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# Ministry<sup>®</sup>

INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

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# Christian leadership: A strange business?

**W**hile it is an honor to be called by God to serve in one of His organizations, working for the church can seem to be a strange business. On the one hand, the importance of this life calling cannot be overestimated; it is a lifework with eternal consequences. On the other hand, we are weak and woefully unprepared for any task with eternal consequences. Thankfully, each church leader (and member) can proclaim with Paul, “This is a faithful saying . . . , that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).<sup>1</sup> Amazingly, God has called us! We are sinners, growing in Christ, and we are His leaders for His church. Praise God; He has not left us without support!

## The most advanced casebook

Looking at Christ’s example of dealing with His disciples, you can see that leadership is a gift of grace. He spent time training them, yet as the culminating event of the universe came—the hour for Christ to drink the cup of God’s wrath—“all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matt. 26:56). That night, Christ’s mission on earth looked like a

failure, and so did His training program. But they were not. God’s way of leading defeats the enemy and brings us life.

Perhaps it is time to acknowledge the Bible as the most advanced casebook for leadership learning ever written. From the story of the origin of sin to its final eradication, the great controversy between Christ and Satan provides a landscape for startling lessons of leadership throughout the Bible.

For example, the Bible reveals the power of leadership: As the leader goes, so goes the people. When the leaders of Israel forsook God and led with deceit and false comfort, the people “wandered like sheep” (Zech. 10:2, NABRE). When Israel had a leader that followed God, they prospered (Gen. 47:27). When the people returned to Him, God was patient; He always desired their good. God did not reject His leaders when they made mistakes. Yet God did seek for leaders to continue to grow after His own heart.

## Applications

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has also recognized the importance of leadership development.

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SCAN FOR AUDIO



**Perhaps it is time to acknowledge the Bible as the most advanced casebook for leadership learning ever written.**

In the wake of COVID-19, it launched a set of global initiatives to support church leaders: annual global online conferences both for newly elected leaders (in the spring) and for all church leaders (in the fall), a mentoring program for executive leaders, and the innovative LeadLab program of the Global Leadership Institute (GLI) at Andrews University. These new initiatives are building on past leadership development programs while seeking to reach out to leaders in new ways.

This *Ministry* issue contains five articles that focus on leadership and growing leaders. The article “Shaping the heart of leaders,” by Erich Baumgartner, highlights how God develops leaders throughout a lifetime and pursues His purposes despite human failure and weakness. Boubakar Sanou focuses on the leadership role of the pastor as a catalyst for whole-church ministry.

A perceptive article by Karen Tilstra focuses on the importance of forgiveness, not only for our social and spiritual relationships but also as an essential component of innovation. Randy J. Siebold's article introduces the interplay between leadership and discipleship and the newly developed Leader Growth Framework, an approach used

by the GLI and the growing LeadLab program. Sung K. Kwon's article focuses on the vital role of the leader in connecting the church to the community. The importance and urgency of the church's mission, the challenges of growth, and the tensions of leading change can too often induce leaders to overwork and sometimes burnout. The Practical Pointers column by Jill Buller reveals simple and practical ways to help leaders stay healthy.

As we have been called into this “strange business” as leaders with faults and yet with eternal consequences, following God as our Leader is our only safe approach! May this issue support you (and those you support) as you continue to grow into a leader after God's own heart.



1 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is from the New King James Version.

# Shaping the heart of a leader

LEAD ARTICLE | ERICH BAUMGARTNER



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SCAN FOR AUDIO

**L**ife does not always turn out as planned. Sometimes it turns out surprisingly better.

An example is the case of Joseph—one day, a slave in Pharaoh’s prison, the next, propelled into top leadership in the land of his suffering. In charge of an unprecedented food security operation, his mandate was to insulate Egypt against a catastrophic seven-year famine. As the years rolled by, everything appeared to go as planned. He was at the height of Egyptian hierarchy, next only to the pharaoh.

But underneath Joseph’s success lingered questions about how to make sense of the twisted trajectory of his life. God had been good to him. Yet somehow the troubling memories were difficult to forget. We get a glimpse of Joseph’s lingering pain just after the birth of his firstborn son: “‘God has made me *forget* all my trouble and all my father’s household’ ” (Gen. 41:51, NIV; emphasis added).

I know the feeling of wanting to forget the past. I grew up poor. My father left our family before I was six. My mother’s work brought in barely enough to pay the bills. So we rented out part of our apartment to make ends meet. Our clothes were hand-me-downs. Being Adventist, I was strange in the eyes of my neighborhood friends. I was different.

I still marvel at how Jesus drew me into His orbit. It happened during a week of prayer in my last year of high school. Although at first I resisted attending, God used the voice of a pastor to bring me to know Jesus as my personal Savior. Through the pastor’s voice, Jesus called me to surrender my life to Him.

That changed my life. I had planned to become a doctor, but now I heard a clear call to ministry. After this were some of the happiest months of my life. Every morning, I would read my Bible and linger in prayer before getting ready for school. My grades soared, and I graduated from high school with distinction. I was on top of the world and thought I could finally leave my troubled past behind. Yet *forgetting* the past was not enough. What I had to learn was that my *whole* life story was about God shaping me as a leader.<sup>1</sup>

## Wanting to forget the past

Joseph had every reason to *forget* the past. Who would not want to *forget* the memory of your brothers ripping off your coat, pushing you over the edge of that pit, and leaving you to die? Who would want to replay that terror-filled journey through the desert that landed you as a slave in the household of Potiphar? How could he make sense of the years in the pharaoh’s prison in return for faithful service in his master’s household?

And now, the great reversal of Joseph’s fortune—was this not a call for him to move on? We can understand how in that tender moment of celebrating the birth of his son, Joseph concluded: “‘God has made me *forget* all my trouble and all my father’s household’ ” (Gen. 41:51, NIV; emphasis added).

But he was wrong.

Just when Joseph thought he could finally lock up his life story in the memory closet called “forgotten,” the trouble of his life showed up in front of him. There they were, on the ground, bowed before him (Gen. 42:6). They had no clue that the one who was looking at them was the very one they once wished dead (v. 8).

The victim meets his tormentors. The memories and feelings return. What would Joseph do now?

The almost unlimited power of his leadership position only intensified Joseph’s dilemma. He remembered their crime and his dreams—now literally acted out just as God had shown him—that triggered their hatred. How do you use your power when God turns your enemies over to you?

Joseph noticed that Benjamin, his younger brother, was missing among them! Had these cruel men killed him? Can you imagine the raw emotion that flushed Joseph’s heart? But he had learned not to let emotion hijack the cool of his leadership. Joseph would test them and, if necessary, break them. His stern voice left no doubt as to who was in charge.

As Joseph unforgivingly pressed them for the truth, a new story emerged. Instead of cruelty, he noticed unselfish commitment to each other. Instead of deception, Joseph sensed devotion to their father. As his ears tuned in to



their hushed conversation, Joseph overheard what he did not expect: they, too, remembered that bitter moment when they had ignored “the anguish of his soul” (Gen. 42:21, KJV). Their sin had imprinted itself on their hearts as if it could not be forgiven. Hearing their anguish over his destiny struck Joseph like a lightning bolt. Only a quick exit saved his face as Joseph broke down and wept as he never had before.

## God redeeming our story

Most of us are too familiar with the story of Joseph not to recognize what a crucial leadership moment this was for Joseph. Here was a leader choosing to work through his past rather than *forgetting* it. It paved the way for that ultimate moment of truth recorded in Scripture when he reassured his fearful brothers after the death of their father Jacob: “Don’t be afraid of me. . . . You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good” (Gen. 50:19, 20, NLT).

Did you notice that? God had not wiped away the truth of their guilt and his misery. God had entered it and redeemed it. Once Joseph realized God’s grace had always been in his story, he could *forgive* it. Joseph could finally embrace God’s grace in his whole story—both glorious and painful.

Many of us have a hard time with the story. We are not, of course, suggesting that God justifies cruelty done to any of His children. Yet when we suffer, God enters into our suffering with us (Isa. 63:9). All too often, the pain of the moment hides this reality from us. Thus, our unhealed wounds and stories of the past are buried deep in the closet of our memory. We wish to *forget* them. But even though banned from view, these experiences still affect our life and leadership and sometimes derail our best intentions. These hidden dynamics are one of the reasons leadership development is such a difficult undertaking.<sup>2</sup>

In a study of congregational leaders, Mike Aufderhar found that leaders “without an awareness of their family system patterns and reactivity often exercise their leadership in unhealthy ways that are damaging to their congregations.”<sup>3</sup> Why? In anxiety-generating situations, we tend to revert to behavior patterns we developed earlier in life. The stories of the past, which are thought to be overcome and discarded, if not forgiven, can still trigger emotional reactions to do their destructive work.<sup>4</sup>

Look at Moses, striking the rock in anger instead of talking to it as God had commanded. Why this overreaction? Fearful of seeing Israel repeat the rebellion, possibly causing their

exclusion from the Promised Land, Moses simply lost it. While we have great sympathy for his “losing it” when faced with the constant whining and rebelling of His people, God still held Moses accountable for his failure under pressure.

What can we do? One way to find healing is to realize that our life is a sacred story authored by God: “Everyone’s life *is* a story. But most people don’t know how to read their life in a way that reveals their story. They miss the deeper meaning in their life, and they have little sense of how God has written their story to reveal himself and his own story.”<sup>5</sup> Learning to read your life story is a core ingredient for leadership growth.

In our leadership program at Andrews University, we ask all leaders to write out their life stories. Then we help them plot their story on a timeline and track God’s fingerprints in the circumstances, events, and people of their lives.<sup>6</sup> Many leaders are profoundly affected by this exercise. The exercise assumes that if God has called you as a leader, He uses *all* of your life to shape the unique you, the good and the bad.

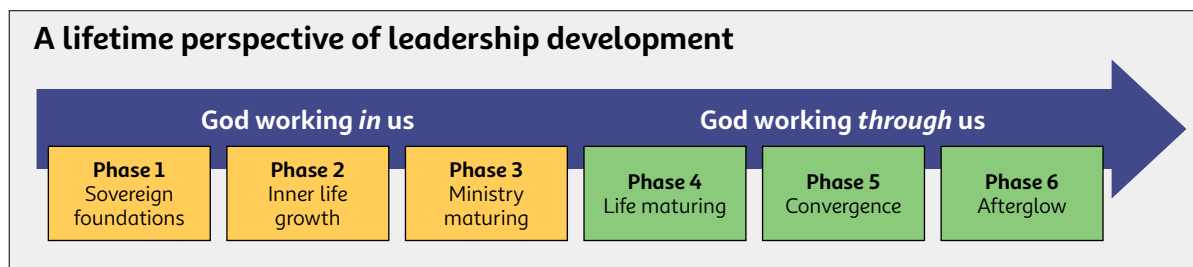
## God’s fingerprints in our lives

God uses all of our life to shape our leadership potential. One of the researchers who has greatly influenced the lifetime approach to leadership development is J. Robert Clinton. After studying the life stories of many biblical, historical, and contemporary Christian leaders, Clinton found six discernable phases in the typical development of a leader. While each life story is unique and does not exactly match these ideal phases, the following six-point review offers an important perspective on what God is doing in each phase to develop leadership potential.

1. *Sovereign foundations.* God works through the background elements of family, context, historical situations, and events to shape a leader. It is not always easy to see God’s hand in the circumstances of life. But reflection in later stages of life will often bring a deeper appreciation of the providences of God in this phase.
2. *Inner life growth.* Emerging leaders need to attend to the inner landscape of their hearts.<sup>7</sup> As they learn to hear God’s voice in Scripture and through prayer, their response to His voice will be tested. Thus, Christian character is formed as they grow in faith and faithfulness. All of life is a platform of service, no matter what profession they are in, and they usually get involved in some form of ministry.



## A lifetime perspective of leadership development



3. *Ministry maturing.* In this phase, emerging leaders reach out to others and begin experimenting with their gifts. They learn by experience how relationships in the body of Christ work—not always an easy thing. These experiences drive some to seek informal or even formal training. Through it all, God continues to shape the inner life of the leader.

In these first three phases, God primarily works *in* the leader, not *through* the leader. While we are evaluating success and productivity, God often quietly works *in* us because He desires us to lead out of who we *are*.

4. *Life maturing.* Leaders in this stage have identified their giftedness and experience ministry as satisfying. They are thus gaining a sense of priority. Often God uses conflicts, isolation, crisis, and destiny experiences to grow into mature fruitfulness. Experiencing God deeply may be valued even more than ministry success. Paradoxically, this is often a period of increased relevance and fruitfulness.
5. *Convergence.* This phase builds on the learning of previous phases. Some leaders experience God's guidance into a role and place that matches their giftedness optimally and maximizes the contribution of their ministry. Clinton warns that this is not something to strive for but a result of responding consistently to God's attempts to guide the leader.
6. *Afterglow.* For a few leaders, the fruit of a lifetime of ministry and growth culminates in a time of widespread influence and blessing to many. Sometimes their influence lingers beyond their life span.

Joseph's life as a leader illustrates God's commitment to growing us as leaders to full maturity. The leadership growth journey is not an easy road. It cultivates not only your competencies but also the inner landscape of your heart.<sup>8</sup>

When I stood that evening, turning my life over to Jesus, I fully expected him to end my troubles. I was ready to *forget* my past and embark on a journey of growth with Him. What I did not realize was how much I still had to learn and unlearn to be able to allow His story to shine through mine. Thus, in the costly twists and turns of my life, I have learned that life does not always turn out as planned.

If you are willing to allow God's presence to shine through the stories of your past, you might just find yourself with fewer burdens, more grace, and a renewed sense of purpose in your leadership and life.



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# Pastoral leadership:

## A catalyst for whole-church ministry

**M**inistry in the New Testament finds its source and focus in Jesus Christ. Jesus set the tone and example for ministry by calling His followers to find greatness through servanthood. Jesus said He came “not to be served but to serve” (Matt. 20:28, RSV).

Based on Jesus’ example, ministry in the apostolic age was always viewed as a position of service (*diakonia*) by the entire community of God’s people (1 Cor. 12:15–26; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; 4:10, 11). Rather than being confined to an elite class of believers, service was the hallmark of all followers of Jesus.

Taking an active part in the fulfillment of the Great Commission was part—a crucial part—of the lifestyle of being a disciple of Christ. All baptized members were called to share in this service in accord with their special gifts.

### Ministry in the New Testament

A study of the concept of ministry in the New Testament reveals that the involvement of believers was driven primarily by their allegiance to Christ, the image they had of the church, their appreciation of their spiritual giftedness, and the apostles’ leadership. The image of the church as the people of God gave believers their self-understanding as the continuation and consummation of God’s covenant community (1 Peter 2:9). This image combines the identity of believers as God’s elect and holy covenant people with their priestly and prophetic responsibility of proclaiming Christ to the world.

The metaphor “the body of Christ” for the church suggests that the church is like a living organism with many functions that, though different, work harmoniously together for the health and growth of the whole body (1 Cor. 12:12–27). This image is a powerful reminder of mutuality and interdependence between church members and ministries.

The fact that each believer has received at least one gift from the Spirit indicates that each member is called to ministry. Each member’s contribution is essential because only when their ministry is performed can the body grow and fulfill its intended purpose. The body is negatively

affected whenever a member fails to play his or her unique part.

Paul’s fundamental concern is that no gift or ministry should be underrated. The entire body of Christ, leaders and members together, had the duty to witness inasmuch as all had received the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. The difference in gifts ensured that a variety of ministries could thrive. There was to be no thought of elitism among church members. Being a shepherd or a healer was related to one gift among many, not qualitatively different from other gifts.<sup>1</sup>

### Recovering the leadership role

Church health studies have established that there is a direct correlation between pastoral leadership and the long-term vitality of congregations. Pastoral leadership that empowers all members is considered the number one quality characteristic of healthy churches.<sup>2</sup> Following are three suggestions that have the potential to foster a whole-church ministry:

1. *Help believers fully embrace their identity as Christ’s disciples.* Recovering the New Testament’s perspective on ministry starts with helping believers fully embrace their identity as Christ’s disciples. While the world encourages us to search for our identity in external and temporal



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things, such as career development, social recognition, or even physical appearance, the Bible asserts that believers' identity is determined by

God's verdict rather than that of their social location (1 Peter 2:9). From the perspective

of Scripture, therefore, what really defines our identity is not our family name, gender, ethnicity, nationality, level of education, job performance, or wealth. As

Christians, our creation in God's image, our redemption by Christ, and the

certain social standards or being approved by certain people. Much of a person's life can be wasted trying to gain the approval of others.<sup>3</sup> When we learn to see ourselves in God's mirror, we will strive for a situation in which all our endeavors fit with our God-given identity. Therefore, Christians should not allow the voices of culture, popularism, media, personal preferences or experiences, or any such to overshadow the voice of the Bible on what constitutes true identity. According to 2 Corinthians 5:20 and 1 Peter 2:9, fully embracing our identity in Christ unavoidably leads to our involvement in God's mission. There is no passive membership in the body of Christ.

2. *Help believers discover and use their spiritual gifts.* Ephesians 4:11, 12 outlines the job description of a pastor: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (v. 12, RSV). The ultimate purpose of equipping the saints is to enable them to become full-fledged ministers in accord with their spiritual gifts and to

## The fact that each believer has received at least one gift from the Spirit indicates that each member is called to ministry.

enabling power of the Holy Spirit constitute the solid foundation of our identity.

Christians should see their true worth through God's eyes rather than those of others. They should avoid falling into the performance trap, becoming approval addicts, or being crippled by the fear of failure. Feeling good about oneself should not be contingent on meeting

actively participate in the building up of the body of Christ. Paul's counsel clearly refutes clergy-dominated ministry in the church. Therefore, being intentional about empowering members so that they faithfully fulfill their own ministry mandate is one of the most important aspects of pastoral leadership.

Leading church members in the process of spiritual gifts discovery, helping them understand and appreciate their giftedness, and showing them the various ways a gift can be used is one of the most powerful means of promoting whole-church ministry. At the end of the process of spiritual gifts discovery and after confirmation of the gifts by the congregation, members can be

assigned to the following four clusters of gift-based ministries:

The first cluster consists of *nurturing* gifts: wisdom, shepherding, exhortation, helping, discernment, faith, and compassion. These gifts focus on building fellowship, visitation, small groups, and member care.

The second cluster consists of *outreaching* gifts: apostleship, evangelism, miracles, compassion, servanthood, and prophecy. These gifts are concerned with equipping the church for outreach.

The third cluster consists of *witnessing* gifts: knowledge, faith, prophecy, teaching, evangelism, exhortation, and healing. These gifts focus on worship, Christian education, and church growth.

The last cluster contains *organizing* gifts: knowledge, administration, giving, leadership, helping, teaching, and wisdom.

Because of the overlapping of gifts between clusters, some members will belong to more than one gift-based ministry.<sup>4</sup> This gift cluster can also be used to resource volunteer ministries and nominating committees.

The involvement of members can be increased by undertaking strategic planning. For example, when a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis is used to gather factual information impacting a congregation's ministry, members are given a platform not only to express their perspectives on the health of their church but also to commit to addressing its challenges. The key point is this: "If we want people's intelligence and support, we must welcome them as cocreators. People only support what they create."<sup>5</sup>

3. *Cast a compelling vision for discipleship as a lifestyle.* Christ's commission to make disciples was not given only to the Twelve. Matthew 28:19, 20 could be paraphrased as, "As you go about your daily lives, make disciples of the people you interact with." The Great Commission is Christ's invitation to let our faith in Him permeate all our dealings—family, school, business, and so on. By virtue of this commission, all Christians are called, whatever their walk of life, to share their faith. God has intentionally placed each believer in their neighborhood, job, school, or other location for the strategic purpose of being outposts for His kingdom. They are the only missionaries some may ever meet or meaningfully interact with.

Christians should regard their work as a calling rather than just an occupation. When believers view their jobs as part of God's calling on their lives, they add new meaning to Christian witness. Thus, it is important for each believer to strive to

connect their deeply held professional dreams with their faith in Christ and their missionary mandate. In 1 Corinthians 12:4–7, Paul uses four distinct terms for the conferral of the Spirit: gifts (*charisma*—verse 4), services (*diakonia*—verse 5), workings (*energema*—verse 6), and manifestation (*phanerōsis*—verse 7).

*Charisma* is an inclusive designation of all the gifts of the Spirit. The emphasis is, rather than being based on the receiver's worthiness, spiritual gifts are the outworking of the Spirit's grace. *Diakonia* emphasizes the purpose of spiritual gifts: a Christlike attitude of servanthood for the common good of the community of God's people. It excludes any preoccupation for special status in the body of Christ on the part of the one who serves. *Energema* directs the attention to God's energy as the source of all gifts. *Phanerōsis* stresses that every believer has at least one spiritual gift for the common good.

In view of such an understanding of spiritual gifts, Christians are to consider spiritual gifts as given to them to be stewarded in the work of ministry. Full-body ministry calls for a complete exercise of the full range of available spiritual gifts. Thus, the architect, landscaper, computer software engineer, banker, garbage collector, shopkeeper, plumber, builder, nurse, all have been given special gifts by God to be used for Him.

By embracing their profession as a vocation, every believer becomes a full-time minister in whatever walk of life God has intentionally placed them for the strategic purpose of being an outpost of His kingdom.



- 1 Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 247.
- 2 Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996); S. Joseph Kidder, *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 27.
- 3 Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance: Seeing Your True Worth through God's Eyes* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 29–40, 53–62.
- 4 Dan R. Dick and Barbara A. Dick, *Equipped for Every Good Work: Building a Gift-Based Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 29.
- 5 Margaret Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2007), 80.

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## *Multiplying Leaders in Intercultural Contexts: Recognizing and Developing Grassroots Potential*

by Evelyn Hibbert and Richard Hibbert,  
Littleton, CO: William Carey, 2023.

**P**astors have long known in theory that one of their most strategic roles is to equip and multiply members of the church who are intentional about reaching their community (2 Tim. 2:2). The challenge has been that most pastors are trained as theologians and preachers, with little instruction in how to train missional leaders. The classroom model of their own schooling is usually of little help. In addition, pastors in many parts of the world today face another challenge: the people most receptive to the gospel are from cultures different from their own. Few pastors are actually prepared to work with people from differing cultural backgrounds.

Both the challenge of leadership multiplication at the grassroots level and the challenge of how to deal with the intercultural dimensions of the church's outreach are very ably addressed by Evelyn and Richard Hibbert in *Multiplying Leaders in Intercultural Contexts: Recognizing and Developing Grassroots Potential*. The authors are cross-cultural church planters who know by experience that the greatest potential influence for growing the church comes from leaders who live out their faith in their day-to-day life in the community surrounding the church. Perhaps they lead a small neighborhood Bible study group or a branch Sabbath School, youth activities, or some other ministry. They are what the Hibberts call "the growing-edge leaders of the church" (118, Kindle edition).

Once you have identified these growing-edge leaders in your community, how do you come alongside them and help them grow? This is what *Multiplying Leaders in Intercultural Contexts* is all about. Many of these leaders are women who are working without recognition and reaching out to

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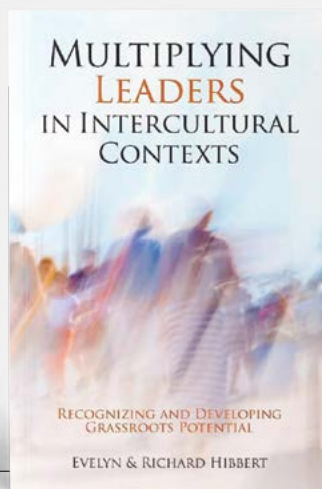
their neighbors, friends, and coworkers, who often belong to different cultures. Culture not only shapes the expectation of what good leadership is but also the relations leaders build. That is why developers of growing-edge leaders cannot afford to be culture-ignorant. Instead, they must approach their mission in humility as culture learners.

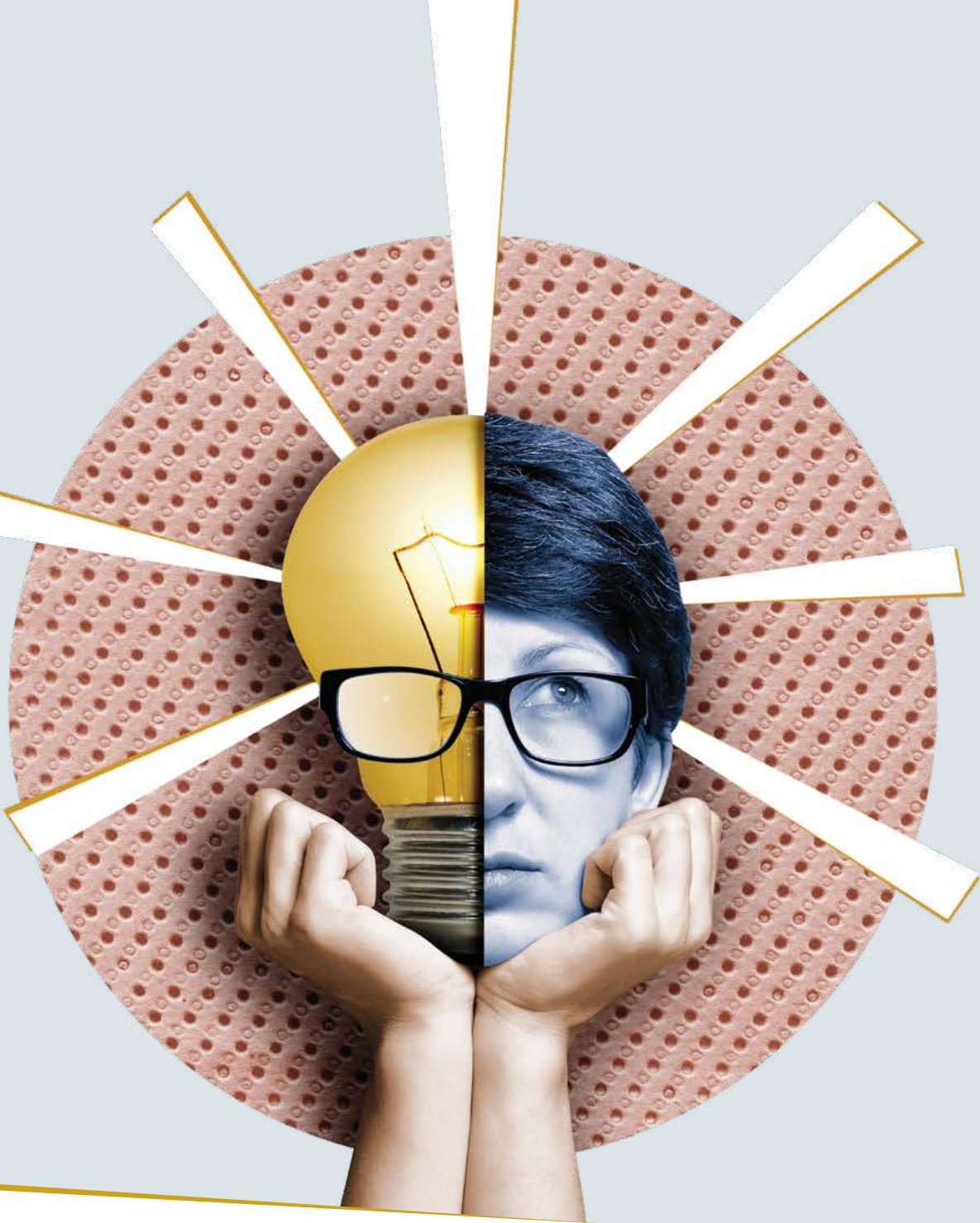
One of the strengths of this book is the attention to biblical principles for good leadership. Their biblical model of leadership revolves around four critical characteristics of Christian leadership: community, character, clarity, and care. The book's most valuable contribution is its approach to learning. Taking Jesus as their example, the Hibberts use an approach that connects learning with experience and emphasizes problem-based learning in the context of real life.

Throughout the book, the authors emphasize that leadership development grows out of a process of discipling a community. As you work with a community of believers, selecting leaders who are recognized by their communities ensures that you are focusing on leaders that have already been tested.

The authors have invested much of their missionary career working among the Millet, a Turkish-speaking Roma group in Bulgaria that experienced a large-scale movement toward Jesus. There, the Hibberts developed an approach to leadership multiplication that has the potential to be fruitful in other contexts where the church is ministering across cultural boundaries. In this book, they share what they have learned through long years of patient leadership development, careful reflection and research, and comparing notes with leader developers from around the world.

This book has been written by missionaries, which may make some readers feel that it is irrelevant in their context. If you work in a predominantly white rural neighborhood, this book may not be for you. But if you are part of a multicultural church or in charge of a ministry working across cultural boundaries, you will find this book very helpful. 📖





# Forgiveness— The core of innovation

**Karen Tilstra, PhD**, an author and international speaker, is the founder and consultant of Creativity Effect and resides in Orlando, Florida, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

**F**orgiveness can mean different things. When a friend misses a lunch appointment, we might be miffed, but we usually forgive. However, a cheating spouse or a friend's betrayal is not so easy. Whatever the case, without forgiveness, we are stuck in a revolving door of rehashing, resenting, and rearview mirroring.

Fred Luskin of Stanford University, a renowned psychologist and author known for his work on forgiveness, defines forgiveness as “the ultimate resolution of unwanted loss and grief.”<sup>1</sup> This is what forgiveness does. It moves us from what we know and experience to something new and better.

My team and I have led more than 500 design-thinking innovation<sup>2</sup> projects. Each of those projects required teams to let go of old thinking and embrace new mindsets, tools, and skills. That meant some level of forgiving oneself and moving beyond habitual ways of thinking and acting. This *is* the innovation journey, and it is laced with forgiving either oneself or others. When leading innovation teams, I never assume people will automatically understand the vital role forgiveness plays in innovation.

Luskin studied people from the United States and Northern Ireland who had experienced violence and loss. He wanted to learn how the act of forgiving would impact them. His study reported a 40 percent reduction in depression among participants. Another study, focused on individuals betrayed by business partners, reported long-lasting positive effects with a 70 percent reduction in anger and hurt. Participants in both studies showed a drop in stress, blood pressure, anger, depression, and hurt while experiencing a higher degree of optimism, hope, compassion, and physical vitality.

### **When we do not feel like forgiving**

When I was 10 years old, my grandmother took my little sister and me to one of her women's ministry's breakfast events. One woman scurried

from table to table, delivering freshly made hot tea. When she got to our table, she accidentally spilled the drink on my sister's head. The woman was horrified and began apologizing. My grandma jumped to her feet, cutting off her apology.

“You did that on purpose,” my grandma spat out.

I was certain the woman did not do it on purpose, but Grandma was not. My grandma gathered our things and ushered us out.

“I'm so angry. I'm never attending one of these events again,” Grandma huffed.

Usually, Grandma was very loving, but for whatever reason, forgiveness was as far from her mind as her going to the moon. True to her word, Grandma never attended another women's ministry event.

From this experience, I learned that a significant barrier to forgiveness is being stuck in our point of view. It is the same in the innovation world. Without forgiveness, innovation does not happen. Innovation always demands reframing thinking. Jesus said something similar when He commanded us to forgive 70 times 7 times. Forgiving, especially those we deem unworthy, is not easy. It is easy to forgive people we deem worthy, but for those we think are not worthy, forgiving requires us to think differently about the person and situation. Jesus did not say to be selective. That is hard, but hard is rarely the point in matters of great importance, like forgiveness.

### **How do we forgive?**

The world of innovation constantly teaches us about forgiveness; I think it is because we cannot forgive when stuck in yesterday's thinking. Just like innovation, forgiveness is a forward action igniting movement, energy, and unity.

While working in a school, I was asked to reinvent a yearly program. For years, this program had been organized by a coworker, whom we shall call Rhonda, who had recently taken another position but asked if she could still help.

I welcomed that. As my team and I prepared for the program, Rhonda offered to take care of the refreshments. However, on the morning of the event, Rhonda announced that she did not order any refreshments.

We stood in shocked silence. With only a few hours before the program began, we needed to act. Thankfully, the food service pitched in and supplied cookies and ice cream. Everything came off without a hitch, and the cookies and ice cream were a hit.

With the refreshment crisis averted, it should have been the end of this story. Right? Wrong! Forgiveness was the furthest from our minds when Rhonda approached us.

“Can you forgive me?” she asked. “I didn’t want your program to succeed, so I didn’t order the refreshments.”

I was dumbfounded and certainly not thinking about forgiveness. Then a teammate jumped in.

“It’s OK. The program turned out fine.”

Another team member followed, “Yes, it’s behind us now.”

Immediately, attitudes shifted. I marveled at my teammates’ transformation. They were no longer angry.

Did Rhonda deserve forgiveness? That was not the point. I had a choice. I could go on resenting her, or I could forgive. Forgiveness was not easy, but it moved me from being stuck. Forgiveness moves us from a people-must-pay-for-their-mistakes mindset to getting on with what matters. That is why I see forgiveness as synonymous with innovation; both are vehicles for new thinking and acting.

A few years back, I led a healthcare innovation project focused on reducing patient complaints during the presurgical process. The group of doctors included in the project felt patients were being “unreasonable” and needed to “buck up.”

We needed to learn what the real problem was. One doctor said several complaints were about the gurney ride to surgery. So that doctor offered to take that same gurney ride incognito. Dressed in a hospital gown and surgery cap and covered with a white sheet, the doctor was pushed by a hospital transporter into the elevator and down the hallways to a surgery unit. People talked all around him and over the bed as if he were not there. While in the elevator, two people discussed a recent basketball game. The doctor felt embarrassed, invisible, and exposed.

Experiencing what his patients experienced shifted his point of view. This simple gurney ride afforded the doctor and his team the information

they needed to get unstuck and improve their patients’ experience. When the doctor put himself in the place of his patients, in their shoes, he could see their side of things. He moved from judgment, cynicism, and fear to curiosity, compassion, and courage.

## Embracing forgiveness

Luskin’s research shows that forgiveness takes practice, but it is a skill almost anyone can learn. Over the years of working with thousands of people, I have found that God equips the human heart with three gifts that are needed to forgive others. I call them the 3Cs: curiosity, compassion, and courage.<sup>3</sup> It is up to us to cultivate these three beautiful virtues so they can become vehicles for forgiveness. *Curiosity* means learning, wonder, and discovery. *Compassion* means kindness, grace, and love. *Courage* means believing there are answers and opportunities; therefore, we push past fears.

These virtues release creativity and support our leadership potential. When we infuse the 3Cs into our daily life, they demystify forgiveness and enable the creative process. Those who live up to their full creative and leadership ability are always learning, trying, failing, embracing feedback, and trying again.

Robert Fritz, a musician and creativity guru, teaches that everyone has a path of least resistance.<sup>4</sup> If our path of least resistance is to be judgmental, cynical, and fearful, forgiveness will not be easy. It might not be forthcoming. If we choose the 3Cs, we create pathways for forgiveness. Soon curiosity, compassion, and courage become our pathway of least resistance. We are building a life of grace, love, and peace.

## Our choice

To forgive or not forgive: the choice is ours. David Hawkins, in his bestseller *Letting Go*, writes that forgiveness is the deliberate act of letting go of past hurts, anger, and heartbreak.<sup>5</sup> The act of forgiving allows us to see those around us in a new light. Forgiving does not mean sticking our heads in the sand. When confronted with the option to forgive or not, pause, breathe, and realize that God has given you the power of choice.

Exercise curiosity, compassion, and courage, not as an overnight fix but as a gate that allows you to open a pathway to forgiveness. It is not easy. Jesus never said it would be, but He did provide a way for us to follow His last great commandment, *to love our fellow men* through curiosity, compassion, and courage.



I have been inspired so many times by the help others have extended. Like the day John Vixie, a principal I worked for, handed me a quote that he had framed, which read, “While none of us can go back and have a new start, we can all start today and create a whole new ending.” I hung that quote in my office. Many people have shared how much that quote has meant to them. One said, “It encouraged me to stop being angry and forgive.” Another said, “That quote helped me forgive myself and begin anew.” To this day, that quote still hangs in my office.

We all have a choice. To forgive or not to forgive. By not forgiving, we are sentencing ourselves to a life of judgment, cynicism, and fear. If, on the other hand, we forgive, we choose curiosity, compassion, and courage. What will we choose?

Victor Hugo wrote in *Les Misérables*: “To love another person is to see the face of God.”<sup>6</sup> If forgiveness is not love, I do not know what is.



- 1 Fred Luskin, “The Choice to Forgive,” *Greater Good* magazine, September 1, 2004, [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the\\_choice\\_to\\_forgive](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_choice_to_forgive).
- 2 Innovation is the result or outcome of creative thinking or new ideas. It is what happens when we find better ways to do things or create improved products, and it is the result of our original, resourceful thinking in unique and unconventional ways. Its main goal is to make positive changes and improvements in whatever we are working on.
- 3 Karen Tilstra, *The Deathline: Stopping the #1 All-Time Killer of Human Potential* (Longwood, FL: Brightway, 2022).
- 4 Robert Fritz, *Path of Least Resistance: Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1989).
- 5 David Hawkins, *Letting Go: The Pathway of Surrender* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2012).
- 6 Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, 1862.

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## LETTERS

### Abuse

The recent article “‘My Well Is Empty’—Adverse Childhood Experiences Among Pastors” (David Sedlacek and René Drumm, May 2023) was excellent, but I think, along with the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) test it is predicated on, the article neglects the primary source of abuse that many pastors (and perhaps more Seventh-day Adventist pastors) have experienced growing up, namely emotional and spiritual abuse. Many of the forms of abuse the ACE test references may not be as likely to occur in the rigidly conservative Adventist sub-culture, but the incidence of emotional and spiritual abuse is at least as damaging and probably more prevalent. A follow-up study and article by the authors would, I believe, be very revealing.

—Dan Appel, email

### Author response

Thank you for sharing the feedback. Even though we limited the data in this article to the original 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), we have expanded the

ACE questionnaire to include spiritual abuse and other indicators of trauma in conservative families. We would be happy to do a follow-up article!

—David Sedlacek, PhD, Andrews University

### Seasons

A big thank you for Jeffrey O. Brown’s “The pressure of summer ministry” editorial in the May 2023 edition of *Ministry*. Although spring and summer ministries are in my rearview mirror already, I found Dr. Brown’s musings witty, refreshing, and spiritually invigorating. I truly appreciate the reminder that the excitement that was evident in spring ministry and even the never-enough reality of summer ministry are still with us. Yet the gospel we preach is still true—more so now than ever—and the promises of Jesus are still ours in ministry to claim and enjoy. I’m pressing on to the finish line, which is ever in sight and reachable through the grace and power of Jesus Christ.

—Willie Oliver, PhD, email

**E**arly in my Christian walk, I found Bible verses that spoke about how God would grant the things I wanted and needed if I asked in faith (e.g., Matt. 21:22; John 15:7). But what I lived seemed to be different.

While at times I had remarkable answers to prayer, sometimes, prayers concerning my desires and even some “needs” did not get answered as I expected. I knew I could not simply ask for a Ferrari, and it would show up the next day. But when I prayed for months and years for a close friend’s son to be healed from a debilitating accident, he was not. Or when I pleaded for a rough edge of my character to be smoothed, it yet again slashed out against those I loved. *What is wrong?* I wondered.

### An ongoing path

While my understanding of how God works in my life is far from complete, I have grown in my comprehension. I recognize that my spiritual life has ups and downs. Both are an important part of the refining process. Rather than using God to get what I wanted or even as a recipe to achieve what I thought was important or necessary, I began to understand the Christian walk as a growing relationship of knowing and loving the Creator God and, ultimately, as a journey of discipleship.

Furthermore, I began to recognize that while a “righteous man may fall seven times,” he will also “rise again” (Prov. 24:16, NKJV). Thus, the process of growing in likeness with my Friend and Savior is not completed in a moment. It “is not a work of a day or a year, but of a lifetime.” While it includes falls and victories, without “continual efforts and constant activity, there can be no advancement in the divine life” and thus no actual growth.<sup>1</sup>

As in discipleship, so in leadership. Both discipleship and leadership are built on relationships, both require a spirit of collaboration, and both intend to influence others to change or grow. Such similarities reveal an essential truth about leadership.

### A journey

Leadership is a spiritual journey. Growth in the spiritual life is foundational to growth as a leader. The journey of discipleship is at the core of the journey of a leader. As growing with God continues throughout our lives, so our growth as leaders should never end. Such realizations have profound implications for both what it means to be a leader and for leadership development.

### What it means to be a leader

Before addressing the significance of leadership, it is important first to clarify to whom we are referring. Leaders are often thought of as those holding a “leadership” position. Yet leaders can clearly be found without a formal position. Just watch children at play and observe how they influence one another. Also, consider the earthly life of Jesus. He held no formal position, yet He was the greatest leader the world has ever known. Thus, when we speak of leaders and leadership, our discussion can apply either to those with formal positions (e.g., elder, pastor, conference departmental director, institutional president) or those who lead from a “support” role.

While many definitions exist, in my search to understand leadership better, the following is one of the most complete: *Leadership is a relationship of collaborative influence for change.*<sup>2</sup> This definition describes leadership as fundamentally about people working together toward a common future goal. Leadership is about supporting people, whether working one-on-one, in teams, or as larger units. It affects the actions, behaviors, and thoughts of others through inspiring, guiding, advising, empowering, and other positive interactions and by using a variety of approaches. Ultimately, leadership is about helping bring about positive change.

Given this definition of leadership, a leader is *one who builds relationships of collaborative influence for change*. Good leaders cultivate an environment that helps people to work together rather than against each other. Even as leaders have their eyes on advancing the organizational mission, they find ways to build and honor people and help them grow. Such an intentional process is often called *leadership development*.

What might such a process look like? What might encourage the kind of ongoing growth God intends for those He summons to lead?

In the Global Leadership Institute at Andrews University (GLI), we have wrestled with those questions. We consulted a wealth of leadership development research, reflected on decades of personal leadership practice, and learned from colleagues and graduate students across the globe. As we searched the inspired record, we were again impressed by the relevance of its principles of growth and development. The approach that emerged from our search we call the leader growth framework.

### The leader growth framework

The framework begins with a Christ-centered approach of both personal and professional

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

# The spiritual journey of leadership:

A “growth” framework

growth and culminates in multiplication—that is, helping leaders grow to support the mission of the church—through five important components. The figure illustrates it.



*Component 1: Led by Christ.* Too often, many have regarded leadership development as a secular process devoid of spiritual content. Ironically, in doing so, we miss the central point: Jesus is the model for leadership and life. He counsels us to come to Him and learn from Him (Matt. 11:28, 29). “Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed.”<sup>13</sup> As we make Him the center of our personal development, Christ supports our development as leaders. He is the indispensable core of the leadership journey.

*Component 2: Leading self.* Accounts of leaders summoned by God to serve His purposes fill the pages of Scripture. In those stories, God shaped leaders for a calling that stretched their abilities and required their trust. Notice the patient preparation of Moses for his leadership with the Israelites. Remember the battle-tested Joshua with his years of training for his taking Israel into the Promised Land. Also, the narratives of David, Elijah, Paul, and others are equally instructive.

Each went through a journey of growth as God sent them forth as leaders. None were without flaws and failures. In fact, it is no accident that the Bible preserves their failures. Life stories are God’s tools to help leaders grow. But few leaders know how to read and learn from them. As a result, they miss a deeper understanding of their identity in Christ.

Consider the life of Jesus. While spending years in the carpenter’s shop, He advanced in understanding God and His own life purpose.<sup>4</sup> We get a glimpse into Jesus’ story as a 12-year-old

at the annual Passover festival. It was here, as He witnessed the slaughter of the Passover lamb, that Christ came face-to-face with part of His place in the business of His Father.

Personal reflection on our own life story in the light of God’s providences helps us anchor our leadership in God’s purposes. It also sheds light on our blind spots that often interfere with our work without our realizing it. Psalm 139 provides a beautiful example of a prayer of self-reflection. Here David pleads for God to examine his heart. In essence, he cries, “Find my ‘blind spots,’<sup>5</sup> Lord!”

*Component 3: Leading with others.* Leading is based on relationships. Working with others in constructive ways is crucial.<sup>6</sup> As any leader knows, laboring with others individually, in groups, or in teams has both occasions of celebration and times of conflict. Sometimes conflicts arise between a leader and others; at other times, leaders mitigate conflict between individuals. In either case, conflicts can be the stickiest and most difficult challenges that leaders face.

Since groups and teams are such an important part of a leader’s responsibilities, growing competence in this area is important. It involves gaining a deeper understanding and skills for how to relate to people, expanding the ability to listen and communicate well, and the willingness (and humility) to view challenges from the perspective of others.

*Component 4: Leading in organizations.* Too many would-be leaders have an idealized picture of what it means to be the “top” leader—they see it as a way to seek power, prestige, position, and/or fame. Such motivation is misguided and short-sighted. The reality is closer to sleep-interrupting challenges and sacrificial service. Yet leadership is also where changes happen, and every contribution counts. Even those without a formal leadership position will make an impact in the organization. Thus, building leadership competence in this area is appropriate for all.

*Component 5. Leading through multiplication.* What is the mark of success for leaders? In answering that question, we must consider the fidelity with which Christian leaders have followed God’s plan for their life, including His call to make disciples, to multiply. For leaders, their investment in others can arguably be their greatest contribution. In his final admonition to Timothy, Paul urged him to make leadership multiplication a priority. “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2, NIV).

Helping emerging leaders to grow has another benefit. As the time-tested saying goes, the best way to learn is to teach. Paul expected his readers to grow “to be teachers” (Heb. 5:12) and continue to learn.

## Final thoughts

This leader growth framework used by the Global Leadership Institute outlines a unique approach to leadership formation. It is designed to provide a framework for both leadership and personal growth, organizational growth, and ultimately, mission growth. As the church strives to fulfill its expanding mission in these difficult times, it needs leaders who constantly strive to expand their capacity to lead.<sup>7</sup>

The path of human growth is built through joy and celebration, yet also hardship, struggle, and pain. Jesus called His disciples to share both His cup and His joy. Since maturing as a leader is a spiritual growth journey, let us pray together for God’s leadership in our spiritual walk, continued advancement in leadership, and the leaders of our church. “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will

be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples’ ” (John 15: 7, 8, NIV).



- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 325.
- 2 This definition is a modification of one from James Tucker.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900), 355.
- 4 See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), chapter 9, “Days of Conflict.”
- 5 Amy C. Edmondson and Aaron W. Dimmock, “Don’t Get Blindsided by Your Blind Spots,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 5, 2020, <https://hbr.org/2020/11/dont-get-blindsided-by-your-blind-spots>.
- 6 See Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10.
- 7 The connection between becoming a more mission-focused church and leadership development is described well in Paul Brantley, Dan Jackson, and Mike Cauley, *Becoming a Mission-Driven Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 11.

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# Social Change Model of Leadership Development

**W**hat does it mean to be a pastoral leader? What is God asking of us?<sup>1</sup> Throughout Jesus' ministry, we witness a genuine servanthood approach toward humanity, especially the marginalized, disadvantaged, and disenfranchised—the poor, the sick, the ritually unclean. Jesus expanded the kingdom of God to places, people, and cultures that some people had never considered Him to be interested in.

Therefore, the focus of effective pastoral leadership is not bigger church edifices but community outreach ministry. It emphasizes being in communion with God and one another. As we follow God's instruction to minister to people's physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs, we share the good news of salvation and God's love through life-on-life evangelism. He requires a total life commitment from His followers. Christians cannot divorce the teachings of Jesus from the method of Jesus yet expect the results Jesus had.

## Biblical values

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development<sup>2</sup> is a critical outline for the church to be a deliberately incarnational organization. Judson University Professor Keith Krispin, Jr., asserts, "Though this model does not emerge from a Christian setting, the focus on values, collaboration, common purpose, and citizenship certainly resonate with biblical understandings of Christian community."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it approaches leadership as "a purposeful collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change."<sup>4</sup> The model rests upon the following assumptions about leadership:

- › Socially responsible
- › Collaborative
- › A process, not a position
- › Inclusive and accessible to all people
- › Values-based



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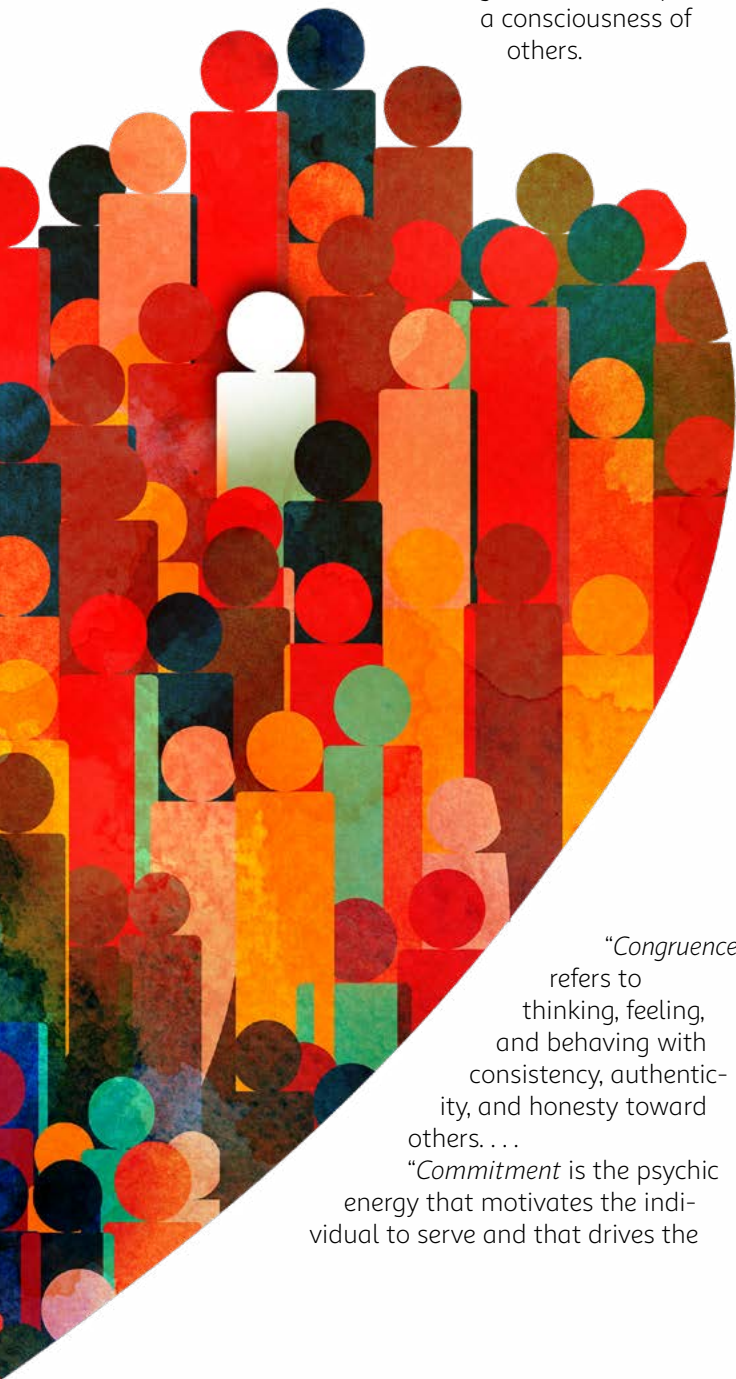


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## Changing self to change others

The Social Change Model implores every leader to be cognizant of the eight Cs:

*"Consciousness of self* means being aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate one to take action."<sup>5</sup> It is the key to being able to develop a consciousness of others.



*"Congruence* refers to thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, authenticity, and honesty toward others. . . .

*"Commitment* is the psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the

collective effort. Commitment implies passion, intensity, and duration."<sup>6</sup> It guides both group activity as well as its intended outcomes.

*"Collaboration* is to work with others in a common effort. It constitutes the cornerstone value of the group leadership effort because it empowers self and others through trust."<sup>7</sup> As a group process, leadership collaboration encourages people to surpass individual goals, interests, and behaviors.

*"Common Purpose* means to work with shared aims and values. It facilitates the group's ability to engage in collective analysis of the issues at hand and the task to be undertaken. Common purpose is best achieved when all members of the group share in the vision and participate . . . in the purpose and goals of the . . . activity. . . .

*"Controversy with Civility* recognizes . . . that differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and . . . must be aired openly but with civility. Civility implies respect for others, willingness to hear other's views, and . . . restraint in critiquing the views and actions of others."<sup>8</sup> It requires trust. "Conflicts need to be resolved but also integrated into the common purpose."<sup>9</sup>

*"Citizenship* is the process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community . . . through leadership development activity. To be a good citizen is to work for positive change on the behalf of others."<sup>10</sup>

*Change* is the ability to adapt to constantly evolving environments and situations while maintaining the core functions of the group. Change "is the value 'hub' which gives meaning . . . to the [eight] C's. . . [It] is the . . . goal of the creative process of leadership—to make a better world . . . for self and others."<sup>11</sup>

In dealing with the first three elements—consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment—we enhance leader development by expanding the individual's personal characteristics. The next set of three elements—collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility—enlarges organizational capability. Then the individual will become more influential not only within the church but also as a citizen of society.

## Barriers to the community

The Social Change Model is also connected to the four elements of critical consciousness development, presented by service-learning practitioner Susan Cipolle:<sup>12</sup>

*Self-awareness* “means having a clear understanding of [one’s] level of privilege, . . . values, . . . role in society, and . . . responsibility to others.”<sup>13</sup>

*Awareness of others* leads to a broader perspective of others. It means that church members collaborate with those of different backgrounds in the community. Instead of doing inward-focused events, they begin to explore opportunities to serve outside the walls of the church. As church members interact with community members, they hear personal stories and community challenges. Perhaps, through such interaction, they begin to see the community as people belonging to God instead of as projects or statistics. As they become less judgmental and more compassionate toward others, the barriers between church and community will break down. Seeing beyond stereotypes, they begin to acknowledge the reality of injustice and inequity.

*Awareness of social issues* leads to “a broader perspective of social issues. . . . As [church members] inform themselves on social, economic, and political issues,”<sup>14</sup> they will start to examine their own beliefs and develop solution-focused constructive services and community involvement.

*Ethics of service*, or seeing one’s potential to make meaningful changes, is the process of discipleship, in which disciples make other disciples through positive service experiences. It “enhances their feelings of competency and *efficacy*”<sup>15</sup> as difference-makers. Church members who have developed a clear sense of values are more likely to live in accordance with their beliefs as disciples. Disciples who regard service as a part of their identity are more likely to choose a profession in which they can contribute to society.

## Why some leave church

Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, co-founders of Minds at Work, say, “Research shows that the single biggest cause of work burnout is not work overload, but working too long without experiencing your own personal development.”<sup>16</sup> If people lack personal development or growth opportunity, they will leave the organization. The church faces the same reality. Church ministry consultant Reggie McNeal observes: “A growing number of people are leaving the institutional church for a new reason. They are not leaving

because they have lost faith. They are leaving the church to preserve their faith. They contend that the church no longer contributes to their spiritual development.”<sup>17</sup>

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development has been the most frequent leadership theory used in leadership development programs.<sup>18</sup> It is an essential component of personal development in both *leader development* and *leadership development*. *Leader development* seeks to increase individuals’ capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes.<sup>19</sup> The term *leadership development* is “the expansion of the organization’s capacity to enact the basic leadership tasks needed for collective work.”<sup>20</sup>

Leader development cultivates such character traits as integrity, determination, transparency, passion, and humility, while leadership development focuses on organizational and managerial ability by establishing direction, motivating and inspiring people, planning, solving problems, budgeting, and so forth. We must invest in both leader development and leadership development.

## Helping the helpless

Research shows that when students participate in planning and directing service-learning experiences, their academic and civic engagement increases. In addition, when given opportunities to voice their opinions and make presentations, students’ public speaking and leadership skills improve.<sup>21</sup>

For example, Cipolle suggests the following questions be discussed when volunteering at a homeless shelter as a way to implement the critical consciousness aspect of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development:<sup>22</sup>

- *Knowledge*—What were your first impressions of the shelter?
- *Comprehension*—How was it similar to or different from what you expected?
- *Analysis*—What parts of the experience have been most challenging to you?
- *Synthesis*—What have you personally learned about yourself from this service?
- *Evaluation*—What ideas do you have to help the situation of homelessness?

## Mindset for ministry

Both Kegan and Tobert regard successful organization growth as requiring three specific mindsets: (1) a socialized mind, (2) a self-authorizing mind, and (3) a self-transforming mind.<sup>23</sup>



- › A *socialized mind* is when leaders develop team players and faithful followers as they align with people and build relationships.
- › A *self-authorizing mind* is when leaders focus on an agenda, learn to lead, develop their own frame of work, focus on problem-solving, and are independent.
- › A *self-transforming mind* is when leaders become “meta-leaders,” able to mobilize people and organizations to collaborate in times of crisis. Instead of problem-solving, they invest their time in problem-finding.

According to Astin, “[A leader is] one who is able to effect positive **change** for the betterment of others, the community, and society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders. Moreover, the **process** of leadership cannot be described simply in terms of the behavior of an individual; rather, leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to effect positive change.”<sup>24</sup>

## Intentional change

The church must become a consciously deliberate developmental organization that equips and educates disciples through intentional and sustainable personal development. We need to create a culture and environment in which individuals learn to improve their self-efficacy as difference-makers for the kingdom of God. When church members and community members collaboratively engage in meaningful service-learning and social change, we will connect people socially and spiritually both inside and outside of the ecclesiastical organizations.

Community outreach ministry is about first seeking His kingdom and righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Therefore, the fundamental question is: Are we the people God calls us to be? Are we faithful, tangible, recognizable, and visible expressions of the kingdom of God in our homes, neighborhoods, communities, and the world? Let us ever remember, ministry begins not with *what* or *how* but with *who*—the God who loves us and those whom He sends us to love.



- 1 A version of this article was first published as a chapter in the book *Burst the Bubble: Finding Your Passion for Community Outreach* by Sung K. Kwon (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2017). Available in print and as an eBook at [adventistbookcenter.com](http://adventistbookcenter.com). Used by permission.
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# Self-denial: The key to effective pastoral leadership

**W**alter Mischel, a psychologist at Stanford University, conducted a groundbreaking study known as the Stanford marshmallow experiment. This study focused on understanding self-control and self-denial in children, revealing the long-term benefits of practicing self-denial.<sup>1</sup> The findings from this experiment highlight the importance of developing self-control to achieve our goals and lead successful lives. This principle also applies to pastoral leadership, where self-denial is crucial in serving one's congregation effectively.

One of the most challenging sayings of Jesus, found in Luke 9:23, highlights the importance of self-denial in Christian discipleship. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (NKJV). Although self-denial is counterintuitive to modern society and human nature, Jesus emphasized its significance for those who wish to follow Him.

Pastoral ministry is a high calling that demands selflessness, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment from those undertaking it. A key aspect of this ministry is self-denial, which involves putting aside personal desires and preferences to serve others.

## A calling

The consequences of a lack of self-denial can be severe, causing harm to congregations through conflict, division, and a loss of trust. In contrast, pastors who practice self-denial can earn their congregation's trust, model Christ's example, and lead their church effectively.

Implementing self-denial in pastoral ministry includes regularly evaluating one's motives and actions, prioritizing God's calling, and placing the congregation's well-being above personal gain. Our decisions have a profound impact on our lives

and those of others. Choosing to prioritize God's will over personal desires leads to a strong sense of inner peace and happiness. Pastoral ministry is a calling to guide God's people by pointing them to Christ, nurturing their faith, addressing their needs, and supporting them during difficult times.

When pastors commit to self-denial, they cultivate an effective pastoral leadership style that benefits the congregation and honors God. Developing self-denial can be achieved by contemplating Jesus' self-denial and humiliation, allowing us to be transformed into His likeness. By embracing self-denial, pastors can prioritize their calling and lead their congregations more effectively.

## Practical steps

As pastors seek to cultivate self-denial in their lives and ministries, it is essential to consider practical steps for incorporating this critical aspect into their daily routines. Here are some practical tips for pastors to develop and maintain self-denial in their leadership:

1. *Cultivate a deeper relationship with God.* A strong and intimate relationship with God is the foundation for self-denial. Engage in regular prayer, Bible study, and meditation to draw closer to God and understand His will for your life and ministry.
2. *Practice humility.* Recognize that pastoral ministry is not about personal glory or ambition but about serving God and others. Stay humble by acknowledging that your abilities and gifts come from God and are intended to be used for His purposes.
3. *Develop empathy and compassion.* Understand the needs and struggles of your members by listening to them, empathizing with their experiences, and offering genuine support and encouragement.
4. *Establish clear boundaries.* Set healthy boundaries to protect your personal and family life while serving your congregation effectively. This may involve saying no to some requests or opportunities that may be personally appealing but conflict with your primary responsibilities as a pastor.
5. *Encourage and empower others.* Foster a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility

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- within your congregation. Empower others to use their gifts and talents in service to God and the church.
6. *Model self-denial through personal example.* Demonstrate self-denial in your own life through acts of service, sacrifice, and self-discipline. This will inspire others to follow suit and create a culture of selflessness within the congregation.
  7. *Regularly evaluate your motives and actions.* Periodically assess your actions and decisions to ensure they align with the principles of self-denial and the congregation's best interests. Be open to constructive feedback from members and trusted advisors.

By implementing these practical steps, pastors can develop and maintain self-denial in their lives and ministries more effectively, creating a leadership style that honors God and serves their congregations well. Embracing self-denial is essential for pastors to fulfill their roles effectively and shepherd God's people with compassion and dedication. When pastors prioritize self-denial, they set a powerful example for their churches and foster a Christ-centered environment that thrives in faith and love.



1 Walter Mischel, *The Marshmallow Test: Why Self-Control Is the Engine of Success* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2014).



## Third Healthy Lifestyle leadership training course inspires pastors

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Church leaders participated in a Healthy Lifestyle leadership training course at the Anmyeon Training Center in South Korea. The course was organized by the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD), Korean Union Conference (KUC), and the five local conferences, from April 16 to 21, 2023.

The slogan “NEWSTART Lifestyle” was not just a theory, but practice. Participants engaged in aerobic exercise (walking), stretching, muscle training, and learning to prepare healthy, vegetable and fruit-based meals.

**Park SangHee**, Health Ministries director of KUC, highlighted why faith (“trust in God”) is the most important factor in the NEWSTART Lifestyle program, while local conference directors lectured on practical aspects of NEWSTART.

After participating in a bountiful breakfast and lunch, leaders were initially skeptical when they saw their light supper consisting merely of two bananas, but they realized the slow process of chewing made them feel full.

**Jacob Ko**, Health Ministries director of NSD, emphasized that God’s plan of redemption requires physical, spiritual, and intellectual restoration, which is why churches, hospitals, and schools were established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Attendees pledged to lead out in health reform as pastors in their local churches.



## Leadership training emphasizes ethics and sexuality

MÖCKERN, GERMANY

April 11–16, 2023, pastors and lay leaders from throughout the Inter-European (EUD) and Trans-European (TED) divisions attended a Family Ministries leadership training event on the campus of Friedensau Adventist University in Germany.

While topics included Christian education and intergenerational worship, sexuality and ethics were heavily featured, with a whole weekend dedicated to the theme “Let’s talk about sex.” The event started Friday evening with “Sparks Talks” (15 minutes each) on the topic “What is so amazing about sex?” by **Daniel Duda**, TED president, **Andreas Bochmann**, professor at Friedensau, and **Karen Holford**, TED Family Ministries director.

Sabbath morning began with a devotion by Holford about Tamar and Judah. Study groups examined stories of sex in the Bible, such as Abraham, Hagar, and Sarai, Tamar and Amnon, drawing lessons for today.

Daniel Duda then presented a sermon, “God, Sex, the Bible, and Us.” Sabbath afternoon featured “Shame-Free Relationships” by Holford; “Dignity” by **Helgi Johnsson** from Iceland;



Photo: Andrea Camer, Friedensau Adventist University

“Consent” by **Ansku Jaakkola**, a female pastor from Sweden; “Current Issues in Sexuality” by **Mary Jo Sandholm**; and “Attachment and Sexuality” by **Torben Bergland**, associate director of Health Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

“Talking about sexuality is often hindered by the issue because the former generations did not

talk about sex and made it such an untouchable topic,” commented **Rainer Wanitschek**, EUD Family Ministries director. All participants stated that these discussions were long overdue. For information about Family Ministries leadership resources, see <https://family.adventist.org/>. [Andrea Cramer/Rainer Wanitschek/Jeffrey Brown]

## Young leaders inspired by Usain Bolt

TRELAWNY, JAMAICA

**S**print sensation and world record holder **Usain Bolt** electrified attendees at the fifth Inter-American Division (IAD) Pathfinder Camporee in April 2023.

The eight-time Olympic champion was brought up in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Jamaica, where his mother and father are members.

Bolt was presented with the IAD presidential medal during his visit. In making the announcement, **Al Powell**, IAD Youth Ministries director, said, “The honorable Usain Bolt is a significant figure in Jamaica and across the world, and we want to share with him the Inter-American Division presidential golden award. Usain Bolt is used to getting gold medals, and we just want to show appreciation to him for his commitment to youth, not just in Jamaica, but around the world.”

In his response, the six-foot-five-inch runner encouraged thousands of young people at the camporee to “always work hard and never give up. Believe in yourself and believe in your dreams.” He concluded, “Enjoy the camporee,” and “God bless you!”

Amid the large crowd of Pathfinders and church leaders, Bolt took time to run 100 meters with two Pathfinders who challenged him, saying they could run faster than he could. Several young people followed behind. Bolt also took time to take group photos with every union delegation before he left the stadium.



Al Powell (right) congratulates Usain Bolt with Balvin Braham (left) looking on.



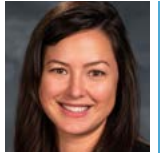
Young people responded to a call for baptism from **Andres Peralta**, Youth Ministries associate director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. “I have a burden in my heart tonight,” Peralta said. “I want one person who came to this camp, who is not a church member and is not baptized, to come forward, and I will pray for you.” One person responded—then another—and in a few minutes, more than 120 had come from their seats. [Nigel Coke-IAD News with Dyhann Buddoo-Fletcher]

Photo: Nigel Coke/IAD

Photo: Ruth Ann Brown/IAD



**Jill Buller, MD**, is a resident physician at Adventist Health Ukiah Valley, Ukiah, California, United States.



## Five strategies for healthy leadership

**M**aintaining health can be a struggle for busy leaders but it is critically important for incisive decision-making and effective leadership. Additionally, leaders are influencing their teams and can have profound effects on the health of others. Here are five suggestions for improving your own health and the health of your team, including goals to work toward.

### 1. Boundaries

Establishing boundaries allows you to take control of your time, energy, and resources and ultimately prioritize what is most important to you. Boundaries can also help reduce stress, improve relationships, reduce burnout, and increase overall well-being. Examples include setting aside dedicated family time or having dedicated time away from technology (e.g., cell phone, computer) on a daily or weekly basis. *Goal: Establish appropriate healthy boundaries in one additional area of your life.*

### 2. Sleep

Adequate sleep is essential for processing memory and deeper thinking processes. Lack of sleep can lead to decreased energy, impaired decision-making, and decreased productivity, and it increases the risk of suffering from chronic pain.<sup>1</sup> Decreases in both quantity and quality of sleep have been linked to increased rates of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and high cholesterol—all factors that increase one's risk of heart disease.<sup>2</sup> *Goal: Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night on most nights of the week.*

### 3. Stress management

Living with high levels of stress for prolonged periods of time can affect many systems, including your body's hormones and nervous system, and can trigger anxiety disorders. Healthy ways to manage stress could include practicing mindfulness, exercising, prayer, or even taking up a relaxing hobby. *Goal: Try a new stress management technique, and record how it seems to work over time.*

### 4. Energy in

Based on the best available research, a diet that consists primarily of whole, plant-based foods promotes physical, mental, and spiritual health. Avoid packaged and processed foods whenever

possible. Remember Daniel and his friends? After 10 days of vegetables and water, “they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food” (Daniel 1:15, NIV). They were found to be 10 times better than others in matters of wisdom and understanding. *Goal: Progress toward a diet that consists primarily of whole plant-based foods. Stay hydrated with plenty of water.*

### 5. Energy out

Exercise! Exercise can be a great way not only to manage stress but also to influence many systems of the body to work more efficiently. It lowers the risk of death from many chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it benefits the brain by activating molecular and cellular cascades to increase the ability of the brain to change and adapt, specifically in areas of the brain that promote learning and memory. *Goal: Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity (i.e., brisk walk) physical activity and two days of muscle-strengthening activity per week.<sup>4</sup>*

### Final thoughts

Implementing these goals can improve your physical and mental health, memory, and general sense of well-being. By maintaining your own health, you can become a more effective leader and positively influence your team to make positive changes in their own lives. “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 1:2, NKJV).



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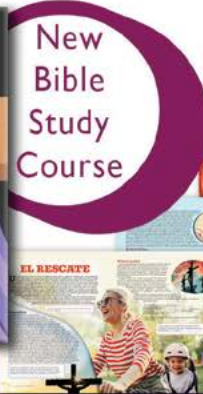
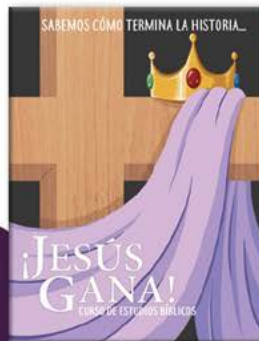
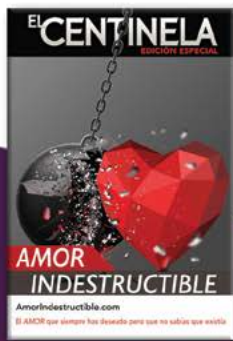
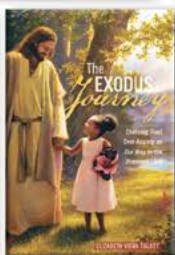
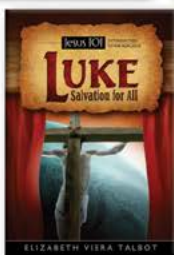
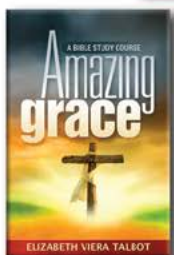
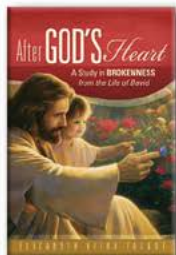
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