Maxson & Lézeau, 2006; Ortberg, Pederson, & Poling, 2000; Rodríguez, 2013; Searcy & Hanson, 2010) speak of stewardship of time, talents, temple, and treasure, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on the financial aspect of stewardship, thus making stewardship the fundraising thrust for the church organization, the financial lifeline for the not-for-profit church organization. The challenge could be to use all the appeals to financial generosity toward the more wholistic call for stewarding and being generous with our time, talents, relationships, opportunities, and any other gift one could use for the Lord's glory and the growth of His Kingdom.

Furthermore, it gives the sense of a prevailing materialistic focus of the church organization. It holds back the full potential of the believers and God's desire for His followers to reach spiritual maturity. Hence, there is a great need to look at the "larger aspect" of stewardship, this undivided unit of all the gifts we as individuals have received to steward.

Rodin (2010) saw "holistic stewardship" as a restoration of the four-fold relationships we were created to maintain, and since our redemption and restoration, we are directed to uphold them. These four-fold relationships are with God, with ourselves, with our neighbor, and with creation (pp. 48-49). From the beginning, the relationship was there when humankind, 'adam, was ordered to "have dominion" (Gen 1:26). Hall (1990) explained this order in the way

> that we should be servants, keepers, and priests in relation to the others. That we should represent them before their Maker, and represent to them their Maker's tender care. We are the place where creation becomes reflective about itself, the point at which it speaks, even signs! (p. 211)

Since its creation, humankind's function has been the stewardship of relationships. More than that, humankind was the Creator's and the Owner's image in all they were and in all they did. Humankind, as stewards, while being dependent on their true Owner, enjoyed complete freedom. Rodin (2010) clarified that "complete ownership calls for holistic stewardship" (p. 82).

This wholistic aspect of a steward's involvement is four-dimensional. It has a vertical aspect (God), it has an inner aspect (self), it has a horizontal aspect (neighbor), and it has a global aspect (creation; Rodin, 2000, 2010). This wholistic aspect empowers stewardship not only as "a" ministry, but as "the" ministry of the household of God. This concept of the household will be addressed later.

The Adventist Context of Wholistic Stewardship
in the Ellen G White Tradition

For the Adventist context, an indebted investigation of Ellen G. White's writings revealed a long list (see Appendix D) of over fifty different areas of life that include spiritual, emotional, relational, material, temperamental, and other areas of life we are "stewards of," acknowledging both the individual or group engagement of the Christian. White made sure that no one misunderstands the vastness and, at the same time, the central place of the steward's engagement. The investigative analysis indicates that beyond White's comprehensive, wholistic view of a steward's engagement, the overwhelming emphasis in her writings was on being stewards of "grace." Some examples are the following: "stewards of God's or His grace," "stewards of the manifold grace of God," "stewards of the grace of Christ," "stewards of the manifold grace of Christ," "stewards of the mysteries of God," "stewards of the mysteries of the grace of God" (see Appendix D).

It is safe to say that out of 535 references, over two-thirds are grace-related, and half of the remaining third are relational, describing the steward's direct dependent relation to God and the Lord Jesus. The references to grace emphasize generosity with all the gifts, including the gospel, received grace and mercy, hospitality, tithing, love, and many other received gifts. White emphasized the graciousness, enthusiasm, keenness, and readiness of a Christian to use the received gifts.

White pointed out the negative effect of not accepting and not using the grace bestowed upon us with these words: "The Lord is not pleased with the loose way in which the churches are left because men are not faithful stewards of God's grace. They do not receive His grace, and therefore cannot impart it" (White, 1946, p. 326). Speaking

of the possible effects of the received grace of the Word of God if used and applied graciously to others, she declared: "As faithful stewards of the grace of God, they would have brought light to many who sit in darkness" (White, 1923b, p. 212). As White (1973) explained, grace and the word of God are lasting and permanent gifts that are received as eternal principles, and we will continue to accumulate their benefits in heaven by sharing these gifts with our fellow human beings now for their salvation, just as it was given to us for our salvation. She was further referring to "time and means, talents and influence" as "temporal gifts" (p. 62), and while she considered them important and worthy of the faithful management of the stewards of God, her emphasis was over and over on stewards who "must be partakers of the self-denial and self-sacrifice of Christ for the good of others" (p. 62). Her emphasis was on the stewards' identification with the Owner or their Lord and the stewards' work of channeling and dispensing the received manifold gifts of grace through their lives (White, 1915a).

With regards to grace, stewards should be distributors and traders of the message of salvation, "the whole counsel of God" (White, 1915a, p. 288), "the special truths" (White, 1915b, p. 329), they should "speak as the oracles of God" (White, 1988, p. 231) the "immortal principles," the "truth in trust" (White, 1988, p. 366) that have been given to them. She further declared that this grace was "His (God's) goods" and "His pledged word" (1977a, p. 242). As Christians, we are to steward faithfully, not in our strength, but "by waiting trustingly," asking for the revelation of His power, and then acting "as if we believed in His efficiency" (White, 1977b, p. 466).

White was sure to stress that the work of evangelism, outreach, service, and generosity with all the gifts was the stewards' work. Grace has been given as a gift, and

handling this most excellent gift of all with its various parts is only possible of stewards

who have the right relationship with the Master, Lord, and Owner, also known as God,

the Creator, and Redeemer.

Lord and Steward Relationship

Stewards are servants or slaves whom their Lord the Owner trusts to care for or

manage a part of His whole household, business, or enterprise. The relationship of

stewards with their master and vice-versa is of utmost importance. As demonstrated in

the previous chapter in the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), the steward's

responsibility and duty were to know and trust his master just as the master entrusted

him.

God's Lordship, the recognition of His authority, and the proper relationship

towards God as our Lord are of utmost importance when speaking of being a steward and

stewardship. There is no steward without a Lord, and there is no stewardship without a

proper relationship between the Lord and the steward.

The Lord and His Steward

God is presented in the OT (Gen 1:1, 27; 2:1, 3-4; Ps 89:12; 148:5; Isa 40:46;

42:5; 45:12, 18), as well as in the NT (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17; Rev 4:11; 10:5-6) as the

Creator, Owner, and Lord. Kantonen (1956) argued that all creation is dependent on the

Creator in the created universe and all creation serves His purpose. Kantonen saw God's

sovereignty over both heavenly and earthly realms as God's ownership. In his view, all

belong to God, and "God is Lord over his creation in the very nerve of stewardship" (p.

33). In other words, as Kantonen wrote: "If God is God, then man can never own

anything" (p. 33), and human existence is "responsible trusteeship" and "responsible existence" (p. 35). In addition, Foster (1985) maintained that "God's absolute right as owner and our relative rights as stewards are unmistakably clear" (p. 41). He further argued that the very understanding and acceptance of God as owner "enhances our relationship with him," and it "can free us from a possessive and anxious spirit" (pp. 41-42). Living in the materialistic, possessive, self-centered, and self-sufficient world means that it is fundamental for a steward to hand over to the real Owner all that is His. Freedom comes to the mind, heart, and spirit so spiritual maturity can occur in the steward. Rodin (2012) called this a spiritual and mental battle, and stewards daily fight a "battle for lordship" (p. 54).

Speaking of possessions and their function in the life of a Christian steward, Willmer (2002) first stressed the purpose of the existence of possessions as a tool for advancing God's Kingdom. However, he turned his attention to possessions as objects of the test with eternal consequences having first, the importance to "determine who is the master of our life" (p. 15). Willmer (2002) explained that reaching mature stewardship happens through faith and maturing one's character. He spoke of six stages of maturity: (a) imitator, (b) modeler, (c) conformer, (d) independent individual, (e) generous giver, and (f) mature steward (see Figure 1). The significance of Willmer's study (2002) is based on a process of growth and maturing in the acceptance of the Lord as Master and self-acceptance of the disciple as a steward. The process is proven to be fundamental in developing wholistic stewardship through the empowerment of the steward. Willmer
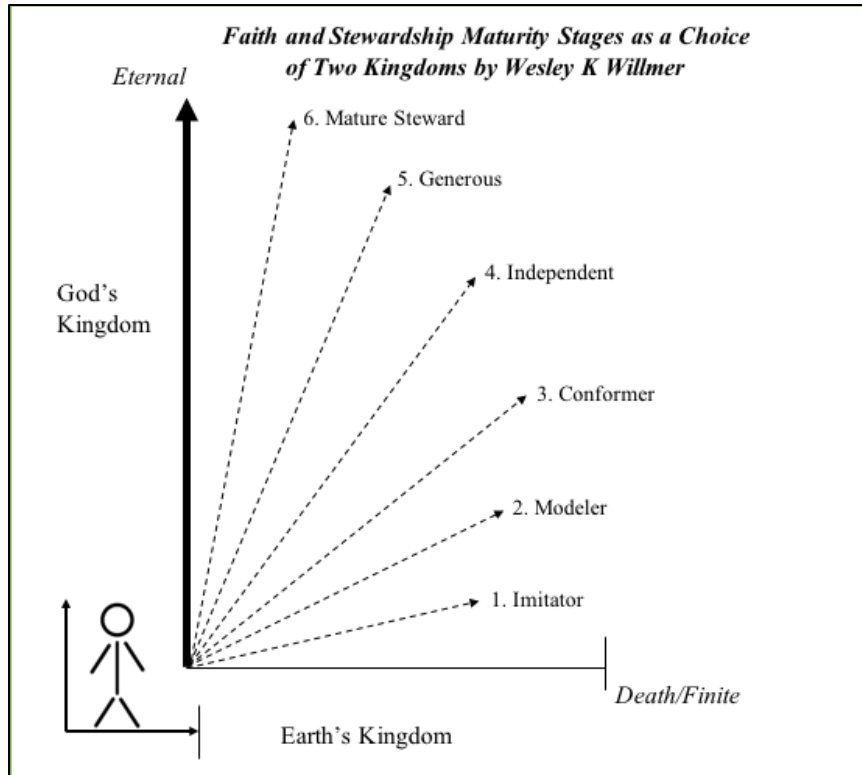
Figure 1. Faith and stewardship maturity as a choice of two kingdoms. Data from Willmer (2002, p. 52).

(2002) further explained each stage of the growth (see Table 4).

The connectedness of the steward's life, ministry, and faith to his maturity is evident in spiritual growth (McCallum & Lowery, 2012). The growth from an imitator marked by imaginations and influenced by stories and experiences of others, which mimics others and has no personal relationship with the Lord and Owner, is where all enter the maturing process. Maturing to the point where there is little regard for self, where the focus is only on God and then on others, and where people abide more by principles more than human-made rules is the final goal. Stewards recognize

Table 4

Correlation of Soul Maturity and Use of Possessions

Correlation of Soul Maturity and Use of Possessions		
Stages	Faith Characteristics	Evidence in Use of Possessions
Stage 1: Imitator	Like a child, is marked by imagination and influenced by stories and examples of others.	Is able to mimic the examples of others in giving when shown or instructed.
Stage 2: Modeler	Takes beliefs and moral rules literally. Perception of God is largely formed by friends.	Gives sporadically when given an example to follow.
Stage 3: Conformer	Faith becomes a basis for love, acceptance, and identity; involves most aspects of life; and is shaped mainly by relationships. Faith does not yet form a cohesive "philosophy of life."	Gives because it is the thing to do. Likes recognition, tax benefits, and other personal gain from giving.
Stage 4: Independent	Begins to "own" one's faith. Faith is less defined by others as one becomes able to personally examine and question one's beliefs.	Starts to give in proportion to what God has given. Danger of becoming prideful regarding giving or giving for the wrong motives. Wonders why others do not give more.
Stage 5: Generous Giver	Grasps the main ideas of an individualized faith, as well as individual practices. Becomes interested in developing the faith of others.	Recognizes that all one owns is from God. Begins to give of one's own initiative, rather than out of obligation or routine. Derives joy from giving.
Stage 6: Mature Steward	Little regard for self. Focuses on God and then on others. Free from manmade rules.	Recognizes the role of a faithful steward of God's possessions. More concerned with treasures in heaven than on earth. Content with daily provision.

everybody and everything as God's possessions; they are more concerned with heavenly

things than earthly ones. Contentment is one of the most excellent principles they live by;

it is the extent of growth the steward should obtain. However, there is no maturing and

growth unless there is cooperation or working together. Vallet (1998) pointed out that

"people do not become stewards unless they are working together" (p. 150). This synergy

is more than mere cooperation or teamwork. The work that stewards are doing should be

one at its essence, goal, and principle, just like those in the Godhead. Since they represent

the Owner and the Lord, they will reflect the image of the Lord and not the image of self.

Bonhoeffer (1995) wrote:

> The lordship of Jesus Christ is not the rule of a foreign power; it is the lordship of the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, the lordship of Him through whom and for whom all created beings exist, of Him in whom indeed all created beings alone find their origin, their goal and their essence. (p. 377)

Wholistic stewardship insists on finding oneself in Christ while letting God work

in and through the steward. There is no "self" in a steward since it involves spiritual

maturity, radiating godliness (god-likeness). White (1923a) explained, "Godliness is the

foundation of true dignity and completeness of character" (p. 362). Nothing we do and

nothing we are is by ourselves, for ourselves, and in ourselves. Maxson (2010) realized

four significant factors that describe God as the Lord and humans as His stewards. He

called one of those "shared governance." Speaking of God as the Lord and Owner, he

explained: "He allows a human being to become His agent in managing His affairs on

earth" (p. 28). Maxson also insisted that in this interdependent relationship, "God chose

to be dependent (sick) on humanity" (p. 29). Speaking of this dependency, Bonhoeffer

(2009) brought in the dimension of God-partnering, rather than just partnering with

human beings:

> So long as we are at work, we will not build the Kingdom of God. But so long as God looks upon us and our work and has compassion upon the godless, so surely will he himself build his house, the eternal Kingdom, where all is spirit. God the Father will reveal his Lordship. (pp. 17-18)

In his research, Gulley (2011) saw Christ's supremacy deeply embedded even beyond His right to the Lordship in creation. His argument was centered on the dual focus on Christ's supremacy that is based on both incarnation and resurrection or his supreme status of "the first" being a comparative rather than of chronological order. He further argued that there were eight reasons why this supremacy of Christ is rooted in Him who is "the beginning." Although all functions of Christ are essential in the context of wholistic stewardship, Christ being the Head of the church (point 4), having supremacy over all things (point 5), and making peace, in heaven and earth, through His death on Calvary (point 8) are the most significant aspects of Christian ministry. The life of a wholistic steward starts with submission to the supreme Creator and Redeemer, to the Head of the church, to fulfill the ministry of the steward to distribute the "manifold grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10). Kantonen (1956) called this sovereignty of the Creator the "sovereignty of Love" that was manifested and freely given to humankind through God's "sovereign act of forgiveness" (pp. 38-39). Hanson (1987) added, speaking of the motivation of the steward, that "the most of deeds, be they acts of prayer, tithing, charity, or temple service, were useless when motivated by anything other than devotion to God" (p. 400).

The Steward and the Household

Everything is about the "house" and "household" of God. Crosby (1988), in speaking of the household in the gospel of Matthew, argued that it "assumes an intimate connection between the term "house" (*oikía/oikos*) and "church" (*ekklēsía*)" (p. 49). We are all but temporary dwellers on this earth of what belongs to God. We are only caretakers, multipliers, and stewards of God's and the Master's gifts. As stewards, we

receive the commission to care for and look after the gifts and the possessions we receive from the Owner. Newell (2010) called this a "personal commission" (p. 24) or the individual steward commission, that is part of the "'mother ship' commission addressed to the whole church" (p. 25), or the whole household in the Great Commission.

At our birth, we bring nothing to this earth and the household, and at our death, we take nothing with us from this earth and the household (1 Tim 6:7). We all receive gifts with some of the same values and some variable values. However, we receive all the gifts for one purpose—multiplication and increase of the Owner's wealth expressed not in earthly, but rather, in heavenly capital.

According to Rodin (2000), God's significant investment in creating His household was in relationships, rather than in material wealth. As previously mentioned, Rodin presented the four-fold relationship: "Our call is to steward these relationships as precious gifts" and according to him, these could be stewarded only by our total "commitment, sacrifice, and love" (p. 79). The fundamental truth is hard to understand: To see "all of our relationships as gifts given to us and of our consequent responsibility to be stewards of each" (p. 79). In the household of God, we can see an increase in the entrusted values only if we pay attention to the relationships. Arn and Arn (1998) argued that the household is a "natural network" of relationships (p. 50) that allows for maturing, expansion, growth, and increase. Further, they argued that this increase was possible because of two reasons. On the one hand, "a level of trust, friendship, and common concern" would have been "respected and heard," and on the other, in the household, all could have witnessed "a life changed by the power of the Master's love" (p. 29).

The members of the household need the corporate body for increase, maturity,

and expansion. The steward needs others to do his work, and there is no stewardship without belonging in a household. Rice (2002) explained: "Taking the family as our metaphor for the Christian community clearly emphasizes the priority of an inner dynamic to external form. It also allows for flexibility and underscores the importance of inclusiveness" (p. 201).

Household is seen by most Christian writers as the church, especially if they see the church as the Kingdom of God on the earth (Fuellenbach 2002; Kraybill, 1990; Rundell, 2001; Seccombe, 2002). Based on Jesus' vision and mission statement in Luke 4:18-19, Cox (2013) suggested that in the environment of the household of God and Christ, three elements in the household make her grow and multiply: *kerygma* (proclamation), *diakonia* (reconciliation, healing, and other forms of service), and *koinonia* (demonstration of the character of the new society; p. 150). These elements serve the wellbeing, health, and productivity of a household directly and especially equip the steward.

Every steward's first responsibility in the household is to *kerygma* (proclaim) or invest by himself and train others to invest in relationships outside the household. Stewards invest in relationships first inside the household and then outside the household (Ross, 2013). They build up the relationships in the household so that they can affect the relationships outside the household. This dynamic is the basis of God's economy. God is in the business of investing in the lives and the freedom of all of His creation. His "currency" is grace, and the stewards are the investors, the brokers (Meeks, 1989). The grace of God has been the main "currency" of God's economy since the fall of humankind.

Speaking of the Law of God, the Torah that "we have left behind us" because Christians did not consider it for what it was, mainly because it was "assumed that it had been superseded by God's Grace," Meeks (1989) argued that "the Torah assumes and includes God's grace" (p. 83) and that "God's mercy is the means by which the true Torah is distinguished from the falls law" (p. 83). The "currency" of God, the grace and undeserved mercy that the Torah encases is "the essence of the covenant" between the Lord as Owner and Master and the dwellers of the household; it creates a realm "that is the multiple relationships of the community" (Meeks, 1989, p. 83). He concluded that "life in God's household of freedom, then, means living in obedience to God's ways of distributing righteousness," the righteousness that he defined as "God's power to create/liberate life out of the power of nothingness" (p. 84).

According to the concept presented, there is only one household. It is God's Household, and then there is "this world." Though God created this world and He owns its entirety, it was usurped, and all of its essences were changed and transformed. In the process, the usurper made the enslaved world believe that they were the owners. Hence, God's established order of stewards and their stewardship service have been compromised with ownership. Rodin (2000) explained, "You cannot be a steward of something that is yours. Ownership and stewardship are mutually exclusive… Where God is not Lord, we are not stewards" (p. 135). Speaking of the opposite reality of being a steward, Rodin (2010) expounded: "The very term steward denotes on the one who is a true owner. And that complete ownership calls for holistic stewardship" (p. 82). Hence, the importance of a wholistic stewardship approach to all we are and do and the significance of introducing the concept of steward leadership.

Steward vs. Owner Leadership

Every person is a leader. The difference might be the capacity, position, aptitude, volume, and so on. Rao (2016) articulated that "everybody can be a leader, but all cannot be effective leaders, as effective leaders have in the extra ingredients that not every leader possesses" (para. 3). Effective leadership is what all leadership styles reach for. Perkins (2016) saw it as an influence, and asked, "If you can't influence yourself, how do you expect to influence those around you?" (p. 70). Perkins further insisted that steward leadership should be rooted in modeling. He expounded, "You can't expect people to be something unless you are willing to be it yourself" (p. 70). Hence, steward leadership is embedded in a genuine steward-master relationship, in an unpretentious godly life that is authentic, selfless, self-sacrificing, noble, and generous. One cannot give what he or she has not received.

Since all Christians are stewards, steward leadership should be a high priority of practice in all areas of life. We can find many different leadership styles in the Christian community: servant leadership, organic leadership, moral leadership, transactional leadership, emotionally intelligent leadership, spiritual leadership, courageous leadership, strategic leadership, and the like. Steward leadership has at least two leading privileges over all the leadership styles: it is not ownership-based leadership; it is people-focused leadership.

When speaking of ownership-based leadership, Rodin (2012) clarified:

Owner leaders take their organization on their shoulders and tie their own self-worth to its success, which requires that they protect turf, use people as a means to an end, and exert control over every situation. Their leadership is typified by power and fear and results in anxiety, stress, and burnout. They are leaders in bondage, and they, in turn, enslave the people they lead. (p. 55)

Furthermore, Rodin (2010) expounded: "Owner leaders must maintain control over their people, and that includes the manipulation required to get them to do what the leader wants" (p. 126). In addition, he argued that owner leaders "like control and predictability. Change comes hard and agility is not a valued characteristic." Furthermore, "they hang on to what is known and can be controlled, manipulated and confined" (p. 131).

The concern of an owner-leader is self-gratification, self-importance, self-obsession, self-promotion, self-preservation, self-dependence, self-absorption, self-centeredness, and the control of others. The steward perspective on leadership is interested in the motivation and reason behind the numbers, accomplishments, and statistics. In a secular environment where leadership is happening, there is constant pressure to do leadership in a secular way. However, should not the Lord's steward do leadership following the Master's example since they are the representatives and ambassadors of the Master, His Kingdom, and His household? Should not their way be that of the Master, not of "this world"? Conversely, Rodin (2010) explained: "The evidence of this new kingdom is found in the lives of the people of the kingdom who live as stewards in the world of owners" (p. 51).

The steward's representation of the Lord's Kingdom cannot happen with any trace of preserved self. One could be a steward only if he or she died in Christ. Bonhoeffer (2009) exclaimed: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die" (p. 115). Dying in Christ assumes all allegiance, faithfulness, and commitment; it means submitting fully, entirely, and unreservedly to the Owner's and the Lord's will. Describing the steward leader, Rodin (2012) (2012) wrote:

Steward Leaders yield their organization to God and seek only to be an obedient (sic), responsive servants of the true Owner. As a result, they are set free to lead! In this freedom they give away power and build up the people around them. They are at peace with success or struggle because they are at peace with themselves. And God works through them to set their people free. (p. 55)

Further detailing the steward's leadership, Rodin (2010) explained that these leaders "develop a culture that value the time, energy and discipline" in order to listen carefully and passionately first to God and second "to those voices that can best guide and inform the organization toward achieving its goals" (p. 129). As leaders, they have to be good stewards "of the vision God placed on the heart of the community" (p. 122). In addition, Girao (1988) highlighted another aspect of the steward leader's responsibility: "Just as the steward of an ancient household was responsible for the welfare of his fellow servants, so are church leaders responsible for the welfare of their fellow believers in the church." Speaking of these church leaders he made sure to emphasize that "they are stewards of God's people" (p.118).

Through this analysis of steward leadership, we may observe that church growth and multiplication can be achieved only by a caring and empowering focus on those we can influence around us. Owner leadership has no room in God's household, the church, and those who practice it should be revitalized so that churches and other institutions could also be renewed.

Jesus said that He is not of "this world" (John 8:23). Moreover, He held that His Kingdom was not of "this world" (John 18:36); the ruler of "this world" had nothing in Him (John 14:30), and He spoke of the Judgment that is coming on "this world" and its ruler (John 12:31; 16:11). Furthermore, the cares of "this world" will make the seed of the gospel and the grace of God unfruitful, choke, and die (Matt 13:22; Mark 4:19). Paul

made sure to warn every household inhabitant not to conform to "this world" (Rom 12:2)

because the wisdom of "this world" was made foolishness, and it is foolishness (μωρός,

flat and tasteless; 1 Cor 1:20; 3:19). Ultimately, the household of God will soon triumph

over the "kingdoms of this world" (Rev 11:15). The household of God is in "this world,"

but "they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). Vallet (2011)

clarified that "the steward's ambition is to know his master's mind and then, unbidden,

fulfill the master's program" (p. 19).

Church Revitalization and Wholistic Stewardship

Every church has a life cycle. I observed that although authors mainly agree on

the phases of church life, there are some significant differences too, as presented below.

Burrill (2004) saw growth and decline through a five-phase process: birth, growth,

maturity, decline, and death. He added that "the final stage is only an intensification of

the fourth stage" (p. 38). Malphurs (2013) used the S-curve or the Sigmoid Curve to

describe the church's life cycle stages. While his model compared with Burrill's, he used

"plateau" instead of "maturity" for stage three to describe the stage that is always

imminent. He expounded that it "is always safe to assume that you are close to a plateau"

(p. 13).

Handy (2015), who popularized the sigmoid curve idea to speak of the "second

curve," stated: "Why not project the present into the future when it is so obviously

successful?" (p. 29). Handy did not support waiting until the curve or the organization

reached a plateau. He explained:

> If you try to draw the Second Curve as one taking off after the peak when that first
> curve is turning down, it doesn't work, on paper or in reality; the Second Curve never

gets up high enough unless you give it a sharp kink. The problem, however, is knowing when that first line is about to peak. (p. 28)

Handy (2015) correctly noticed that there is no plateau on the S-curve, but a "peak." When we speak about a curve, it is hard to imagine a plateau that is level ground or a mesa. Hence, Burrill's (2004) argument that the organizational decline is only the intensification of the previous stage is correct because, geometrically speaking, there is only one point on a curve that is the peak, and all other points on the curve either incline to or decline from to that point. It is safe to conclude that there is almost no room for plateauing in an organization, but rather, a slowing of the incline and the beginning of the decline.

For a wholistic steward who is in his Lord's business, there should not be plateauing of the Master's economy. There could be, as suggested, slowing down of the incline of the economy of God that awaits a new momentum, a new spark at the right time to start another curve of growth. Steinke (2006a) used the motive of organizational and congregational health to further the analogy of church revitalization. He argued that "health is a process, not a thing or a state. It is ongoing, dynamic, and ever-changing. Health is a direction, not a destination, a once-and-for-all property" (p. 27). Hence, Steinke stated that there are only "less healthy" and "more healthy" congregations because health strives toward wholeness even etymologically speaking. He clarified, "The health of a congregation is multifaceted. It is a power-sharing arrangement. Attitudes count. Working together counts. Faithfulness matters. Mood and tone are significant" (p. 20).

Congregational health has a multidimensional, multifaceted, and wholistic shalom. Etymologically, *shalom* means, "Made whole or complete by adding or

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subtracting." In addition, it conveys the following notion: "To be in a state of wholeness. Also, to restore or make right through payment or restitution… A state of being whole, complete or full" (Benner, 2005, p. 460). We can say that a congregational lack of health can mean a lack of shalom, wholeness, and completeness, and what can appropriately address a complex congregational "lack of health" and wholeness is "empowering people to take responsibility for their own health" (Steinke, 2006a, p. 85) because according to Steinke, "health comes from individuals being responsible, being stewards of the whole" (p. 85).

The old philosophical conundrum remains—what are we striving for as individuals and society, perhaps even as church revitalizers? What are we looking for as a result of our revitalization efforts? What can we call a healthy church, a revitalized or renewed church?

Most Christian writers and church revitalizers look at the steady numerical growth of attendance and donations as solid indicators of a healthy and growing church. Simpson (1999) called these numerical indicators "quantifying the Spirit of God" (p. 190). Reflecting on this fact, Henard (2015) remarked: "Not all churches that are growing experience biblical church growth. Drawing crowds is not the same as growing a church" (p. 9). The declining numbers are symptoms of illness that can be leadership-related, relational, social, generational, emotional, lacking vision and mission, and can be driven by individualism and institutionalizing (Henard, 2015; Macchia, 1999; Trousdale, Sunshine, & Bendit, 2018).

Church decline is a complicated, all-inclusive matter and it requires a wholistic approach for its renewal, turnaround, and revitalization. Hence, Barna (1998) suggested

that "we must begin by taking steps to restore the church—and all those within the church—to spiritual wholeness" (p. 23). These steps are individual as much as corporate. Without personal spiritual renewal, there is no genuine, authentic, corporate church revitalization either. This renewal starts with recognizing the Lordship of Christ in the individual life.

> The Lordship of Christ is the central reality in all of creation, and it is the central fact of the Christian life. It should shape how we see ourselves and how we understand the world and our place in it—in other words, it is to be the center of our worldview. At its core, having a biblical worldview means understanding what the Lordship of Christ means in every area of life. Growing as a Christian means progressively living out the Lordship of Christ more and more faithfully in more and more areas of life. (Trousdale et al., 2018, p. 148)

Revitalization is more than focusing on leadership, relationships, emotional health, and emotional intelligence. Renewal of the congregation means "living under His authority and Lordship, [it] is the heartbeat of our conviction and the target we must put at the center of our multiplication crosshairs" (Willson, Ferguson, & Hirsch, 2015, p. 44). The Christian call to live in the Kingdom of God is a call to live under the Lordship of God and Christ. Hence, as Hirsch (2006) explained, "Jesus thus becomes the pivotal point in our relation to God, and it is to him that we must give our allegiance and loyalty. Jesus is Lord!" (p. 93). True wholistic revitalization is only possible with Christ in the center. Hirsch (2017) clarified, "Planting the gospel will generate new communities founded on Jesus, his gospel, and his lordship" (p. 204).

We realize that church revitalization is encompassed by the great controversy between good and evil, Christ and Satan. The church fatigue, weakness, and fluctuating health is a sign of a constant battle that is going on between Kingdom builders and the prince of this world. God's Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). It cannot be built

by human effort alone. Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5b), and

Davis (2017) pointed out:

> Church revitalization is like the renewing of a dormant, seemingly dead plant to bear fruit. Not one pastor or lay leader could ever bring this about. This is something only God can do through Christ by the power of the Spirit. Revitalization is like seeing the life-giving sap flowing from the vine to the branches again, bearing good fruit for Christ. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing… No work of genuine revitalization can occur by a new generation of strong-willed leaders sweeping away old unscriptural, man-made traditions and replacing them with new traditions. Rather, these leaders must submit themselves first to Christ and like humble servants ask, "What do you want us to do?" (pp. 37-38)

Training revitalizers, providing the best practices, and giving the best tools for turning around churches are all very important. Many authors have an emphasis on methodology, strategy, and plan. However, if a church and the revitalizer are looking for wholistic healing, renewal, and resurrection and if they look to be good stewards of all the gifts entrusted to them, they need the power of the Spirit. Croft (2016) explained,

> God's design is for that power to come by God's Spirit moving through His spoken word. As we see it illustrated in the valley of dry bones, that power harnessed by God's Spirit and word can breathe life where there is no life and bring unity where there is division. (p. 30)

Maxson (2010) concluded: "It's about accepting Him as Lord and accepting the Holy Spirit as the active agent and seeking His will first before acting, before making a decision" (p. 98).

Conclusion

Many churches experience slowing down in their mission and ministry, while others are declining and slowly fading away. This literature review has investigated the fundamental causes for the lack of church health that implicate the church's decline and how this trend can be reversed. While some conclusions for turn-around churches are

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given, such as having an inclined congregation that is willing to submit to change, some new insights were discovered that I found enlightening.

One example is the implication of the reductionist view of stewardship and its adverse effect on the local church's decline. Alternatively and positively speaking, a multifaceted, gift-based, wholistic view of stewardship should and can turn around a declining church. Furthermore, the importance of the correct relationship between the Lord and stewards and the understanding and practice of stewardship to grow God's economy puts church revitalization in a completely different dimension, moving it from a merely organizational and managerial sphere to personal, relational, and spiritual. In other words, there can be no wholistic revitalization without genuine love (agape), care, and interest for the individuals and the community of believers. The source of genuineness is only found in the Owner-steward relationship and submission to the power of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, I have found that church revitalization is God's work. Church leaders and revitalizers are only stewards commissioned by God to heal and grow His Kingdom and His economy of salvation.

In addition, the investigation has revealed that a fully empowering and engaging method for revitalization through spiritual coaching and coaching, in general, is the closest way to practicing wholistic stewardship. Accordingly, I engaged with local church leaders by modeling wholistic stewardship through coaching. While local church leaders volunteered for research purposes, they were assessed and coached to become empowered and change agents in the local church.

This model of empowerment coaching of local church leaders was chosen for several reasons. First, by coaching local church leaders, the process of personal

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revitalizing and renewal starts immediately. Second, by experiencing empowerment coaching, church leaders can offer coaching to other leaders and members, so multiplication occurs. Finally, empowerment coaching is Holy Spirit-infused coaching, and anything in God's economy and His household has to be divinely driven.

Recommendations

This investigation has opened new avenues and uncovered new insights worthy of further investigation and research. The literature review has uncovered a connection between stewardship and church revitalization and, to some degree, its connectedness with discipleship and disciple-making. I believe that further investigation is needed in the wholistic nature of stewardship and its utilization in church revitalization, church planting, disciple-making, church leadership, and administration. Only an in-depth study can demonstrate the spiritual and practical benefits stewardship can have in the spiritual life of a Christian and the church as a household. Further studies should be conducted in connecting stewardship with discipleship, outreach, and mission in the context of God's economy of salvation and his ownership (Keech, 1963).

Finally, investigators may want to explore how personal modeling and individual investment in a local leader could renew broader church communities by multiplying coaches.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

This research aimed to implement wholistic stewardship that is more than giving

and caring. The broader aspect of stewardship includes complete dependence on the

Owner. "That complete ownership," according to Rodin (2010), "calls for holistic

stewardship" (p. 82) that is manifested in creating, developing, multiplying, and healing

(Hall, 1990; Rodin, 2010; Scherman, 2011; Steinke, 2006a; Vallet, 2011). This kind of

stewardship was expressed through coaching and empowering church leaders to be more

spiritually self-conscious and more practically effective in their ministries for refocusing

and revitalizing the whole church at Pueblo First.

I found that empowering church leaders (stewards of the gifts) was needed for

turnaround churches, or at least church leaders who wanted to empower other leaders

(Schwarz, 2012), basing their leadership on relationships with the members. The second

aspect of successful turnaround churches, as found, was the participation in and hands-on

modeling of the empowering leadership for reproduction purposes of church leaders by

the local pastor (Connors & Smith, 2011), which was essential. A mere classroom setting,

presentation, or lecture was not sufficient for the movement of church revitalization. The

one-on-one approach was necessary if real steward-disciples were shaped to grow the

movement (Spader, 2014).

I had to determine whether both Breen and Cockram's (2011) claim that shifts in

church culture result in church revitalization and Stanier's (2016) claim that coaching alters habits could bring the desired change to the church, and whether it could help the leaders' relation to and use of the received individual gifts, as well as their devotion to God as Master and Lord for the purpose of church revitalization and personal spiritual growth. The hope in this positive change is rooted in OT Scripture in the story of Joseph (Gen 39:1-9). It is further portrayed in Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), while the practical aspect is depicted in the great commandment (Luke 10:27) and Paul's emphasis to the Ephesians about the healthy church (Eph 4:11-15).

This theory and Bible-based hope are yet to be demonstrated through a credible empowering leadership model expressed in easily duplicated empowerment coaching as explained by Stanier (2016). This project sought to determine whether our perception of God as Lord and a steward awareness of the local church leader and church member could bring the desired turnaround in a declining or disintegrating congregation in member engagement, attendance, vision, and church mission.

I followed a plausible plan of empowerment coaching and leadership training that engaged the volunteer leaders in the process of change and modeling. Pueblo First Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership was the subject of this research. This church had experienced a significant decline in attendance in the last two decades. At the time of this research, the average attendance was about 20% of the membership. In addition, I observed that the leadership team members showed little commitment and engagement with their respective offices and ministries. The leadership team had to be reorganized before the project due to many vacant ministry positions.

This research sought to implement an effective plan that established that the

church atmosphere, the church culture, and the leaders' and members' commitment could be changed, and the church could be revitalized through coaching, empowering relationships, and steward-disciple modeling. This change resulted in the leaders' and members' recommitment with a clear vision, mission, and focus as the church engaged in a new movement (Trousdale et al., 2018).

I set the following ten progressive steps:

1. Consent of the RMC of Seventh-day Adventists for conducting the research in their territory.

2. Local church leadership consent for conducting the research in the church.

3. Voluntary participation of church leaders in empowerment coaching.

4. Voluntary participation of church leaders in the "research support group."

5. Volunteer Empowerment Test.

6. Qualitative assessment of the local church by using the NCD survey.

7. Quantitative assessment of the local church by using the ME^{25} survey.

8. Providing *The Coaching Habit, Say Less Ask More and Change the Way you Lead Forever* (Stanier, 2016) to each coachee.

9. Coaching and modeling the coaching for the church leaders based on Stanier (2016).

10. Conducting training of the volunteer coaches in essential coaching.

This order was my preference, and it could vary based on the circumstances and the dynamics of the research itself. My purpose was to cover all the steps of the implementation, not necessarily the order.

**Step One: Consent of the Rocky Mountain
Conference for Conducting the
Research in Their Territory**

Presenting the project and communicating with the RMC was essential for this project. I approached the administration about the church revitalization project after I was hired (March 2019), eighteen months before the project started. The RMC administration's knowledge, insight, and understanding of the local church's leadership dynamics, life, history, and struggles were crucial for my church revitalization approach. Furthermore, the opportunity the administration had provided by giving me "open hands" to implement the proposed project and allowing me to take "any necessary additional steps" (E. Nelson, personal conversation with RMC executive secretary, 2020) to revitalize Pueblo First was a humbling investment of trust in the project, as well as in me. I also procured an official consent letter from the RMC to conduct the research and present it to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) as part of the package for acquiring their consent for researching PSDA. In addition, I asked RMC administration if they could find a project coach who would "encourage, motivate, challenge, and provide accountability" (Collins, 2009, p. 76). Furthermore, the scale and the length of the project combined with the regular pastoral duties and the extraordinary pandemic circumstances needed additional feedback on and assessment of the research so that the project would be successful.

The RMC administration and the different offices also helped provide access to necessary membership and financial data for further insight and analysis of the PSDA church.

Step Two: Local Church Leadership Consent for
Conducting the Research in the Church

I was also the pastor at the PSDA church, so after receiving the consent letter

from the RMC for the research, I approached the church leadership team (Church Board)

to acquire consent and an official consent letter for researching Pueblo First. I submitted

the letter of intent to the leadership team and answered any questions they had regarding

the research. The decision was made in my absence (August 2020) under the leadership

of the head elder so that any possible personal influence from me could be avoided. The

leadership team devised their honest opinions and commitment to the research and its

outcome, the church's revitalization, and renewal (Burrill, 2004).

The acceptance of the project meant that the leadership team and the church at

large committed to the project for six months. This involved a personal and corporate

commitment towards assessments, surveys, training, and coaching. The research outcome

was expected to be optimistic based on the leaders' willingness to participate. On the one

hand, the volunteer leaders benefited by experiencing personal spiritual growth, learning,

and applying new skills to implement a coaching-based ministry (McGervey & Cosby,

2011). On the other hand, the local church benefited by finding out their strengths and

weaknesses through surveys, by addressing the minimal factors (Schwarz, 1996), and by

allowing the coached leaders to impact better the life and ministry of the individual

members and ministry groups.

Step Three: Voluntary Participation of Church
Leaders in Empowerment Coaching

Participation in this research was entirely voluntary. Following the vote of the

leadership team for consent, I presented the whole leadership team with a written letter of

intent to recruit 6-8 leaders (volunteers) for coaching. The decision to join the project and participate as a volunteer needed to be made one week after the letter of intent was presented to the leadership team. If there were more than eight volunteers, I would take the initiative to choose from the pool of volunteers the maximum number of coachees, maintaining a balance between departmental leaders and elders. If fewer than six volunteers were reached, I would work with the number of volunteers who signed up for coaching. However, my conviction was that the lower number would negatively impact the project's final results. The suggested number of potential volunteers represented one-third of the leadership team. My opinion was that it was a healthy number of leaders to work with to empower, refocus, and start the process of revitalization and church culture revival.

I implemented empowerment coaching (Crane, 1999) for church revitalization in order to enter a relationship-building experience with the volunteers. This relationship was based on objective facts. It had a behavioral focus through dialogue and exploring solutions to the matters of life and ministry. The coach, on the other hand, engaged in "empathic understanding, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard" (Rogers, 1980, p. 7) towards the volunteer, expressing no judgment, but walking alongside the person with the intention of humble learning as the coachees found balance in their thoughts, goals, aspirations, and ministry. In this process, the volunteers were kept accountable to their set goals by the coach.

The volunteers volunteered not only for the project itself, but also to experience a self-transformation that included transitions in their behavior, strategy, and goals. Clear boundaries were set and determined so the focus of the coachees could be on the goals

and objectives that they set (Logan, Carlton, & Miller, 2003).

The risk to any participating leader was minimal or nonexistent, and while the research depended on the commitment of the individual leaders, they could leave the project at will. The Coaching Covenant fully protected each participant. I signed the Coaching Covenant with each coachee. As the coach, I kept notes of the topics addressed, strategies made, and progress achieved by the coachee. I believed that only Christ-centered coaching that utilizes the Holy Spirit's power (Creswell, 2006) could change the coachees and bring new life to the church community. The participants and their ministry involvement would not be affected by any adverse outcome of the research, and the Coaching Covenant protected their continual leadership.

Step Four: Voluntary Participation of Church Leaders in the "Research Support Group"

In implementing gift-based wholistic stewardship, I found it essential to be accountable to the same leaders and church members I was attempting to revitalize. This group was composed of other leaders than those who volunteered for coaching, but they were also volunteers. I decided to ask for volunteers, rather than choosing the coachees and the volunteer research group myself because I wanted the leaders to offer the received gifts in the research to "get their ideas, commitment, creativity, and excellence, which are by definition voluntary gifts" (Hunter, 2012, p. 60). I could apply the methodology and real influence only if no positional power was exercised at any stage of the revitalization process (Maxwell, 2013). However, authority is applied, that is by definition: "The skill of getting people to willingly do your will because of your personal influence" (Hunter, 2012, p.61).

This leadership approach was in line with the steward leader concept of giving away power and building up and empowering the volunteers by encouraging the work of God in them by "joining them on a mutual journey of faith and discovery" (Rodin, 2012, p. 55). I believed this journey had to be reciprocal. As much as I was journeying with the coachees, I believed it was important that the local church leaders who journeyed with me also experience the joys, challenges, success, and struggles that the research in church revitalization would bring. This approach was in line with the counsel of the Apostle Paul: "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

Step Five: Volunteer Empowerment Test

In essence, steward leadership, coaching, discipling, and church revitalization was a journey and a commission of empowering the local church leaders and church members to do likewise. Jesus commissioned His disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples" (Matt 28:19). When a lawyer asked Him about the life that would secure him "eternal life," Jesus shared the story of the Good Samaritan and then commissioned him, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). The example of empowering leadership is indispensable in the process of church renewal and revitalization. For this to happen, I needed to be an example in empowering leadership. More important, I needed to know where the volunteers for coaching and the research support group were in their leadership style (Schwarz, 2012).

For this exercise, I provided every volunteer with a free-of-charge Empowerment Test by 3 Color World at the beginning of the implementation process for two reasons: (a) I could coach the volunteers (coachees) with more insight into their leadership style

and (b) I could be a better example to the coaches, making my empowerment and coaching style more effective (Burrill & Evans, 2014). Pertaining to the research support group, I hoped to have more insight into their leadership style through empowerment leadership "wing traits" if they were more assertive in empowerment or leading (Schwarz, 2012). This helped me process better their input, guidance, questions, and criticism for revitalization.

**Step Six: Qualitative Assessment of the Local
Church by Using the Natural Church
Development (NCD) Survey**

One of the most critical steps in the church revitalization process was the church's qualitative assessment. I sought to explore how a coaching relationship could impact and enrich the relationship between the pastor and the leaders and among the leaders themselves as they become team players and builders of the household of God. This research, and with the help of ThoughtExchange, examined how declining churches can turn around in a spiritual as well as relational way, not only having the members involved—"doing to" but rather engaged—"doing with" in the church. In order to determine the church health and relationship quality level and assess the possible change in those same qualities, the church engaged in an NCD Survey at the beginning and the end of the research period.

Appointed church leaders supervised the NCD survey, and I was not involved with the survey at any stage except with the results. In this way, the participants felt no pressure to modify their answerers or present the church more favorably, and the results could more likely be realistic. The timeframe for taking the survey was one month from the initial announcement at the church. Furthermore, the survey was done online or by

filling out the form, depending on the person's preference and ability. The survey was provided through the North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI). Thirty members and I as the church pastor participated following the NCD's instructions.

After the survey results arrived, the church leadership team assessed them and focused on two primary goals: (a) to increase the overall average and (b) to decrease the min-max spread (Burrill & Evans, 2014). The team's particular focus was to look at the quality characteristic church profile (QCCP) "minimum factor" and specific low-scoring questions. The results were given to every leader. They were able to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation process by receiving monthly reports from me at leadership team meetings during the research period.

The leadership team implemented the following action steps (Schwarz, 1996). The sequence of the steps was able to be varied based on the circumstances.

1. Build spiritual momentum: Schwarz (1996) emphasized that it is "not church development, but worship of God [that] is the goal" (p. 106). White (1903) concurred, saying that "Godliness – godlikeness – is the goal to be reached" (p. 18). The leadership team focused their effort in this initial step on prayer throughout the implementation process (prayer partners, prayer groups, prayer sermon series, prayer ten days). Devotion to Christ as Lord (through devotion to individual and group Bible studies, small groups, and community-focused activities) and worship of God (though personal and communal worship time, using one's spiritual gifts, and through returning tithes and practicing generosity) were a priority.

2. Determine a maximum of two minimum factors: The leadership team determined and accepted developing qualitative goals from the QCCP results during its

initial meeting after the reception of the NCD results. The "minimum factor" meant that the church needed the most growth in those areas to be more wholistic and balanced in its overall growth (Schwarz & Schalk, 1998), and it determined the goals the team set.

3. Set qualitative goals: Based on the "minimum factor," the leadership team set precise, time-bound, measurable goals related to a quality increase in the church and members' lives. This was done during the initial leadership meeting after the reception of the NCD results.

4. Identify obstacles: For the goals to be realistic and adequate for the context, the leadership team looked at the possible disadvantages of implementing the goals. The team looked particularly at how the strategic approach to the qualitative growth of the church would challenge the present church culture, traditions (Chan & Beuving, 2012), and spirituality. This was assessed in the leadership and church groups through "think-tanks" and brainstorming sessions.

5. Exercise the strengths based on the NCD results: The leadership team determined what qualitative areas of the survey the church was at its best and emphasized it to grow the "minimal factors" (Schwarz, 1996). The team looked at how the maximum factors might help increase the minimum factors of our score. In addition, the team looked at the leadership and the membership church ministry participation through their spiritual gifts, not through appointment.

6. Address the minimum and maximum factors of 3-5 lowest scoring questions: Finally, the team looked very closely at the minimum factor in the NCD score and a few of the lowest scoring questions. The qualitative goals were analyzed to create healthy conditions for the change to take place. For this to happen, the leadership team had to

commit to the process entirely, and part of the team had to agree to be coached so the change would be lasting and multiplying. Although the implementation would have a time limit, and I was looking for tangible results, it was hard to determine the direction, volume, and speed the implementation would take. I was aware that in addressing the minimal factors, the leadership team and the church would do everything possible to plant, water, and harvest (1 Cor 3:6). However, only God gives the overall growth, multiplication, and godliness (Schwarz, 2015).

**Step Seven: Quantitative Assessment of
the Local Church by Using the
Member Engagement Survey**

The purpose of the GALLUP® Member Engagement Survey® (ME[25]) was to evaluate and measure the spiritual health of a church community that can lead to more engagement of the members in church attendance and gift-based ministry (ME[25]: Measure, Manage, and Maximize Member engagement brochure by GALLUP®). In addition, I sought to establish whether the qualitative changes could bring about quantitative fluctuations in the congregation. The focus would be on numerical increase in members' engagement in church ministries, volunteering in activities, willingness to be trained and participate in leadership, and a general increase in attendance of church members and guests.

I focused only on several survey questions to project the necessary quantitative differences in a congregation. The main focus was on how a wholistic approach to leadership through empowerment coaching could help the church engage and commit to a more dedicated and spiritual life. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) wrote: "Focus on each person's strengths and manage around his weaknesses. … do everything you can to

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help each person cultivate his talents. Help each person become more of who he already is" (p. 182).

The questions of interest chosen were the following:

ME02 – I spend time in worship or prayer every day

ME09 – I speak words of kindness to those in need of encouragement

ME10 – I am a person who is spiritually committed

ME15 – The spiritual leaders in my congregation seem to care about me as a person

ME18 – The mission or purpose of my congregation makes me feel my participation is important

ME22 – In my congregation, I have opportunities to learn and grow

(The questions are cited from the ME[25]).

The "I" questions focused on the individual member to determine his/her commitment level to spiritual disciplines and ministry and care for others through encouragement and empowerment. The rest of the focus questions evaluated the individual member's opinions and experience of the spiritual commitment and engagement level toward the rest of the church members. It also presented the leaders' care for the members' spiritual growth, the church's missional direction, and most important, a reciprocal trust that is based on the lordship of Christ.

The Church leadership team evaluated the answers to these questions given by the congregation at the beginning of the research period. Those leaders who volunteered to be coached would experience empowerment for themselves. For this purpose, strength-based coaching (Winseman, Clifton, & Liesveld, 2004) that combines talents, skills,

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knowledge with spirituals gifts (Rath, 2007) would be followed. I trusted that if this approach to empowerment and engaging coaching and its branching in the local church (Ogne & Roehl, 2008) were to be practiced, it would produce a higher level of trust among the leadership team members and between the team and the congregation. Furthermore, it sought to evaluate whether this practice would result in a higher commitment level in the leadership team and the congregation and whether there was a greater accountability level from all involved and an increase in the non-tangible and tangible results (Miller & Hall, 2007).

I concluded the research with a second survey. Finally, the two results were evaluated and compared in a quantitative analysis that resulted from qualitative engagement with the congregation. The possibility of church revitalization and renewal tangible in quantitative results through qualitative methods would be proven through this research.

Step Eight: Provide the Coaching Habit,
Say Less, Ask More and Change the
Way You Lead Forever
to Each Coachee

After selecting the volunteer leaders (6-8 individuals), I presented each participant with Stanier's (2016) book on coaching. Reading this book was required for several reasons: (a) besides a one-on-one introduction to coaching by the researcher, the coachee was expected to learn more about the basic coaching principles and practices; (b) the self-education helped the coachees to reduce or eliminate any remaining skepticism or anxiety toward coaching; (c) the questions of the book were the guideline and foundation of my coaching and modeling of coaching; and (d) the book and its coaching questions were

foundational for developing the coachees' coaching habits as they branched out and started coaching other leaders and members.

In a church culture where giving advice, teaching, preaching, canceling, and mentoring are the norm, introducing coaching as a way of connecting, growing, enabling, and empowering others for ministry in the Kingdom brought into perspective a genuine interest for others. Stanier (2016) explained that "a little less advice, a little more curiosity" (p. 159) would build up a habit of curiosity that would open the gates of "how to change" before getting to the subject of "what to change" (p. 23).

I assessed the legitimacy of Stanier's claim and whether his coaching method through the suggested questions could help establish a coaching habit by introducing curiosity and changing how the local church leaders led and engaged in their leadership.

**Step Nine: Coach and Model the Coaching
for the Church Leaders Based on Stanier**

The central part of this project was to coach leaders to bring a wholistic change in their ministry and leadership that would bring the desired positive change and revitalization to the church. I was convinced that coaching could help the local church step beyond the boundaries of "control established by past Christendom" and open opportunities for God to steer and shake the church back to His likeness, His movement, and His vitality (Bandy, 2000, p. 18). The validity of this theory was demonstrated through this research. Moreover, the "received power" (Acts 1:8) could only come to fruition by self-surrender and profound spirituality, not by an external new technique or method of ministry (Bandy, 2000).

Although I expected the surveys to prove and point out the shortcomings and

weak areas of the local church's spiritual wellbeing, I intended to coach on an assumption of health (Creswell, 2006). This health assumption was based on the concept of a "received gift" that is always good and Spirit-inspired. Hence, I looked to empower the strength of the coaches and helped to bring clarity and focus to them as they chose the subjects that would grow their personal experience in the areas they chose and where their needs were. I believed that Creswell's (2006) statement that "leaders who can develop leaders are more successful at honoring their leadership skills" (p. 119) was true. Hence, my purpose was to develop leaders who could even outgrow me. Furthermore, as Sandstorm and Smith (2008) pointed out, "emerging leaders" should partner "with experienced executive coaches who can radically advance this process" (p. 284). This was achieved by bi-partisan, willing engagement in coaching.

The coachee and the coach (myself) signed a Coaching Covenant (see Appendix C) that outlined the coaching relationship, the expectations, and the coaching goals. The coach kept a record of the coachee's goals, and sent (e-mailed, texted) them to the coachee to keep the coachee accountable while, at the same time, making sure that a trusting relationship was built and God-sized goals were reached (Creswell, 2006). Halfway through the project (after three months or six coaching sessions), the coachees were expected to take their own notes about their goals and responsibly submit or email them to me. Through this exercise, they learned to record their own goals as they prepared to have potential coachees.

I committed to coaching with punctual attendance, attentive listening, focused questions, honest relating, deep reflecting, refocusing, and reviewing (Logan et al., 2003). Furthermore, I intended to introduce change without telling the coachees what to do, but

by helping them to take responsibility for "defining and pursuing their own future"

(McGervey & Cosby, 2011, p. 66). Naturally, none of this happened without the direct

involvement of the Holy Spirit in the coachees' lives that produced the wholistic health of

the leader and the congregation. Steinke (2006a) pointed out the following:

> The health of a congregation is multifaceted. It is a power-sharing arrangement.
> Attitudes count. Working together counts. Faithfulness matters. Mood and tone are
> significant… Healthy congregations are spirited. They are graced and gracious,
> generous with each-others and outsiders. They are communities of thanks and praise.
> They are wholesome and refreshing. (pp. 20-21)

Ultimately, when we want to revitalize, renew, and regenerate a church, we look

to make people faithful, reflect godliness or God-likeness, and be wholistic stewards of

all the gifts they receive from their Lord (Bandy, 2007) by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The research examined how an intentional, daily, deeper relationship with the Master and

Lord through daily "Divine Appointments" could improve the leaders' relationships and

develop a culture of Lord-focused life and teamwork. For the qualitative spiritual growth

of the leaders, I presented each coachee with the book *Life-Changing Divine Appointment*

– 30-day Challenge (Evans, 2020), which they completed in the first phase of strategic

implementation. The participants were expected to complete the 30-day challenge and

journal how the experience impacted them personally and how it impacted the church

around them.

Step Ten: Conduct Training of the Volunteer
Coachees in Essential Coaching

In the last month of the implementation of the project, I conducted a coaching

seminar for the coachees. After the practical aspect and modeling part of coaching, after

the coachees had grasped the foundations of coaching from Stanier (2016), I analyzed the

coaching period and gave further instructions about the extraordinary potential of Christ-Centered Coaching (Creswell, 2006) and its potential impact on the church-at-large.

After the seminar that included two sessions, the coachees chose whether they would like to become coaches and branch out the coaching to other leaders and members. The seminar was held in person and on an internet conference platform. I planned to extend my coaching beyond the implementation period since revitalization and church ministry multiplication would only take shape in the project implementation phase.

The project implementation gave only a glimpse into the potential of empowerment coaching and its relation to wholistic stewardship and gift-based ministry, which, according to Rodin (2008), creates transformed stewards who become change agents in the body of believers. From my experience and based on practical scholars and revitalization practitioners (Barna, 1993; Burrill, 2004; Cheyney, 2016; Easum, 2007; Eymann, 2012; Frazee & Schaller, 1995), it is known that an entire church revitalization would take more than a year; in most cases, it is three to five years.

Passing on the knowledge and skills and making the larger group of leaders aware of their Lord-given gifts is necessary to lead to a change in an organization, institution, or church (Kotter, 1996). Hence, I found it essential to implement the project and give birth to a movement (Addison, 2019) that could resurrect dead churches, rejuvenate plateaued churches, and accelerate growing churches. This approach was initiated as a starting point for a complete revitalization of the leadership and the church in the local setting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I elected to do the project implementation in ten steps or phases. These steps included the church leadership team's empowerment coaching to coach habit

development in the coachees, branching out the coaching throughout the church leadership team and beyond, and revitalizing the leadership team and the church. For this purpose, Stanier's (2016) book, *The Coaching Habit, Say Less Ask More and Change the Way you Lead Forever,* was used as a foundation.

While I used coaching to form a coaching habit with the church leaders, I also modeled the coaching practice to the volunteer coachees. In addition, I mentored, counseled, taught, and demonstrated skills and ways of ministry and leadership for the empowerment of the local church leaders and the development of a local church's Christ-centered coaching movement through wholistic stewardship.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE OF THE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Before the Project's Introduction

When I arrived in Pueblo on May 1, 2019, there was a ten-month period before the COVID 19 restrictions were introduced. A positive build-up happened towards the research. My first goal was to find out as much as possible through research (local, conference, online) about the history and dynamics in the local church. As the situation unfolded and the leadership team became more scarce through resignations, I became more aware of a lack of trust amongst them. I could at least partially relate to them because of my experience of having my trust greatly shaken. I approached them individually and collectively, being vulnerable and letting criticism fall on me as a pastor, leader, and friend. I let this happen not because I caused the problem, but because they had to release their anger, disappointment, doubts, and emotions to start anew.

Through this exercise, I aimed to renew trust in myself as a pastor who did not stand with any of the fractions or individuals but intended to rebuild their trust in each other that coaching later deepened and solidified even more. In addition, I invested time in training elders, deacons, and some departmental leaders so they could take responsibility and leadership. Furthermore, I chose a group of able leaders (six of them) and shared the Natural Church Development (NCD) material that we jointly presented as a seminar to the rest of the leadership team to inform the leaders and prepare the grounds

for the survey. These initiatives led to more confidence in the leaders so that the general church climate started changing, and the attendance grew to just under 100 before the COVID19 restrictions went into effect.

The Initiative Implementation

This research aimed to implement wholistic stewardship empowerment coaching of the volunteer group of church leaders in Pueblo First to start the process of revitalization and renewal. This chapter details the implementation of the project in its ten steps.

Step One Implemented: Consent of the Rocky Mountain Conference for Conducting the Research in Their Territory

The first step of the project implementation started by reaching out to the administration of RMC, the local conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to get permission to do research in their territory, specifically at PSDA. The official letter was issued on August 3, 2020 by the Executive Secretary of the Conference and it gave official affirmation and approval to me to conduct research and study at PSDA in the territory of RMC. At no time during the project did I find the administration to be anything but supportive and helpful, which was fundamental in starting and completing the project. The consent letter by the RMC was also instrumental in acquiring the IRB's permission for research with human subjects.

In addition, the RMC administration and departmental leadership helped provide necessary access to the information about the history of the church, membership and attendance, and the tithe and offering changes through the years relevant to the conducted

revitalization study. I approached several leaders in the conference to provide project

coaching. Unfortunately, due to the restraints of the COVID-19 pandemic and

inadequacy (lack of competent experience, familiarity) in academic practices, I had to

find a project coach outside the local conference. This lack of experience exposed the

need in the Conference for qualified and experienced leaders with academic and practical

know-how to support ongoing research in their territory that can improve, enrich, grow,

and develop local churches. I believe that if there were a more active interest of the

Conference in the revitalization process and research, the benefits would have been

immediately realized in the local church and the broader territory of the Conference.

Step Two Implemented: Local Church
Leadership Consent for Conducting
the Research in the Church

Following the consent letter from the RMC, at the next regular church leadership

team (Church Board) meeting on August 10, 2020, with 22 out of 23 members in

attendance, the letter of intent for the research and the consent letter of the RMC

administration were presented (see Appendix B). After presenting the details of the

research project and after answering a few questions, I handed over the chair to of the

head elder and left the room. This action was necessary for several reasons. First, I did

not want the leadership team to be emotionally involved with their decision-making.

Second, the leadership team felt no time limit or pressure to discuss the proposal. Third,

the leadership team had to have the freedom to discuss the letter of intent and the consent

letter from the RMC. Finally, the leadership team had to have freedom to decide about

involving the leadership team in a six-month-long project, which required total

commitment from each one of them.

After a relatively short meeting, the church leadership team unanimously voted to uphold the proposed coaching project and commit to realizing the initiative individually and corporately. The whole leadership team promised to have a united front to the congregation and support all the surveys, tests, and coaching that was about to take place. I found that the local church leadership team had to "own" the project and be wholly committed to it before taking further steps. My approach by empowerment and entrusting the entire process to the leadership team was a steward approach showing complete trust and confidence in God's guidance and the team's ability to make the right decisions. In the words of Rodin (2010), "as we undergo the transformation of our own heart in our response to the call to be a godly steward, we become leaders who are passionate about the hearts of our people" (p. 104).

Step Three Implemented: Voluntary
Participation of Church Leaders
in Empowerment Coaching

Following the church leadership team vote, I presented the letter of intent to recruit volunteers for empowerment coaching among the church elders and ministry leaders. The number of volunteer coachees was not to exceed eight and not be less than six leaders. All the leaders were given seven days to consider prayerfully becoming part of the group of coaches. I found that giving a definite time outside the board room to the leaders to make the decision boosted the confidence and trust of the leadership team towards me and encouraged their reliance on God's guidance in their decision-making. In addition, their morale and confidence were boosted by the trust I extended.

At the end of the given time, I had eight volunteer coaches, corresponding to one-third of the leadership team. The task and the expectations were met in the number and

the aspect of the volunteer group. However, it was interesting to observe that the remaining church leaders, the majority of church elders and church leaders, did not even attempt to be among those who would volunteer for church revitalization, empowerment, and coaching exercises. There were five ministry leader volunteers and three elders. Furthermore, the group consisted of six female leaders and only two male leaders, the significance of which will be examined in the next chapter. Following their initial commitment to empowerment coaching, all of them signed the Coaching Covenant. This document bound both the coach and the coachee to mutual respect, punctuality, and commitment. The coaching sessions were to happen every other week for six months, and in case of rescheduling, it had to happen a day earlier. In addition, the volunteers were further instructed in the meaning and process of empowerment coaching through a short meeting. They readily agreed to all the stipulations and time frame.

I found that a more formal introduction to empowering Christian coaching would have served a great purpose through coaching. It took some of the volunteers a couple of months (over four sessions) to realize what coaching was and how it worked since they had never been exposed to it before. Moreover, even though I found it difficult to keep the coaching format with those volunteers, they adjusted to the questioning format and became comfortable with it. I believe that if step ten had also been presented as part of step three, some coachees would have been more confident and enthusiastic in participating in coaching and opening up to the Holy Spirit's power in goal setting and goal-reaching. Relying only on the personal introduction and modeling coaching was insufficient in some cases, although it did not significantly affect the project.

Step Four Implemented: Voluntary
Participation of Church Leaders in
the "Research Support Group"

I also reached out to the leadership team for qualified individuals who could be part of the Research Support Group (RSG). I found having accountability to the same body of leaders who were being coached and kept accountable to be very important. While making the coach vulnerable, this approach demonstrated the level of trust I had in the leadership team's ability to oversee the research. Since lack of trust is a significant issue in declining churches (Arn & Arn, 1998), it was appropriate for the coaching process to build trust. By taking down the cloak of professionalism and making myself exposed and liable to the RSG, I was following Piper's (2013) claim. He expounded: "Professionalism has nothing to do with the essence and heart of the Christian ministry. The more professional we long to be, the more spiritual death we will leave in our wake" (p. 13).

Two individuals with experience in coaching volunteered to be on the RSG out of the church leadership team. The RSG volunteers and I signed a formal covenant of mutual respect, privacy, and punctuality (see Appendix C). The meetings were scheduled to be once a month, six times during the research period. During these meetings, I gave my monthly report and answered any additional questions about the ongoing coaching sessions while protecting the coachee's identity. In return, I received encouragement, focus, and inspiration for continuing the work.

From the beginning of the implementation, I realized that it would be suitable for the rest of the leadership team that did not have direct involvement in coaching to be regularly informed about the progress of coaching and the project. Hence, I had a regular

monthly report of the leadership team at every regular church leadership team meeting. Through this approach, the leadership team had a better sense of ownership and involvement in the whole project. This involvement of the whole leadership team also boosted their willingness to succeed, even if most of them were not directly involved in the project.

Step Five Implemented: Volunteer Empowerment Test

Following the findings of the volunteer coachees, I requested that they take the Empowerment Test® by the 3 Color World®. The test had to be taken at the beginning of the coaching process for several reasons. This step was essential for the coachees to know how the church perceived them as leaders. The test's Summary Profile portrayed the coachees' influence tendency. According to the Empowerment Test®, there were two sides of each person's influence tendency: empowerment and leadership. These two leadership sections were further divided into three other areas of leadership that were assessed as an explanation, motivation, and liberation. A "bubble level" represented the assessment results of the coachees done by two or more individuals from the leadership team or the congregation.

Some coachees found doing the online test quite difficult since their computer literacy was relatively low or nonexistent. However, with some help from the church's technical team, they sent out the requests to preferred individuals to do their leadership assessment. Even with all the provided support and help, one out of eight coachees could not complete the test during the research period. After analyzing the situation, the

technical team and I concluded that there must have been a technical glitch that prevented the test from being completed and submitted.

The summary profile of the received tests showed that in six out of seven cases, the coachees, church leaders, had the right influence tendency for church growth and revitalization. They were either very balanced or were more empowerers than leaders. Six out of seven coachees were well equipped to use their gifts in the best possible way for empowering others to use their gifts in implementing the church's big mission and vision. In addition, these six leaders were able to empower more through motivation and identifying the most critical next steps. On the negative side, the test pointed out that in order to avoid becoming a cheerleader and a driver, these leaders needed to focus more on explaining and on the liberation of others.

On the other hand, one out of seven coachees had a strong tendency in leadership. This influence inclination, while giving the rest of the leaders the freedom to experiment and pursue their dreams, is a liberation dimension of leadership that could become only comrades. The leaders and coachees had to grasp the importance of exploration and motivation besides the liberation of others.

In light of the revealed influence tendencies, I spent more significant parts of two sessions coaching the volunteer leaders and reflecting on the empowerment leadership win traits. Through this process, the volunteers became more aware of their leadership strengths and weaknesses and they made plans to mend and adjust their leadership skills and influence. All the volunteers who completed the test found the exercise to be an eye-opening experience. On the other hand, based on the results of the empowerment test, I was able to do the modeling, steer the conversations, and coach to make the coachees

more wholistic and balanced in their ministry and leadership approach.

In addition, the leadership support group also took part in the Empowerment Test®. The test results gave the support group volunteers insight into their empowerment strengths and weaknesses, which was necessary to adjust their strategies towards me if necessary. On the other hand, I had a deeper understanding of the questions, comments, and insights the support group had through the results. I believe that the balance between the two volunteer support groups was helpful. One of them had empowerment influence tendencies, while the other had leadership influence tendencies. Both of them skillfully used their strengths while being aware of their weaknesses and allowing each other to take the lead when the particular strengths were needed to help me be focused, more aware of the process, and committed to the initiative.

Step Six Implemented: Qualitative Assessment of the Local Church by Using the Natural Church Development (NCD) Survey

The NCD survey was initiated upon IRB approval for research at Pueblo First on August 28, 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic made the initiative quite challenging. The restrictions, anxiety, and diverse political opinions created an even more significant gap between some leaders and church groups that I aimed to lessen and eliminate through the process of leadership coaching and empowerment. By the time the survey took place, the pandemic and the complete lockdown were barely lifting, with the option of having only ten people sharing a room. Hence the NCD survey had to be done online and, in some cases, hand-delivered to church members.

The North American Division Evangelism Institute had provided access to online and printable surveys. The instructions for conducting the survey were closely followed.

The church leadership team chose 30 church members and 10 alternates, while the RSG volunteered to survey the appointed individuals and collect the data in a timely fashion. The survey was finished before the end of the appointed period of one month, and the results were available on the same day the last survey was collected on September 20, 2020.

The results showed that the NCD composite average was only 29 points (see Appendix E), exhibiting a low average at most of the assessed church health areas and a few at ground-level existence. Those minimum factors had to be addressed.

On September 24, 2020, the church leadership team met virtually to assess the survey's results and determine the (a) two minimal factors to address, (b) how to decrease the minimum-maximum spread by focusing on the specific low-scoring questions in the given qualitative area, and (c) the church leadership team had to accept steps to implement the revitalization project. These points were the outcome of the meeting:

1. Regardless of the lockdown, the leadership team members agreed to build spiritual momentum by implementing some corporate and individual steps to build closeness. The church leadership team and some departments with their associates organized themselves into prayer partners. Over 20 praying twosomes were organized. One of the teachers started an online, virtual Bible study class (with 12-26 participants), and an in-person disciple-making class was introduced by signing up about 10 participants. I introduced a Sabbath sermon series on the "Coaching Questions of Jesus," followed by the in-depth study of the "Disciple's Prayer" ("The Lord's Prayer"), "Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough," and "The Cross of Christ." These series were conducted through six months of research.

2. In the extraordinary meeting mentioned above, the church leadership team had

determined, based on the NCD survey's quality characteristic minimal factors and related

direct questions, that the area of assessment results would be addressed. The survey

results pointed to (a) Loving Relationship (22 points) and (b) Holistic Small Groups (24

points) as the most lacking qualities the church had to address (according to NCD

assessment scores, the low is 35 points, the average 50 points, and the high 75 points). A

closer look at the related areas and the lowest scoring questions uncovered an even more

daunting reality. The lowest scoring question for Loving Relationship was Q61: Our

leaders show concern for the personal problems of those in ministry (11 points). To my

surprise and that of the leadership team, the second-lowest scoring question was not from

the Holistic Small Group set of questions, but rather, from the Empowerment Leadership

area of the survey, Q73: The leaders of our church concentrate on the task for which they

are gifted (12 points). The leadership team agreed that the number one area that had to be

addressed was Empowerment Leadership. This decision was right in line with my

findings regarding church leadership and organizational health (Lencioni, 2012). This

finding gave a straight path to empowerment coaching as a possible solution to the

existing problem.

During further NCD score analysis, the leadership team found that the second

area that needed immediate addressing was Loving Relationships, rather than Holistic

Small Groups. The fourth and fifth-lowest scoring questions were Q39 – I can rely upon

my friends at church and Q30 – In our church, it is possible to talk with other people

about personal problems, both scoring only 17 points. (See Appendix E)

3. The leadership team set the following qualitative goals for the two areas of church life improvement and healing:

(a) The volunteers from the leadership team committed to be coached and empowered in their ministry for six months. The engagement helped the leaders as they addressed the challenges in their personal life and ministry to focus more on the congregation's and individuals' needs. The coaching happened every two weeks and was conducted by me. The goal was to have at least several leaders who could continue coaching other leaders and members under my supervision.

(b) The church elders and church deacons received training during the first and second months of the research period. They were organized by the heads of departments to visit and address the church membership's personal and spiritual needs. The goal was to visit (by phone, Zoom, or in-person) all the church members (shut-ins and disengaged, young and aged) and the church guests who would visit weekly to build the feeling of care, community, and belonging. In addition, new church cards were created for weekly mailing to those missed at the church. These activities were also intended to address the second-lowest score, Loving Relationships.

(c) The leadership team was organized as prayer partners to support each other, keep each other accountable, and pray for the people and success of the project. Besides building the spiritual strength and stamina of the individual leader, the purpose of this activity was to spread the initiative and influence in the broader membership.

(d) I required the church leadership team to have an external ally (Schwarz & Schalk, 1998), an independent NCD coach (an NCD certified pastor), who oversaw and kept the team and me accountable during the project implementation.

4. As the next task, the leadership team assessed the obstacles that made the project implementation challenging. It found that the pandemic restrictions made some of the goals almost impossible to implement. They found that the lack of physical contact with church members led to further alienation and criticism among some of the church members. Addressing the second-lowest NCD score, Loving Relationships, proved to be more challenging than any one of us anticipated. To address this issue, one of the church elders initiated an online "think-tank" that provided a real-time situation assessment so that the leadership team could improve its response to the rising issues. In addition, the leadership team was aware that in-person and online worship attendance, according to eAdventist, had significantly decreased since the beginning of the pandemic—from about 100 regular attendees to just over 60, including in-person and online. This number further decreased through the project period until about four months into the implementation period, when the trend of attendance decreasing changed to increasing. This change corresponded with the coachees engagement with their assistance and the church members through empowerment coaching and leadership.

5. The leadership team further examined the strengths as they were presented in the initial NCD results. Passionate Spirituality (49 points) and Inspiring Worship Service (48 points) were the most prominent. The leadership team partially addressed these points as they developed the spiritual momentum (see point 1) and the qualitative goals (see point 3). However, they found that the warm welcome, intentional praise songs, the

heartfelt intercessory prayer, and planned involvement of most active church members served as a tremendous bonding tool for people who were worshiping together in-person and virtually.

6. Finally, the leadership team committed to six months of supporting the whole project and ensuring that this project bring positive results with their participation and the volunteer leaders' engagement in the process.

A second NCD survey was taken at the end of the implementation period on March 27, 2021. The results and their implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

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**Step Seven Implemented: Quantitative Assessment
of the Local Church by Using the Member
Engagement Survey**

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The church membership received the GALLUP® (ME²⁵) on September 26, 2020, in-person (printed) and online (electronically). The RSG took the responsibility of conducting the survey. The members were informed about the nature and purpose of the survey. Furthermore, they understood that they could fill in the survey only once by the end of the day; otherwise, it would not be counted. The survey had 49 random anonymous participants who fully completed it on time and in its entirety.

The "I" questions of interest revealed the following results.

ME02 – I spend time in worship or prayer every day (GALLUP®)

Almost 88% (43 out of 49) of the survey participants responded with "agree" or "strongly agree." Just over 6% were unsure, and another 6% were in disagreement with the statement; they did not practice daily prayer or worship.

ME09 – I speak words of kindness to those in need of encouragement (GALLUP®)

Close to 92% of the enquired (45 out of 49) were confident that they spoke words of kindness to those in need. Only 4% were not sure, and 2% were not doing it.

ME10 – I am a person who is spiritually committed (GALLUP®)

Of those surveyed, almost 88% (43 out of 49) considered themselves spiritually committed, about 10% felt they were neither, and 2% felt that they were not committed at all.

This survey proved a high level of spirituality, readiness for service, and commitment among the church membership. The leadership team assessed these qualitative church health parameters to be a strength of the congregation and a tool that could be used to address the minimal factors present in the NCD survey. In addition, the survey revealed a substantial base of individuals who could be coached to develop further the church's need for loving relationships and gift-based ministry.

The second part of the focus questions has revealed a stunning reality regarding a substantial gap between self-observation and how the members see each other and what expectations they have, especially from the elected leaders in the church.

ME15: The spiritual leaders in my congregation seem to care about me as a person (GALLUP®).

According to those surveyed, 57% (28 out of 49) felt that they were well cared for by the leaders in the congregation. About 18% were unclear, while over 24% felt neglected.

ME18: The mission or purpose of my congregation makes me feel my participation is important (GALLUP®).

The number of members who were satisfied with the church's mission and felt their participation was essential was just above 61% (30 out of 49). Sixteen percent were Those neutral, and about 20% felt left behind.

ME22: In my congregation, I have opportunities to learn and grow (GALLUP®).

From those surveyed, 65% (32 out of 49) responded positively. Twenty-four percent were uncertain, while about 10% felt indifferent.

These survey results have suggested several conclusions: (a) church leaders, while recognized and present in the congregation, need to show care and connectedness to the congregation members. Almost half of those surveyed felt disconnected or uncertain of the leader's care; (b) just over half of those surveyed felt confident and open to participating in the church's mission; and (c) while the number of those who saw the opportunities for personal and spiritual growth in the congregation was significant, one-third of the participants were either not informed or just ignorant about the given opportunities.

Considering the quantitative assessments, the leadership team embraced the need for leaders' coaching to engage better with the membership. Furthermore, they agreed that better communication of the church's mission in the community and among members would lead to greater awareness and commitment. Moreover, a more transparent and multi-platform information flow of the available assets for the members' and leaders' individual spiritual and gift-based ministry growth would increase engagement and confidence in serving.

A second ME[25] was taken at the end of the implementation period on March 27, 2021. The results and their implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

**Step Eight Implemented: Provide the Coaching
Habit, Say Less, Ask More and
Change the Way You Lead
Forever to Each Coachee**

The volunteer leaders received a copy of Stanier's (2016) book. All the participants read the book, and during the coaching sessions, they had the opportunity to experience the questions implemented and used in their life context and ministry. I realized that most of the coachees first focused on their life's burning issues, throbbing relationships, superficial spirituality, and hectic planning and scheduling before they could give any priority to their ministry or church service. Furthermore, the volunteers were able to familiarize themselves with the flow of the coaching session and the use of empowerment questions as part of the coaching process.

The whole group of eight leaders grew through the process of coaching. In the second half of the implementation process (the last three months), they all focused on three major parts of the implementation: bettering their ministries by setting clarity to their calling, nurturing their spirituality, and creating a community and culture (Ogne & Roehl, 2008). In addition, Stanier's (2016) claim that "little less advice and little more curiosity" (p. 159) should bring change in leadership and lead to empowered leaders was put to the test. The tangible results and conclusions of empowerment coaching are further discussed in the next chapter. However, my expectations were met, and I observed the leaders' growth and maturing, and the church's move from disintegration and chaos to concept (Collins, 2001).

In addition, the coachees naturally, all by themselves (Schwarz, 2015), extended

their experience and learned skills to other leaders and church members, causing a ripple

effect and exciting others to attend and serve the church's vision.

Step Nine Implemented: Coach and Model
the Coaching for the Church
Leaders Based on Stanier

The coaching of the eight volunteer leaders started by signing the Coaching

Covenant (see Appendix C) that outlined the peripheral rules of the coaching covenant.

All the participants received *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the*

Way you Lead Forever (Stanier, 2016). They familiarized themselves with the process of

coaching and the questions they would be facing. At the same time, I spent a coaching

session worth of time with each participant, explaining the purpose and the structure of

coaching.

The coaching sessions were conducted every first and third week of the month for

the six months of the project implementation, starting in September 2020. All the

appointments were to be respected faithfully by both sides according to the Coaching

Covenant. However, the coachees had the freedom to end the coaching at any time

without excuse. While giving autonomy and choice, this freedom of the coachees also

had a purpose of what Canfield and Chee (2013) called "reframing." The reframing

technique helped the coachees respond appropriately to the event or circumstances in

order to have the desired outcome while reflecting on how the process happened. The

coachees were responsible for the content of the conversation. At the same time, I, as the

coach, helped the coachees move from the realization of the need for change to

empowering them to want to change, supporting them through change and celebration of

achievement. Only by changing one's habits can one change one's behavior, level of success, values, and ultimately, as this study's purpose was, one's church's health (Canfield & Chee, 2013; Passmore & Tee, 2021; Stanier, 2016).

My guiding questions were taken from the book by Stanier (2016).

- The kickstart question: What is on your mind?

- The awe question: And What else?

- The focus question: What is the real challenge here for you?

- The foundation question: What do you want?

- The lazy question: How can I help?

- The strategic question: If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?

- The learning question: What was most useful to you?

These simple questions were used as a foundation for all the coaching sessions while practicing active multi-level listening (Blackaby & Royall, 2018). In addition, the coaching sessions served as a modeling platform for the coaches, and the questions, as a simple tool that they could reflect on and use as they were open to and comfortable with coaching other leaders and church members. All of the coachees completed the reading of Steiner's book in the next two months, which gave them essential knowledge and understanding of the nature and practice of coaching, and it supported their curiosity and determination to be the change. The effects and the results of the coaching will be presented in the next chapter.

The coachees were asked to participate in a thirty-day spiritual challenge as part of the implementation coaching process. The purpose of this exercise was to impact their spiritual well-being, growth, and maturing by having a more intentional and focused daily

spiritual approach in their daily living. Since this exercise was in addition to coaching

and not part of the coaching covenant, I left the individual coachees to decide for

themselves while observing, comparing, and contrasting those who participated in the

exercise and those who did not. Six out of eight coachees participated. This participation

showed to be significant, and we will reflect on its results in the next chapter. The willing

coachees received *Life-Changing Divine Appointment* (Evans 2020), and while all of

them completed the challenge, only half of them were able to do it in a consecutive

thirty-day period. This difference did not have any particular effect on the coaching

session outcomes.

Step Ten Implemented: Conduct Training of the Volunteer Coachees in Essential Coaching

I envisioned having additional training sessions with the coachees during or upon

the completion of the implementation period. As the project was nearing its end, in order

to find out whether there was interest among the coachees to practice essential coaching,

I created a simple questionnaire (see Appendix A). The coachees could choose whether

they would participate or not and express their opinion and desire for coaching or not.

The response was unanimous; all eight participants expressed their willingness to learn

more and have hands-on experience with coaching. I prepared and shared the two-part

coaching training seminar in-person with the coachees right after the implementation (see

Appendix A). Four out of eight participants immediately expressed their willingness to

coach others. Two asked for more information, training, and time, while the remaining

two individuals, while enjoying being coached, did not feel coaching others was a calling

for them. The assessment of these results will be discussed further in the next chapter.

As expected at the beginning of the investigation, the participants found undiscovered potential, spiritual stamina, and new solutions and ideas demonstrated to them by the working of the Holy Spirit, aided by questions, support, trust, and accountability (Addison, 2019).

Conclusion

The scope of this investigation stretched beyond the project implementation period; however, I kept my results to the limitations of time and the extent of the project. As verified in the following chapter, the project demonstrated that a wholistic steward approach, through empowerment coaching, could bring forth qualitative change and revitalization in an unhealthy and declining church environment. The more tangible, quantitative results are yet to be presented.

The project implementation was done during the time of the pandemic. The circumstances limited me in delivering coaching, and the participants in their ability and willingness to stretch the boundaries of their goals and aspirations. The coaching results extended beyond the expectations in the individual lives and ministry of the coachees. However, the overall results and impact of coaching through branching out are yet to be seen in the near and subsequent future. Planting the seed of revitalization has happened, and just as the local church leadership was involved in bringing the church to the slope of decline, it should be the local church leadership that will return the church to the slope of ascent. A local church cannot expect change and be revitalized unless its leaders revive and revitalize others. Wholistic steward revitalization is not the work of one; it could be the initiation of one, but it is the work of all.

Wright (2006) eloquently concluded when he wrote about God's restoration:

Christians are called to leave behind, in the tomb of Jesus, all that belongs to the brokenness and incompleteness of the present world. It is time, in the power of the Spirit, to take upon our proper role, our fully human role, as agents, heralds, and stewards of the new day that is dawning. That, quite simply, is what it means to be Christian: to follow Jesus Christ into the new world, God's new world, which he has thrown open before us. (p. 237)

In the following chapter, the research results will be presented, assessed, compared, and contrasted to reveal what kind of "new world," new opportunities, ideas, and vision the Lord has thrown open before the Pueblo First leadership team.

CHAPTER 6

PROJECT EVALUATION AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the project's initiative, examine the results, reflect on its impact on me as a pastor and ministry leader, and suggest conclusions and recommendations regarding the effectiveness of local church leadership coaching for church revitalization.

Summary of the Initiative

The purpose of the initiative was to determine the impact of the local church leaders' coaching as an instrument of wholistic stewardship on the church's decline in attendance and ministry commitment. The following steps were made to accomplish this goal: (a) I reflected on the theological aspect of wholistic stewardship in the Bible; (b) I consulted a vast array of related literature on wholistic stewardship, coaching, and leadership to define the impact of coaching and the methodology of the initiative; (c) I executed a research plan that directly impacted a group of local church leaders of a declining and disengaged local church, and (d) I qualitatively and quantitatively evaluated the impact of the project's implementation on the church members. Limitations were put in place to ensure that the church was in decline and disengaged, and the local church leaders were volunteers and not chosen by me.

The volunteer leaders included eight individuals from the existing leadership team of the PSDA. The leaders were able to choose to be part of the project. The coachees adequately represented the leadership team with three elders, one deacon, and four departmental leaders. All coachees received the book, *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way you Lead Forever* (Stanier, 2016), which was comprised of the seven essential coaching questions that I used initially to grow and mature the leaders. My coaching aimed to mentor and empower the leaders to emulate the same coaching method and impact the broader leadership team and church body. I was the initiator of this "chain reaction" or "branching" and I came alongside the coachees and coached them for six months, biweekly, to set the foundations and start the revitalization process at Pueblo First.

Considerations and Conclusions

Before the portrayal and the analysis of the research statistics, it would be valuable to consider the theological implications, literature and theoretical conclusions, and methodological deductions.

Conclusions on Theological Implications: Chapter 2

The theological research proved that a steward does not exist without a lord and a household to manage. The steward does not handle only his master's finances, but all of his economies. Hence, it is wholistic and comprehensive, not partial and incomplete. Joseph, the son of Jacob, never lost touch with his Lord. The Lordship of Jehovah was unquestionable in his sight. Joseph was growing the economy of his Lord whether he was in Potiphar's household, in the dungeon, or at the Pharaoh's palace. All that he did and all

that he was in Egypt was because of God's provision; as Joseph acknowledged, "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth" (Gen 45:7). The continuous awareness of living in the presence of the Lord gives the steward the right attitude towards the ministry. I found this to be the foundational principle of coaching as a wholistic tool for empowering any leader to grow, mature, transform, and prosper a church.

The NT Parable of the Talents sheds further insight on the wholistic stewardship and coaching as an empowerment method of the steward's work of growing the economy of the Master. The analysis clarified that stewardship extends beyond the earthly realm of the Master and that it is the ultimate level of spiritual growth of a servant. Commissioning and entrusting the servant with a vast amount of wealth or the Master's possession should humble the servant and motivate him to "do his best" and multiply the received wealth. Furthermore, it was revealed that wholistic stewardship and coaching as an empowerment method are relational, spiritual, and trust-based more than professional and methodological. The role of the Holy Spirit is at the core. In addition, the Holy Spirit encompasses the whole process of talent multiplication, economic expansion, and kingdom growth by enabling the servant to focus daily on the vision and mission of the steward.

<center>Conclusions on Literature Reflections: Chapter 3</center>

I was astonished to discover the strong relationship between wholistic stewardship to every area of life and ministry, and especially to the revitalization of local churches and the church organization-at-large. The wholistic stewardship approach to ministry is gaining more and more ground in the Christian community today. It is based on practical

theology with deep roots in the relationship, fellowship, accountability, and empowerment leadership in a biblical household setting. These are the same principles Christian coaching is based on (George, 1994; Miller & Hall, 2007; Ogne & Roehl, 2008). Hence, I applied renowned theologians' concepts, steward leadership experts' models, and practitioners' employed practices (Ferguson & Bird, 2018; Stanier, 2016; Vincent & Krivickas, 2012; Webb, 2015; Willmer, 2008) to bring change in the local congregation.

In-depth research in the writings of Ellen G. White reinforced the non-reductionistic view of stewardship and embraced the wholistic, gospel-focused, and household-based purpose of stewardship. My major surprise was that the use of the phrase "steward(s) of" (singular and plural) referred to White's number one and most emphasized gift, the grace of God in its many forms (see Appendix D). Emphasis on grace and the many evidences of grace fortifies the wholistic nature of stewardship and its multifaceted nature, firmly embedded in receiving (discipling) before giving (stewarding). Giving, sharing, and ministering lead to stewarding and maturing through practicing what one has learned through discipling and is then empowered to do through commissioning (see Figure 2).

| Discipling | Commissioning | Stewarding |
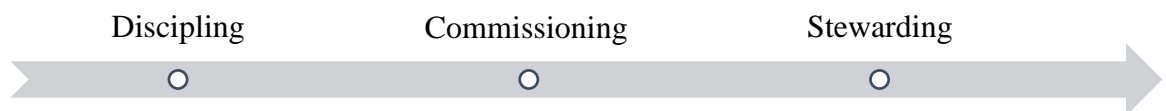
Figure 2. Discipling, commissioning, stewarding.

Many practical theologians understand discipleship to be the ultimate goal and objective of a growing Christian and they see the church's ultimate purpose to be discipling (Putnam, 2010; Putnam, Harrington & Coleman, 2013; Roennfeldt, 2018, 2019; Stott, 2010). The literature research established that discipleship, while continuing throughout one's life, is not the final destination. The research has established that all Christians receive a commission, regardless of its size or scope, with one purpose: to grow God's saving economy and be His stewards. The research has demonstrated that Adam (mankind) was created to steward all that God created—the physical world, relationships, social life, emotions, spirituality, and so on—a wholistic universe. Humankind lost the dimension of stewarding and turned to ownership by cutting out the Creator God from the rebellious world. Hence, the purpose of wholistic stewardship is not only to grow the economy of God, but also to restore the Kingdom of God to its right relationship with the Owner. The goal of the steward is to bring glory to God and serve Him continually even through eternity.

The research further observed that the relationship between the steward and the Lord and all the Lord's gifts, their use, and development is achievable by empowerment, coaching, and steward leadership. The project's implementation was necessary for this theory to be proven.

<div align="center">

Conclusions on the Project's Implementation:
Chapters 4 and 5

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My primary concern was to grow a group of local church leaders through empowerment coaching. Through this process, the goal was to initiate positive change in their personal lives, spirituality, ministry, relationships, and any other aspect of their lives

<div align="center">

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by their choice, and then focus on short-term and long-term tasks and goals. The applied approach was in harmony with a non-reductionistic stewardship view. It had an unforeseen positive impact individually on the coachees, and corporately, on the rest of the leaders and the church.

I found that the church leaders were not able to perform their duties and responsibilities. In some cases, they were executing their ministry assignments, but only on some basic, minimal level because some issues were in the way. I expected the coachees to work on their ministry assignments to improve their performance and quantitative results; however, that was not the case. Five out of eight coachees chose to be coached on subjects like a marriage relationship, personal spiritual growth, and family relationships before they could engage in any other ministerial growth. I concluded that church revitalization, membership engagement, and high leadership performance are unlikely unless there is a previous focus on personal issues through a coaching process to heal or eliminate the most pressing issues in people's lives. The research showed that when 62.5% of the coached leaders were asked: "What is on your mind?" (Stanier, 2016), their response was not ministry-related, but life-related, something that held them from engaging in the ministry to a lesser or a greater degree. The coachees' benefits through the coaching sessions and how their commitment, dedication, engagement level, and performance grew through the growing and maturing coaching process were learning curves for the coachees and me.

Based on my observation and the coachees' description, the coachees grew qualitatively and spiritually in increased prayer life, personal and family devotions, improved clarity of mission, becoming more committed disciples of Christ, and

becoming calmer and more trusting. On the other hand, their quantitative achievements were also apparent through setting and pursuing goals, less procrastination, more accountability, and engagement in ministry. It was also noticed that they could significantly empower people around them (their associates and involved church members) by asking questions and listening, rather than just giving opinions. I concluded that by implementing coaching with the local church leaders, the leaders were not the only ones who benefited from the experiment, but also their families, their relationships, their ministries, associates, and the church body.

The coachees were assessed through the Empowerment Test® for their leadership approach and influence inclinations as to whether they were more empowerers or leaders (superiors). I found that all the coachees had the tendency and skills to empower others. This propensity towards empowerment was found to be essential for the work of revitalization of the coachees. I found that the coachees' attitude, commitment, and developed trust toward me played a significant part in their personal growth, maturing, and reaching their goals. In other words, their positive spirit, fueled with faith and trust in the Lord, and their desire to change and be the change agents in the church became the change factor.

The research findings have proven almost conclusively that Willmer's (2002) model of Faith and Stewardship Maturing Stages is well balanced and truthful. I observed the coachees' maturing from one stage to another, regardless of what stage they were in when the project began. In all cases, there was maturing, which is also essential for the process of revitalization. Consequently, while being coached and building their trust with the coach as they opened up with their personal, relational, spiritual, and other issues, the

coachees increased their level of confidence in each other, the rest of the leaders, and the members and became more emotionally, relationally, and spiritually intelligent. The only shortcoming of the research was the lack of leaders with leadership (superiority) inclinations for comparison and contrast. The question of how leaders with superiority and ownership tendencies react, change, and become change agents and revitalization drivers by empowering others is still to be investigated.

<div align="center">Conclusions of the Natural Church Development (NCD) Survey</div>

The impact The brief period between the surveys resulted in only marginal changes. of the research was measured qualitatively and quantitatively. The NCD survey (qualitative assessment) was conducted at the beginning and at the end of the implementation period after only a six-month interval. A more extended implementation period and longer time between the surveys, as suggested by Schwarz (1996), the author of NCD, would have given more precise results for the proposed strategy. The survey had the purpose of determining the areas that were most in need of improvement and where change and growth were necessary. The research has shown that while the area that was addressed was Empowering Leadership (EL), the results were experienced in the areas of Loving Relationships (LR) and Holistic Small Groups (HSG). The purpose of the exercise was to increase the minimal factors through empowerment coaching and implementing wholistic stewardship principles. I had hoped that the margin of increase in the areas of interest would be more significant, but it increased only in the span of the margin of error, up to four points. Although some areas were well addressed, like LR, Q14: "I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings," increased extraordinarily by 27 points; LR Q80: "If I disagree with a member of our church, I will go to them in

order to resolve it," increased by 10 points, or LR Q: "The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments," increased by 8 points. This showed some deep spiritual developments on the way; however, by the end of the implementation period, they had not yet brought the expected results. Nevertheless, following the project period of six months, the church attendance increased, the church leaders' and members' engagement increased, and further advancements were realized through the leaders' empowerment of other members and other leaders.

On the other hand, the composite average of the NCD increased only by one point, from 29 to 30 (see Appendix E), showing an overall stagnation on the surface. Besides the given epidemiological situation throughout the span of the research that further disheartened, disconnected, and demoralized the members and leaders, I assessed that other factors also contributed to these marginal increases. These factors were the rising tension between the pro- and anti-mask members, pro- and anti-vaccination arguments, and a rising strain between views on last-day events causing discord and conflict.

Another important finding for this seemingly low level of change was that the leaders and coachees were unwilling to empower others until their own personal, social, spiritual, and other issues and grievances were addressed and resolved. Personal issues took priority over any other church revitalization need or issue. Stanier's (2016) kickstart question allowed the leaders to talk about issues most of them never could talk about and express. In addition, Stanier's model further encouraged the leaders' confidence sufficiently to address and resolve issues and look for options and solutions they had never considered previously. Hence, my conviction is that church revitalization is not

possible without addressing the personal issues the leaders and members face daily. A revitalizer could have the best methodology for church revitalization, but if the leaders and members are not seen as individuals in a wholistic way but only as statistics and data, church revitalization to God's liking will not be possible.

The fact I found curious was the decline of one point in the EL areas. This result could also be interpreted as if no change had taken place. I found that this phenomenon could be explained in two ways. First, the changes happened in the practical areas of the life and ministry of the leaders and not necessarily in their professional area of visible leadership skills. Second, for most of the research period, the leaders practiced their leadership from behind the phone, zoom, text messaging, and sometimes by showing their masked faces at members' doors or in the church. The invisibility of some of the leaders gave the impression of no presence and no caring. In addition, the psychological factor of personal and collective anxiety and performance nervousness was of some concern to the leaders as they were coached to bring change in their own lives and the life of the church (see Table 5).

Table 5

Natural Church Development® Results

	Loving Relationship	Empowering Leadership	Holistic Small Groups
First Survey October 2020	8	21	28
Second Survey April 2021	12	20	32

I found that the church attendance recovery, after a significant decrease that started just after introducing the COVID-19 restrictions, started recovering close to the end of the implementation period. Attendance decreased from just over 90 that was a combination of those in-person and those online, to about 60, losing about a third of the regular attendees. During this time, the project implementation was finishing, and the coached leaders were starting to implement the new ministry model of empowerment coaching. As a result, they empowered the members, and new ministry volunteers came forward in surprising numbers; the attendance started growing. About seven months after the implementation ended, worship attendance was up to over 90 individuals, just as it had been before the significant decrease.

My opinion is that through the implementation, the church leadership and the church itself have gone through a numerical recovery and a methodological and qualitative, spiritual change that improved the church's overall atmosphere and quality. Since the end of the project implementation, the number of those attending church has continued to increase through dedicated empowerment leadership of those who received coaching. The numbers have recovered to the numbers before COVID-19 started.

Conclusions on Member Engagement Survey

The quantitative assessment of empowering leadership change through coaching has also brought some noteworthy findings. The members' engagement level in their personal lives during the research period has slightly decreased. Their engagement with personal prayer and worship (ME02®), speaking of words of kindness and encouragement (ME09®), and the level of commitment (ME10®) have declined, still

keeping the numbers at a higher-than-average level. I am convinced that the lack of

physical contact due to the COVID-19 pandemic caused this decrease.

The quantitative area addressed through the coaching was the church leaders'

ability to make a difference and change the members' lives. More church members felt

that in the two assessed areas, the church leaders had brought improvement. More

members felt cared for (ME15®) and more members recognized that they and others had

opportunities to learn and grow (ME22®). These improvements directly resulted from the

leaders' coaching since their ministry tasks and goals engaged more individuals in the

congregation and expressed more loving care for their needs. In other words, the coached

leaders were naturally mirroring the received empowerment as they were empowering

others around them (see Table 6).

Table 6

Member Engagement Survey®

	ME02®	ME09®	ME10®	ME15®	ME18®	ME22®
First Survey September 2020	88%	92%	88%	57%	61%	65%
Second Survey April 2021	73%	90%	81%	60%	52%	69%

The members' feeling of being needed in church ministries declined in this period

(ME18®). I believe that the focus on the individual strengths and needs of the coachees

during the research period had a detrimental effect on clearly communicating the

church's mission and purpose. In addition, the epidemiological situation contributed to

the decline. The church had to close its doors for a period and re-invent its ways of ministry that could have negatively affected communication of the church's vision and mission.

Conclusions on the Data

The investigation has assessed local church revitalization through empowerment coaching that empowers church leaders to make the necessary changes and resolutions in any area of life to bring qualitative and quantitative change and revitalization to the broader church community. The research proved that positive change could be brought qualitatively and quantitatively in the church's life only if the local church leaders' personal issues, concerns, maturity, and hurts are addressed, renewed, and revitalized first. The data show that the improvements made in six months were marginal. I am convinced that an extended period of coaching would result in more significant outcomes. The leaders could be better cared for, and the church could be brought to complete revitalization and revival by branching out the church leaders' coaching.

I further believe that having more leaders with empowerment tendencies could bring this revitalization about more robustly and tangibly. As mentioned above, the research group for this investigation, according to the Empowerment Test®, was made up only of leaders with natural or developed empowerment skills. There was no one with leadership (ownership or superiority) tendencies in the group of eight volunteers. I would have found it appealing to experience and assess the differences between the two types of leaders in the context of revitalization. This could have been especially interesting to study in the context of stewardship and steward leadership that insists on empowerment,

rather than ownership and superiority (Rodin, 2010; Vincent & Krivickas, 2012; Willmer, 2008).

Other Conclusions About the Research

The COVID-19 pandemic cloaked the whole implementation process. Government restrictions on the county, state, and federal levels have significantly impacted the entire implementation process and the research outcome. I believe that social restrictions, lack of in-person meetings, and the shortfall of personal interaction have impacted the implementation process and the research outcome. Nevertheless, the alternative methods that I used—Zoom conferencing, messenger video calls, and phone calls—have served to mitigate some of the impacts of the pandemic. Based on the results, I found that the alternative coaching method (not in-person) could be beneficial in the future and can be effective for distance challenges.

Conclusions Beyond the Core of the Research

The research ended after six months of implementation. This period was sufficient for turning around the volunteer leaders and initiating the change toward revitalization. What could not happen during this period was the revitalization of the congregation; however, good foundations for the renewal were laid. When the initial research was finished, four out of five leaders had moved forward with coaching others and changing the general leadership and the congregation's climate. They started looking for new leaders who were willing for open ministries; they were ready to train them, and they were willing to partner with each other to form new alliances for more vital ministries. Hence, the Outreach and Education Center was created. Under the leadership of one of

the coachees, eight ministries were pooled together, and they worked on finding space and funds, working on programs, and partnering with institutions and services outside the church to reach the community under the Seventh-day Adventist name.

Furthermore, leaders whom the coaches inspired took the initiative to organize others and work on long-neglected items or those that previously had not existed. In this way, the local church policies and procedures were refreshed, and addendums were added for the church organization's better functioning. In addition, a former church leader influenced by one of the coaches, approached me to start a never existing ministry— volunteer services—and help make the leadership team collaborate better.

At the beginning of 2022, with one of the coachees, we initiated a mission training class as part of the Sabbath School, resulting in over half a dozen new small groups with health, support, and spiritual flavor. Most of these small groups were organized by the leaders and members whom the coaches influenced. This list could expand to include significant building improvements and the changed, welcoming atmosphere from the moment one enters the building.

My conclusion that lasting change and lasting results can only occur if local leaders are empowered has been appropriately demonstrated. Developing a trust relationship between me as pastor and coach and the leaders and coachees has resulted in further projecting this trust in others and creating a network that leads to a movement, instead of a hierarchy that could easily lead to ownership of leadership and centralization of power in the church.

Prevalent Conclusions

This research sought to determine whether a local church leadership group could be empowered and revitalized by using simple coaching methods inspired by wholistic stewardship principles for empowering and bringing renewal in the local church body. The initiative has proven that the process of revitalization and church regeneration is, beyond any doubt, possible and achievable. The NCD survey has proven not only that Loving Relationships have increased 4%, but the Holistic Small Groups have also increased 4% as a result of coaching the church leaders. Interestingly, while the NCD's results showed that Empowering Leadership did not grow, the church members felt more cared for (3% increase) and recognized more opportunities to learn and grow (4% increase). In my opinion, these two survey results, the NCD that analyzed only 30 randomly chosen individuals and the ME25® that analyzed the whole church, speak of the limitation of surveys and that they are only a tool of assessment and not necessarily a precise analysis of the local church qualitative and quantitative growth.

While we as church leaders, pastors, and researchers like to measure and evaluate every growth and change when it comes to the body of Christ or the household of God, we should be aware of at least two significant facts: First, our ways are not God's ways: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8-9). Second, God gives the increase and sustains the growth:

> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages

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according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Cor 3:6-8)

These two factors speak of God's complete lordship and sovereignty in the process of revitalization and growth.

Conclusions on Personal Transformation as a Professional

While the research and implementation of the revitalization process have brought forth change and renewal in the ministries of the involved volunteer leaders, it also had a profound influence and impact on me. The biweekly coaching sessions have not only allowed me to coach and walk alongside the coachees professionally, but it has also allowed me to become more personally interested, involved, and invested in their lives. Due to frequent planned meetings, both sides felt they were growing closer together as friends, allowing for increased trust, openness, and accountability. Through this process, I became more aware and attuned to the leaders' relational issues, emotional concerns, and spiritual challenges. I realized that before any progress in the local church revitalization could happen and any issue could be addressed in the congregation, the church leaders should first be listened to, helped, and guided.

I assumed that the local church leaders needed renewal just as much, if not more, than the church body did. Moreover, I also believed that wholesome local church revival could be brought about only by the local church leaders who are coached and mentored. The research has shown that this theory was correct. Just an outside intervention, a "hit-and-run" approach, could bring revitalization, but not necessarily one that is lasting. Through the implementation process, besides gaining more appreciation for coaching as a legitimate stewardship discipline, I also realized that revitalization cannot be achieved in

a church setting without being wholly invested in the lives of the church leaders. Every church has the capacity for self-healing; it only needs to be encouraged (Steinke, 2006b). I spent more time praying and fasting for the volunteers, their challenges, goals, and uncertainties than I ever did before. Finally, I witnessed the coachees' lives, relationships, and spirituality because of the honest, open, committed desire (of coach and coachee) to bring change about. As a result, not one of the volunteers has removed himself or herself from the implementation process.

Strategic Recommendations for Church Organizations

I appeal to all levels of church leadership to pay close attention to the church membership and commitment decline in our local churches. For many years, the church under investigation has been in decline without serious attempts to resolve personal, relational, and spiritual issues present in the church. Local churches and higher organizations usually settle for "oiling the machine and maintaining the momentum" (Dale, 1981, p. 129). Thus, I recommend the following to the local church leaders, pastors, and higher levels of leadership.

Recommendations for Local Church Leadership

1. Local churches should engage yearly or, at the least, every two years in a Natural Church Development (NCD) survey to assess the church qualitatively and have a clear focus on bettering the church's health and vitality.

2. Local churches should use the Empowerment Test® to find leaders with natural or developed empowerment skills to coach for faster renewal and revitalization.

3. Local church leaders should be taught and then engaged in a periodical or constant coaching experience. Local church pastors trained in coaching or coaches assigned by the Conference should be responsible for local church leadership renewal.

4. Local church leadership should be helped to set reachable goals, make plans, and be held accountable to revitalize, grow, and multiply the local church.

5. Local church leaders should become coaches to other leaders and members so that reliance on outside sources is minimized and the church can move in a healthy direction (Steinke, 2006a).

Recommendations for Pastors as Leaders

1. Pastors should consider assessing themselves with the Empowerment Test® to establish that they have the necessary leadership disposition for church revitalization, that is, empowerment skills.

2. Pastors should consider looking for opportunities to be trained in basic and advanced coaching skills to coach and empower church leaders who will bring change and revitalization to their congregations.

3. Pastors should consider using tools (NCD, ME[25]) for church assessment and they should use them to get general insight into their church's health dynamic.

Recommendations for the Conference

1. A Conference should consider having a tool for assessing the churches' health in its territory. They can use the generally accepted NCD survey used in the North American Division. This tool, combined with the pastor's assessment leadership tool, Empowerment Test®, could significantly help pair up the right pastor with the right

church and bring a wave of revitalization through empowering leadership into the churches that need it most. In addition, the Conference will have greater insight into the reasons behind the quantitative changes either in membership and attendance or in tithes and offerings.

2. A Conference should consider having qualified and trained administration and directors that can organize, teach, help, and lead a coaching-based ministry in their territory. Let us suppose the Conference had coaches ready who would coach and empower pastors in an organized and personal way, who would coach church leaders, who, in turn, would coach other church leaders and members in the same way. In that case, church renewal and revitalization could spread like wildfire.

3. A Conference would benefit from hosting a Coaching Training for their pastors. The North American Division could offer conferences on basic and advanced levels of training. This training involves both qualified teachers and practitioners. Participants could learn in the pews during the intensive courses and practice triads as they practice the coaching methods they have learned. In addition, the Conference would greatly benefit if every pastor had a permanent coach.

4. A Conference would be sensible if they appointed a qualified and experienced church revitalization director who was a leadership coach who supported and coached the NCD process. This office could be attached to existing evangelism, church growth, and multiplication directorship, or it could be a separate office if the situation required.

5. A Conference would be sensible to undertake a study periodically in its territory and compare the churches where coaching is practiced versus churches where

the traditional methods of church growth are practiced. This could help to fine-tune the Conference's goals and aspirations.

6. A Conference could consider teaching and implement the wholistic principles of stewardship such as lordship principles, generosity, household, coaching, maturing, and so on, to present the wholistic biblical understanding of stewardship and move away from the truncated, exclusively financial view of stewardship. The wholistic view and teaching of stewardship will significantly impact people's spirituality, relationships, emotional life, social life, time management, and even financial stewardship.

Recommendation to Educational Institutions

1. Educational institutions would help the field greatly if they considered having a module on wholistic stewardship or if the wholistic aspect of stewardship were included and promoted in all theological and practical disciplines (Vallet, 2011). The theological implications and the literature review indicate that we are stewards of all things, which includes everybody in the household of God and beyond, and that stewardship has an eschatological value (Ladd, 2002).

2. Educational institutions should seriously consider adding a module or combining coaching with one of the existing leadership modules. Coaching is proving to be, among all leadership disciplines and skills, the one that empowers and changes people. Since church revitalization and renewal will be one of the primary directions in the church's future, this skill will be unavoidable in the ministry of pastors.

3. Educational institutions could greatly assist the field if students took the Empowerment Test® to assess their empowering skills. Furthermore, they could include

classes that help students develop the necessary skills for becoming ministers who empower and steward/servant leaders.

Final Thoughts

This research had aimed to bring revitalization and renewal to a declining and disintegrating church through empowerment coaching as a wholistic stewardship method. Even under the dire circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, PSDA saw improvement, and a reversal was initiated. The working of the Holy Spirit was critical in this initiative which confirms that local church leadership coaching brings positive change and renewal in the local church. Since the local church studied was a dying and disintegrating church with severe signs of polarization and dropouts (Dale, 1981), it is projected that declining and plateaued churches could be revived using this method. This study has demonstrated that approaching stewardship from a more wholistic interpretation could benefit the church in ways rarely comprehended before and could bring in innovative ways of ministry that could resonate with the constantly changing world.

APPENDIX A

PROJECT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Pastor: Anton Kapusi
3910 O'Neal Avenue
Pueblo CO, 81005
Office:719-564-6193
Cell: 914-207-9634
Email: antonk@rmcsda.org

Pueblo, September 2020

Dear (the name of the leader)

I have the privilege to address you as a potential Pueblo First Seventh-day Adventist church revitalizer, positive change initiator, and church leaders and members coach and mentor. For the last four years, I was on my Doctor of Ministry study journey, and I have successfully reached the practical implementation (project) part of my studies. For this initiative, I would need your help as a church elder or leader. Starting on September 20, 2020, I would like to take you on a journey of spiritual growth and maturing, I would like to empower you in your ministry and service to the Lord and to your local church by walking alongside you in your ministry.

I would be thrilled if you would allow me to coach you as you serve. I would provide a safe, compassionate, and confidential environment to help you see what you don't, can't, and won't see. I will do my best to help give perspective, improve performance, aid you with problem-solving and processing conflict. I will do my utmost as I walk alongside to empower you to plan your work and then work your plan effectively in a proper sequence.

Thank you for being willing to make a difference and start a movement.

Anton Kapusi – Pastor

_____

APPENDIX B

LEADER'S CONSENT FORM

Pastor: Anton Kapusi
3910 O'Neal Avenue
Pueblo CO, 81005
Office:719-564-6193
Cell: 914-207-9634
Email: antonk@rmcsda.org

Date: _____

Leader's Consent Form

I _____ (print name) by signing this form agree to

participate in the research project conducted by Anton Kapusi – Pastor as part of his

Doctor of Ministry Project at Andrews University – Leading for Growth and

Multiplication cohort.

I understand that my name will not be disclosed anywhere at any time. I agree that the

process and the project results will be released in his dissertation, public presentations,

and publications.

Signature:

_____

APPENDIX C

COACHING COVENANT

COACHING COVENANT

Elder/Church Leader: _____

Congregation: _____

Conference: _____

Contact Info: Phone # _____

E-mail: _____

Researcher: Anton Kapusi

Contact Info: Phone #s: Cell: 914-207-9634 Work: 719-470-0885

E-mail: antonk@rmcsda.org

Agenda and Goals:
- To train and establish a culture of "branching" coach model, expanding the numbers of coaches by making the elder/learner into a coach/steward. Initial goals include recruiting learners, creating an environment of trust, and deepening the learners' understanding and practical ability to "walk alongside" another learner and empower his or her ministry.

Commitment of the Researcher:
- The researcher will focus on coaching through one-on-one coaching and a practical demonstration of coaching by empowering, supporting, and emphasizing "the holistic development of the leader and ministry together"- (Ogne & Roehl, 2008 pp.29). This will be achieved by clarifying the coachee's calling, cultivating the coachee's character, creating a trusting community, and connecting with the local culture.

Commitments and Expectations:
1) **Meeting Frequency:**
   We will meet with the whole group for a two one-hour session at the beginning of the coaching agreement to establish the foundations of coaching through teaching and implementing the coaching principles. In the following six (6) months, the researcher will be meeting with each coachee separately twice a month for 25-30 minutes. The sessions will be in person (at the church office), by ZOOM video conferencing, or by phone, making sure of adequate privacy.
2) **Schedule requirement:**
   Coaching sessions will be planned in a timely manner, considering each other's schedules and respecting each other by being on time. Rescheduling will be held at a minimum. If either party cannot hold the agreed time, they will be required to give a minimum of 24-hour notice, and they will need to reschedule their session immediately.

3) **Commitment to Issues and assignments**
   The coachee agrees to have the agreed-upon issues addressed and check on assignments. All goals and assignments will be recorded and shared with the learner via e-mail to avoid miscommunication and ensure accountability.

4) **Confidentiality**
   Confidentiality will be maintained except where permission is expressly granted or where disclosures affect the ability to serve in a ministry capacity.

5) **Natural Church Development and Membership Engagement Survey**® **(ME^{25}):**
   Two Natural Church Development church health tests will be conducted. At the start of the research period, the initial test will give a direction of the coaching. At the end of the coaching agreement, the final NCD test will serve to assess the coaching results. In addition, The GALLUP®, Membership Engagement Survey® (ME^{25}) will be done at the same time by each church member to evaluate the change in the level of engagement of the members led by church leaders.

6) **Empowerment Test:**
   The coachee will complete a Leadership Empowerment® assessment test to become aware of his/her strengths, finding the lenience either toward Empowerment or Leadership skills. https://3colorworld.org/en/etests

7) **Length of Coaching Relationship:**
   We will begin the coaching relationship on September 20, 2020. After initial training and signing the coaching agreement, we will work together for three months. At the end of the first part, we will evaluate the effectiveness of our coaching relationship, make changes if necessary and proceed with the second part (three more months) of coaching. At the end of the six-month period, we will again evaluate our coaching relationship, and if the goal of building the "branching" coaching model succeeds, we will end the research and the contract.

I commit to the above expectations in this coaching relationship!

Coaching covenant date: _____

_____   _____
Elder/Church Leader   Researcher

APPENDIX D

ELLEN G. WHITE ON WHAT ARE PEOPLE "STEWARDS OF"

Stewards of God CS 158, PaM 261; RY 102; 4bSG 40, 44; 1T 199, 202; 2T 128; 2T 657; 3T 118; 5T 373; 6T 274, 458; TSA 44; TDG 349; BLJ 178; WM 188; GCB 4/1/1897; GCB 4/1/1897; RH 3/14/1878; RH 5/16/1882; RH 1/9/1883; RH 1/1/1884; RH, February 10, 1885; RH 08/10/1886; RH 3/19/1901; RH 12/3/1903; RH 1/17/1907; ST 8/1/1900; SW 1/15/1907; YI 12/9/1897; PH008 11; PH140 50; PH097 16; PH159 152; PH159 159; 13MR 268; 15MR 284; 15MR 336; 17MR 166; 21MR 247; BCL 26; PC 25; PC 25;

Stewards of (Jesus) Christ HFM 43; SD 269; 1T 538; RH 4/4/1880; ST 3/22/1883; ST 6/30/1887; YI 6/29/1893;

Stewards of the Lord 4bSG 55; 1T 147, 224; TSDF 149; PUR 10/24/1901; RH 4/18/1871; 13MR 228; 1SAT 160;

Stewards of the mysteries of God AA 276, 361; AG 28; GW92 21; GW 15; 4T 402; AUCR, 1/25/1907; RH, 1/1/1884 (x2); RH 12/2/1884; RH 7/25/1893 (x2); RH 10/10/1893; RH 9/12/1899; RH 9/19/1899; RH 1/11/1906; RH 8/24/1911; ST 5/26/1887; 20MR 324; 1888 947; KC 154;

Stewards of the mysteries of Grace AG 59; GW 288,

Stewards of the mysteries of heaven GW 150; PaM 195; PK 142; RH 10/22/1901; RH 9/11/1913;

Stewards of the mysteries of the grace of God LS 329; PaM 29; SpTA02b 121; PH133 12; 1888 443; 1888 956;

Stewards of God's (His) grace AA 363; CS 112, 161; 5T 731-2; 8T 24; Ev 326; FE 212, AG 62, GW92 304; GW 187, 396; LHU 366; 1MCP 242; 2MCP 797; OHM 40; SD 217; 2T 245; 6T 166; TSB 264; TM 166, 213; TSA 19, 51; TDG 321; UL 81, 159, 379; Canvasser 12/18/1890; BTS 1/1/1908; BTS 1/1/1908; HM 7/1/1891; HM 6/1/1897; HM 11/1/1897; PUR 7/7/1904; RH 1/1/1884; RH 8/10/1886; RH 11/25/1890; RH 1/27/1891 (x2); RH 2/14/1893; RH 2/28/1893 (x2); RH 2/13/1894; RH 6/15/1897; RH 12/21/1897; 9/12/1899; RH 5/15/1900; RH 3/30/1905 (x2); RH 6/22/1905; ST 5/25/1888; ST 2/8/1892; ST 6/25/1894; ST 7/9/1894; ST 1/21/1897; ST 2/3/1898; ST 2/24/1904; ST 6/10/1908; YI 2/20/1896; SpTA02a 15; SpTA03 46; PH039 5; PH096 51; PH099 44; 2MR 326; 12MR 96; 13MR 268; 16MR 199; 17MR 360; BCL 88; 1888 143; LLM 319; PC 25; PC 276;

Stewards of His grace and His temporal gifts CS 161; RH 6/13/1893; 11MR 280;

Stewards of the grace committed to them ST 4/21/1887;

Stewards of His grace and truth 8T 24; RH 11/12/1903; SW 5/15/1906

Stewards of the grace of Christ Ev 618; FE 229; SpTEd 191, 197; 6T 196; TM 128, 236; UL 257; VSS 116; WM 95; Advocate 6/1/1902, RH 6/11/1895; RH 4/28/1896; RH 8/16/1898; RH 10/1/1901; RH 6/22/1905; RH 9/28/1911; RH 2/13/1913; SpTA04 8; PH140 50; PH079 11; PH079 11; 5MR 329; 6MR 201; 19MR 203; 20MR 32; 21MR 72; 1NL 127;

Stewards of the grace of heaven 2MCP 466; RH 4/4/1912; ST 2/14/1906; ST 5/10/1910;

Stewards of manifold grace of Christ AH 208; CT 41; 309, Ed 286; Ev 158; FE 463; PaM 154, 164; Pr 195; 2 SM 124; 6BC 1081; 5T 730; RH 11/13/1894; PH028 10; KC 67;

Stewards of the manifold Grace of God AH 445; COL 234, 267, 394; CS 111, 112; CT 459; AG 205; LHU 23, 278, 289; ML 194; OFC 139; 1SM 191; 2SM 132; 3BC 1154; 6T 342; 7T 246; 9T 221; TM 470; TMK 316; UL 61; YRP 19; ACUR 6/1/1900; BEcho 2/15/1889; 6/15/1893; GCB 4/1/1897; HM, 11/1/1893; RH 8/10/1886; RH 8/10/1886; RH 5/24/1892; RH 6/13/1893; RH 10/9/1894; RH 8/28/1900; RH 12/24/1908 (x2); ST 3/4/1889; ST 8/23/1899; ST 3/3/1909; SW 12/18/1902; SpTB10 25; PH118 20; PH005 22; 20MR 326; LLM 222; 1NL 91;

Stewards of manifold grace SW 9/4/1902;

Stewards of the manifold gifts of God BTS 1/1/1908; PH029 21;

Stewards of God's (Lord's, His) gifts MH 211; RH 6/11/1895; RH 12/10/1895; RH 12/10/1895; RH 12/14/1897; PH136 6; 2MR 98;

Stewards of His love and mercy ST 9/12/1895;

Stewards of the souls of their children PH079 11;

Stewards of His business GCB 4/1/1897;

Stewards of the last days RY102; 4bSG 40; 1T 199

Stewards of His beneficence SW 37; RH, 12/10/1895;

Stewards of high responsibilities 7T 202;

Stewards of much higher responsibilities 16MR 256

Stewards of capabilities and means ST 9/12/1895;

Stewards of the Lord's property CS 326; FLB 162

Stewards of the Lord's (His) means (entrusted) AH 396; CS 327, 331, 4T 482; 8T 150; TM 255; HM, 4/1/1895; RH 12/5/1893; RH 12/19/1893; RH 12/24/1903; RH 3/20/1958; ST 10/14/1889; ST 7/9/1894; SpTA05 6; 1MR 229; 12MR 38; 13MR 5; 21MR 5; 1888 1418;

Stewards of means and (of) His rich grace 9T 225; RH 10/31/1878; RH, 10/10/1907

Stewards of His (God's) goods AA 337;PP 526, 535; Te 48; 4T 77; WM 175; GCB 4/1/1897; RH 5/16/1882; RH 9/10/1889; RH 9/17/1889; RH 6/11/1895; RH 2/18/1902; RH 6/17/1902; RH 11/15/1906; ST 9/27/1883; ST 1/21/1897; SW 6/16/1908; 4MR 419; KC 117;

Stewards of their (our) Lord's goods RC 227; TDG 208; WM 16; IR 2/25/1903; RH 6/26/1894; RH, 11/13/1894; RH 7/1/1902; ST 4/4/1895; PH164 22; 1MR 229;

Stewards of their Lord's money 2T 657; 3T 118; PH159 152;

Stewards of the Lord's property RY 107; 4T 480; RH 9/19/1893;

Stewards of God's possessions BEcho 2/15/1889; ST 12/1/1887;

Stewards of God's bounty RH 12/17/1889;

Stewards of God's flock 3BC 1132,

Stewards of this part of the Lord's vineyard RH 7/28/1903; PH067 27;

Stewards of talents (God entrusted) 5T 389; TM 328; RH 7/10/1883; SpTA08 12;

Stewards of privileges and gifts 1Red 66;

Stewards of (their own) means RY 86, 104, 108; 3SM 244; 2T 328; 3T 117, 122; 9T 53; BLJ 193; WM 233; ACUR 12/1/1900; HM, 11/1/1889; RH 12/18/1883; RH 1/12/1905; PH140 50; PH096 69; PH159 150; PH159 152; 19MR 326; BCL 46;

Stewards of the means in the treasury CEv 66; CM 94; MC 65;

Stewards of the means and ability CCh 243; TM 50; RH 9/5/1893; 1NL 49;

Stewards of money RH 12/10/1895; 1888 1628;

Stewards of money and other talents 16MR 45;

Stewards of the (sacred) truth 6T 448; TDG 303; PH004 4; 11MR 373;

Stewards of their bodies GCB 4/1/1897

Stewards of His character ST 7/9/1894;

Stewards of other men's consciences 1888 1628;

Stewards of reason RH 12/10/1895

Stewards of intellect RH 12/10/1895

Stewards of influence RH 12/10/1895;

Stewards of (sacred) trust CS 35; RH 12/24/1903; 20MR 387;

Stewards of Earthly things COL 144; Pr 309,

Stewards of their production PH079 11

"Steward of" (singular) – 139 References

Steward of God AA 95; CCh 247; 9MR 344; DG 103; 2MCP 750; PaM 223; RY 92; 1T 692; 2T 675; 3T 385; 3T 436; 4T 62; 5T 617; 9T 246; TMK 220; BLJ 188; AUCR, 02/25/1907; RH, 08/25/1874; RH, 01/01/1884; RH, 0308/1887; RH, 03/17/1896; RH, 06/21/1898; RH, 03/14/1899; ST, 11/25/1886; ST, 05/26/1887; ST, 10/18/1899; YI, 11/23/1899; 5MR 449;

Steward of God's word: ST, 06/07/1883; PH004 24; 1MR 185; 9MR 343; 15MR 164; 16MR 258; 19MR 144; KC 154;

Steward of His grace FE 301; YI, 05/17/1894; 19MR 389;

Steward of the grace of God CCh 248; CH 351; OFC 286; RC 41; 6T 41; 7T 72; TMK 158; WM 111; AUCR, 06/01/1900; GCB, 01/01/1900; RH, 10/16/1888; RH, 09/02/1890; RH, 07/25/1893; RH, 06/21/1903; ST, 03/23/1891; YI, 12/22/1892; YI, 08/17/1909; PH130 12; 6MR 194; 1888 53;

Steward of manifold grace of God Ev 255; MB 135;

Steward of the grace of Christ AG 61; OFC 202; 3SM 80; 6BC 1104; TM 121; YI, 12/22/1892; SpTB07 23; PH028 12; PH086 15; 5MR 147; 5MR 314; 1888 732;

Steward of the mysteries of God GC 260; PaM 41; 4SP 179; ST, 01/03/1884; SW, 15/24/1904; 13MR 310;

Steward of (sacred) trust(s) CW 162; 7T 176; PH102 9; 9MR 343; LLM 257;

Steward of higher trust of heaven 16MR 256;

Steward of His mercy and love SW 37; RH, 12/10/1895;

Steward of His goods COL 256; RH, 06/19/1894; RH, 04/09/1895;

Steward of his (your) Lord's goods CS 136; TSB 70; BLJ 188; BLJ 188; RH, 01/05/1869; RH, 03/31/1896; ST, 04/21/1898; ST, 06/21/1899; 17MR 148; 18MR 269;

Steward of His means COL 262; DG 104;

Steward of the Lord's treasure PCO 121;`

Steward of funds: 4MR 432;

Steward of (their) means (His) 6T 391; CS 348; 6T 391; 8T 146; WM 327; RH, 01/04/1898; RH, 09/05/1907; RH, 10/10/1907; PH146 45; PH080 4; PH102 18; PH102 27; PH096 30; 3MR 205; 9MR 119; 9MR 119; 16MR 256; 21MR 76; 1888 1413; 1888 1442; 1888 1504; KC 121,

Steward of entrusted means CS 129; Hvn 93; 9T 132; TM 424; SpTA10 14;

Steward of "all that you possess" 2T 166;

Steward of greatest abilities CS 116; RH, 04/09/1901;

Steward of your strength 2T 435

Steward of (many) talents AU Gleaner, 09/16/1903; 1888 1504;

Steward of talents of influence 1888 1504;

Steward of souls 9MR 119;

Steward of the house PP 227; 1SP 145; 3SG 160; ST, 01/29/1880;

APPENDIX E

NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT (NCD) RESULTS
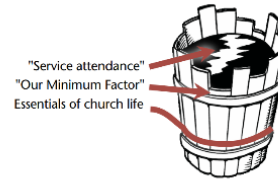
TWO NCD SURVEY GENERAL COMPARISON

NCD Profile *plus*

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

"Service attendance"
"Our Minimum Factor"
Essentials of church life

Pueblo First

Apr-21

Pastor for 2 years: Anton Kapusi

Profile	Date	Minimum Factor	Maximum Factor	Min - Max Difference	Average
3	Apr-21	12 Loving relationships	43 Passionate spirituality	31	30
				Change 2 - 3	+1
2	Oct-20	8 Loving relationships	44 Passionate spirituality	36	29

FIRST SURVEY – OCTOBER 2020

160

Quality Characteristic Current Profile

Legend:
- Current
- High (65)
- Average (50)
- Low (35)

Characteristic	Value
Empowering Leadership	20
Gift-based Ministry	32
Passionate Spirituality	43
Effective Structures	33
Inspiring Worship Service	28
Holistic Small Groups	32
Need-oriented Evangelism	37
Loving Relationships	12
Average	30

www.ncdamerica.org   Page 9 of 30   © 2011 Christoph Schalk, Ian Campbell and Adam Johnstone
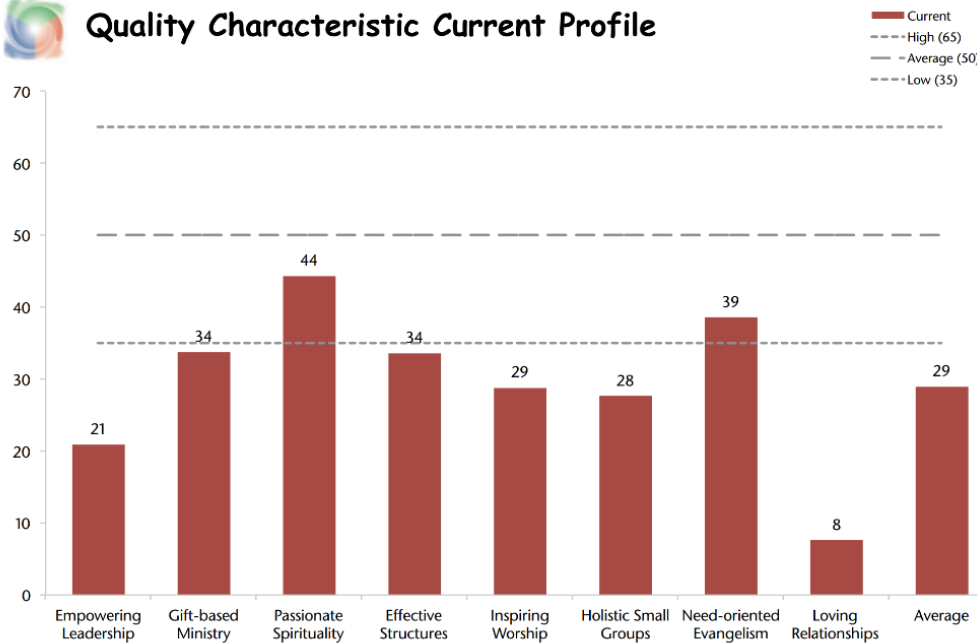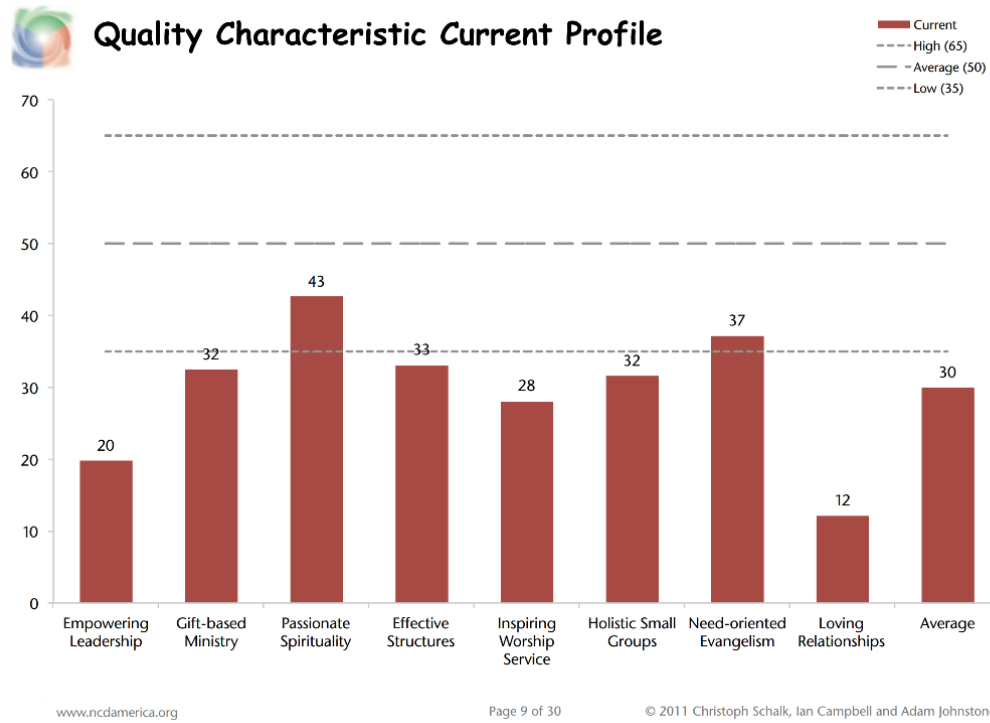
REFERENCE LIST

REFERENCE LIST

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CURRICULUM VITA

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