

MENTORING: DISCUSSION STARTERS  
FOR PASTORAL INTERNS IN GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL

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Advisor: Donna Ciangio, D.Min.

Greg Williams  
Drew University  
Madison, New Jersey  
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ABSTRACT

MENTORING: DISCUSSION STARTERS

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Greg Williams

GCI, Glendora, California

Grace Communion International is a denomination that went through dramatic theological and doctrinal change in the early 1990's. In the midst of change GCI's Ambassador University, the feeder system for training new pastors was closed. In the building of a new system to train Pastoral Interns a need was recognized to produce written material for meaningful ministry dialogue between Pastoral Interns and Life Mentors in GCI. Through the cooperative, creative work of the Advisory Team a selection of nine pastoral essays were written and then field tested with ten Pastoral Interns and their Life Mentors.

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To my loving wife Susan,  
Dr. Dan Rogers,  
and my willing and always able Advisory Team

## INTRODUCTION

Grace Communion International (GCI) is a denomination that has gone through an unprecedented spiritual rebirth. Formerly known as Worldwide Church of God (WCG), its doctrines were unorthodox, and in some cases plainly heretical and legalistic.

If Grace Communion International had a “normal” history, it would be easier to document my Doctor of Ministry project. However the back story of GCI will be significant for the readers of this project to understand where we came from, how we have progressed and where we are going.

It is important to understand that the WCG was viewed by the wider Christian community as a cult for more than 60 years from its inception in 1933 until its inclusion into the National Association of Evangelicals in 1997. In his classic book *Kingdom of the Cults* Dr. Walter Martin, a leading authority on cult apologetics for over 40 years, clearly documented the theological problems in the WCG. In Hank Hanegraaff’s edited and updated version of Martin’s work, he documented the radical changes in the WCG and welcomed us into orthodox evangelical Christianity.

Other notable religious leaders in the wider Christian community made strong, encouraging statements about the changes of the WCG in their endorsements of the book *Transformed by Truth* written by Dr. Joseph Tkach, GCI President:

*The changes that have already occurred with the Worldwide Church of God are far more intensive than those that brought about the Protestant Reformation. –*

Dr. D. James Kennedy

*Wow! What a story! Transformed by Truth was a healing balm for this old preacher's cynicism. Read this book and rejoice with the angels. You will be glad you did. –*

Steve Brown



Dr. Joseph Tkach Jr.

*To know these dear brothers who have truly “tasted grace” is to be more than fully assured of the validity of God’s miracle wrought in the Worldwide Church of God. –*

Jack Hayford

The grace awakening that the WCG experienced was not a small adjustment, but rather a complete transformation. Moving out of heretical teachings that shaped a strange and powerful worldview was a long and difficult journey. The rebirth that began in the early 1990’s is ongoing because of substantial losses in manpower and resources, and 23 years later we are still reforming and rebuilding operational systems.

One specific system that I was given the challenge to rebuild and oversee is the GCI Pastoral Internship Program. I am in the third full year of development and there is much yet to learn and accomplish. It is within the pursuit of this Doctor of Ministry degree through Drew University that has allowed me the marvelous opportunity to think more critically, research more extensively, and work in community with other GCI ministers to build a program that can effectively serve young, emerging leaders.

### **Transformed by Truth – The Story of GCI**

The story of GCI has been an incredible story that has been compared by some observers to the Apostle Paul’s conversion from Judaism to Christianity. In order to tell the stories I will draw references from *Transformed by Truth* written by GCI President,



Dr. Joseph Tkach Jr., and I will also insert pieces of my personal experience and perceptions in the journey from heresy to orthodoxy.

Herbert Armstrong founded the WCG in the 1930's. He came out of a background in advertising and he brought these skills to his burgeoning radio broadcast which eventually grew into a religious empire that became truly international in its outreach.



Herbert W. Armstrong

Armstrong had no formal training as a theologian, but he was a voracious reader. He assembled several bizarre and heretical ideas that came mostly from a variety of Protestant authors and were repackaged to become the doctrines of the WCG. Dr. Tkach points out that the concept and practice of Sabbath-keeping came from The Seventh Day Baptists; the ideas about the nature of man came from Charles Finney a revivalist from the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and the belief in Anglo-Israelism originated with John Sadler<sup>1</sup> which was the proposition that British peoples are descendants of the lost 10 tribes of Israel. Armstrong described his discoveries as “revelations,” and many WCG members wrongly perceived that these revelations were directly from God to him, and not concepts borrowed from other theorists.

Dr. Tkach provides further explanation by identifying seven key areas of emphasis that defined the WCG, and set us apart from other denominations:

### **Who Is God?**

We taught that God is sovereign, immutable and eternal, and yet we vigorously rejected the Trinity. The personhood of the Holy Spirit was denied and relegated to a

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Tkach, *Transformed by Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers Inc, 1997), 88.

force, or extension of God's power. The rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity alone served to land the WCG a notable section in all the prominent cult books.

### **Who Is Man?**

The denomination taught that God is reproducing himself through humanity. I recall hearing from Armstrong and other lead ministers the expression that "We will be God as God is God!" As alluring as this notion is, it is utterly impossible for created beings to become like, or equal to the eternal Triune God.

### **What Is Salvation?**

Salvation was the vicarious work of Jesus on behalf of humanity plus our obedience; obedience especially as it related to the doctrines outlined by WCG. The performance of the individual church member directly impacted their future salvation and reward, and the continual emphasis placed on personal building of holy, righteous character pushed grace completely out of the picture. The denomination also rejected that a person was "born again" at the moment they placed their trust in Jesus for salvation; Armstrong taught that true salvation only comes at the second appearing of Jesus.

### **What Is the Church?**

Certainly God has a true church and the WCG is that one, true church. We referred to The Roman Catholic Church as the "Mother of Prostitutes" of Revelation 17, and the Protestant Churches were her harlot offspring. Mr. Armstrong vehemently preached that he felt the true gospel had not been preached in nineteen centuries, and in essence he was a modern day John the Baptist preparing the world for the second coming of Jesus. For Armstrong any possible thread of the true church over the past 2,000 years was equated with church bodies that observed the seventh day Sabbath. This is definitely

one of the most embarrassing teachings and we continue to apologize for our blind arrogance.

### **How Should We Handle the Old Covenant?**

Herbert Armstrong taught that we weren't under the old covenant, but neither were we fully under the new covenant because he felt that this would not be fully ratified until the return of Christ. Living between the covenants allowed Armstrong to pick and choose what he felt applied from both Old and New Testament teachings – e.g. we observed Old Testament Holy Days, but we did not practice animal sacrifice. The direct impact was living a lifestyle containing both Jewish and Christian elements.

### **What Is a True Sense of History?**

Herbert Armstrong believed that he had been called by God to preach the true gospel message that had not been heard for 1900 years. All other churches were not “God’s Church,” and all other versions of the Gospel were false. This, of itself, was not unique. It is an idea that is common among cults. However, he stirred into the mix the doctrine of what is known as Anglo-Israelism. This teaches that the Anglo-Saxon nations (America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, etc.) are the modern descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. This may seem like an improbable idea, but it can be concocted convincingly by stringing together several unrelated scriptures and distorting the significance of selected historical events. Herbert Armstrong did a masterful job of packaging and selling this concept. Once believed and internalized, this worldview gave the church members a strong incentive to obey and support. It had the unfortunate side effect of attracting many people who thrive on esoteric knowledge, fringe beliefs and conspiracy theories. It also fostered a subtle form of racism. Although the church in most

places was never blatantly racist, the belief that the Anglo-Saxons were God's chosen people and all others were Gentiles, did produce an "us and them" attitude in many ministers and members. Since our reformation, many "non-Anglo" members have told me they felt like second-class citizens and I have a profound respect for them for staying with us.

### **What Does the Future Hold?**

Everything centered on the impending return of Christ that was continually predicted to happen in short order. Armstrong notoriously made prophetic predictions throughout his 55 years of church leadership. The multi-media driven promotion of the message of the coming kingdom was Armstrong's version of preaching the gospel. WCG church members were called on to make personal sacrifices in order to underwrite the enormous cost of television time and the massive volume of printed literature that was mailed out free of charge. While Armstrong seriously believed in the impending return of Christ it was detrimental to many of the members who did not plan well for the future in terms of caring for their personal financial needs and matters related to their children, and especially the grave disappointment when the "few short years" predictions turned into decades.

### **The Changes**

After Armstrong's death in 1986, Joseph Tkach Sr. became the new President. To Armstrong's credit he had instructed Tkach that certain changes needed to be made, in particular the church teaching to have members seek healing from disease by faith alone instead of



Joseph Tkach Sr.

seeking medical attention. This began the process of change in theology that went further and deeper than any of us could have imagined.

Joe Tkach Jr. explains in his book that the rejection of Anglo-Israelism was the central plank that brought about the other sweeping changes. Once the idea of Anglo-Israelism was rejected, it impacted most of the main doctrines of the WCG, such as Sabbath-keeping and observance of Old Testament Holy Days, Armstrong's elaborate view of prophecy, and the schema of Christ's return and millennial kingdom. Everything we believed began to unravel.

In 1991, Joseph Tkach Sr. assigned one of our churches top scholars, Kyriacos Stavrinides, to do a lecture series on the topic of the Trinity. There were 26 hours of lectures that our pastors pre-viewed before attending a three day conference entitled "God Is..." I attended one of the conferences held in Philadelphia and it was a firestorm. A large percentage of our pastors had their minds made up before they even watched the videos and there was a close-minded reaction to the concept of the personhood of the Holy Spirit and his membership in the Godhead. There was an underlying anger in many of my colleagues and friends that I had never witnessed before. With the top-down nature of WCG structure, typically the pastors were receptive to the teachings that came down from the denominational leadership and were at least willing to listen and evaluate them. This conference, marked by the rejection of the mainline doctrine of the Trinity, was the beginning of a mass exodus of ministers and members that would take place over a painful four year period.

Even prior to the extensive teaching on the doctrine of the Trinity a significant splinter group called the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG) had formed in 1989. Gerald

Flurry was a dissident WCG pastor who promised to keep the faith that had been delivered through Herbert Armstrong and founded PCG. The PCG provided a landing place for disgruntled WCG members who wanted to continue their allegiance to the teachings of Herbert Armstrong. Tim Martin of the Watchman Fellowship states Flurry's ministry is simply an imitation of Armstrong. The PCG continued to republish Armstrong's books until the WCG won a federal court suit in September 2000. The PCG was then ordered to cease publication of Armstrong's materials.<sup>2</sup> In a true sense, PCG led the way for other splinter groups to come into existence and then to bleed off WCG members who were in the middle of processing the sweeping doctrinal changes that were unfolding.

In December 1994, Joseph Tkach Sr. gave a sermon that was heard around the WORLDwide Church of God! The crowning statement was that Jesus is our Sabbath; he proclaimed that our rest is found in him and not in a 24 hour period of time Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. This sermon marked the irreversible journey out of Armstrongism and into Christian orthodoxy. Because of this, in 1997 WCG was welcomed into the National Association of Evangelicals. This was a great day!

Philip Arnn of the Watchman Fellowship said "Tkach will be noted by religious historians as the only man in his century to lead a major heretical sect into the diverse mainstream of the Christian community." Arnn also added, "The WCG is a dysfunctional family that is trying to move forward under the burden of the betrayal of trust that is the pain of the past."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tim Martin, *The Philadelphia Church of God* (The Watchman Expositor), Vol. 17, No. 2, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Arnn, *The Worldwide Church of God: Are We There Yet?* (The Watchman Expositor) Vol. 14, No. 2 1997.

Arnn was astute in his observation that the pain of loss and moving out of confusion would be difficult. The loss of pastors and members was traumatic especially because so many shared a long history of close personal friendships, and many were connected by family ties. To us, the drama that unfolded was tantamount to an institutional Civil War. The confusion was made more complex by the start up of splinter groups that continued to espouse their version of Armstrong's teachings. There are now several hundred groups identified as coming from WCG, however, most are very small. Only a half dozen of these splinter groups have sizeable numbers, and some of these continue to divide and splinter. For the WCG members who stayed the course, the move from heretical cult status to Christian orthodoxy was even more monumental than the losses and the pain. Jesus rose to the rightful central plank of doctrine in the WCG and there was no turning back.

For the church members who went through this tumultuous time the simple phrase, "the changes," became pregnant with rich meaning. Somehow, the denomination survived the initial impact of "the changes." The re-construction has been going on for more than a decade and brings us to where we are now. Many of us are amazed that we are still standing, and we know it is by God's grace. So now we ask, "Lord, what would you have us do?" The generation that went through the change is aging, and there is a growing sense that we must make the training of new leaders a priority.

### **More Obstacles**

I have viewed the timing of GCI's entrance into the sometimes turbulent world of orthodox Christianity and mainstream evangelicalism as a challenge. But it is also a

wonderful opportunity. As well as overcoming our past reputation as a cult, there are some significant obstacles that we continue to negotiate:

### **We Need to Become More Community-Focused**

Most of our congregations were established as commuter churches. It is not uncommon for many of the members to drive from 20 – 50 miles to attend church services. As GCI re-launches our aging congregations and starts new ones, the focus has to be narrowed to targeted communities where sustained efforts are made, relationships are built, and a long-term presence is established.

### **Pastors Need to Work with the “Graying Factor”**

The median age of our salaried and non-salaried pastors is 61. We have a top-heavy membership of the baby-boomer generation born 1946 to 1964. What we are hoping and pushing for is a movement that Evangelical Free Church Pastor Chris Holk calls the “Encore Generation.” Instead of the Christian population 55 years old and up having a mid-life crisis, we desire that they have a mid-life course correction and become more active in ministry. These senior members need to be encouraged to be involved in missions in ways that make sense for them. These aging congregations can be networked with trained interns and other resources provided by the denomination to become viable church re-launches and promising new starts that will allow them to truly become “Legacy Churches” that propel GCI into the future. The strategy is for the aging, commuter churches to play a significant role through prayer, financial support, meaningful encouragement, and participation in their areas of passion with the purpose of launching the future GCI church.



## **Overcome Inexperience**

Existing as a cult for so many years made the nature of our church inwardly focused with an emphasis on personal piety and an isolationist approach that kept us from actively engaging in the world around us. Early on in our transformation many of our congregations jumped into short-term service projects such as cleaning up roadside litter, building Habitat for Humanity houses, serving meals at the local shelter, etc. These acts of kindness are good, but the goal is to choose the great over the good and to be more intentional in our efforts. We need a fresh start that is fully focused on the work of the church. *Transformational Church* and the Transformational Church Assessment Tool produced by Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer are presently being implemented. The progressive journey is to keep our churches focused on the biblical principles for being the church while also providing clearer direction on how to help those churches engage their culture in their unique setting and utilizing their resources which include available time, treasure, and talents. The hope for our theologically reformed churches is to become growing churches that are making new disciples. Overcoming our inexperience requires us to examine why we are acting and doing the things we are doing while being more careful about launching into programs and projects.

## **Individual GCI Churches Need to be Free to be Who They Are**

The traditions and styles of operation have been strong in GCI and many of our congregations are stagnating in long-established ways of being and doing church. GCI congregations need to discover a renewed sense of identity followed by a desire to join Jesus in his mission in their corner of the world. Dianna Butler Bass's research led her to uncover a vast number of renewed churches. She wrote about faithfully innovative

churches, not programmatic churches embracing clever evangelistic strategies, but solid, healthy churches that demonstrate Christian authenticity, coherent faith, and offering members ways of living with passion and purpose. Butler Bass says “Churches that were their own best selves – creative and traditional, risk-taking and grounded, confident and humble, open and orthodox, denominationally loyal and independent.”<sup>4</sup> Butler Bass’s description of a healthy church displays what is called the genius of the “and.” Her paradoxical descriptors of church qualities are not qualities that are in opposition to one another, instead they mutually exist. These qualities speak loudly to the maturity and freedom we desire for our churches.

### **Become Missional-Minded and Active in Missions**

Reggie McNeal says that being missional is a way of living not an affiliation or activity; to think and to live missionally means seeing all life as a way to be engaged with the mission of God in the world.<sup>5</sup> Our newfound high view of God and scripture has helped us to embrace the classic doctrine of *missio Dei* – God the Father sending the Son, the Father and Son sending the Spirit, and Father, Son and Spirit sending the Church. The good news is that minds are being transformed to grasp where and how Jesus is at work in the immediate world around us and for us to join in. It is especially intriguing to observe how Jesus meets people in relationship. The concept of place-sharing has been a primary theme of our training and teaching via conferences and written materials, and many of the discussions around the table with our ministry leaders. “Place-sharing” is a term coined by author Andrew Root and the concept was drawn from the teachings of

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<sup>4</sup> Diana Butler-Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2006), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass Books, 2009), xiv.

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In Root's flagship book *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry* he explains place-sharing:

*"Ministry...is not about 'using' relationships to get individuals to accept a 'third thing,' whether that be conservative politics, moral behaviors or even the gospel message. Rather, ministry is about connection, one to another, about sharing in suffering and joy, about persons meeting persons with no pretense or secret motives. It is about shared life, confessing Christ not outside the relationship but within it. This, I learned, was living the gospel."*<sup>6</sup>

We have embraced the notion that mission work needs to be relational and that Jesus is present in the relationships. We do not bring Jesus to people, rather we identify where he is already active. It is then the work of the Holy Spirit to open the eyes and hearts of people and we participate by being Christ's ambassadors in the midst of relationships. The inward-focused church of the past is slowly becoming more outward and joining in with the mission of Jesus Christ in the world today.

### **Leadership Transition**

Many of GCI's denominational leaders and local church pastors are three to five years away from retirement. Some of these baby-boomers are finding it difficult to let go. Some are also overly concerned that they need to leave behind a legacy. The downturn in the economy has been an additional factor in causing a delayed retirement for many of our pastors. Our desire is to train enough qualified younger leaders who can step into these future vacancies. This is why the work of the Pastoral Internship Program is so needed. The need for having healthy, well-trained pastors who are ready to step into fast approaching vacancies cannot be over stated.

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 15.

Dr. Liz Selzer makes the observation that team mentoring, as we practiced in this project, is particularly helpful for businesses in recovery mode.<sup>7</sup> Team mentoring is much more economical and accessible than outside training, and Selzer's research has shown how mentoring has held up even under the conditions of recession. Dr. Selzer's findings were an encouragement to do the work of this project, and positive signs of deeper development in the Pastoral Interns were realized through the work of the project. Mentoring done well and through a team effort is my continued objective with the goal of promoting continued renewal and rebuilding of GCI.

### **Conclusion**

In spite of its heretical beliefs and cult-like ways, the old WCG grew into a large fellowship with a strong development and feeder system for producing pastors. From 1948 until 1996 Ambassador College existed for the primary purpose of training pastors. The established pastors then had the opportunity to have Ambassador College graduates come to their church area and serve as ministerial trainees. It was a system that served us well for several decades and was easily taken for granted.

With the closing of Ambassador College in 1996, GCI experienced a great void in the developmental system for producing new pastors. The pool of new recruits for the ministry had nearly dried up. I was unique in the fact that I, as a pastor, was officially allowed by the denominational leaders to mentor three different interns in this post 1996 period. Then in 2010 Dr. Dan Rogers, GCI Director of Church Administration, asked me to formalize a GCI program to train and develop Pastoral Interns.

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<sup>7</sup> Liz Selzer, *3G Mentoring* (Greenwood Village, CO: Mentor Leadership Team: 2011), 17.

The need for training and preparing new pastors for the twenty-first century is proving to be far more complicated than simply re-creating the Ambassador College model of the past. This project has been an effort to very carefully and very thoughtfully make the preparatory internship phase for pastoral candidates as holistic and healthy as possible.

I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul as he instructed his young protégé Timothy in II Timothy 2:1-2, “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup> Passing along the grace and message of Jesus is the ongoing chain of the Christian faith in which GCI flows. The Apostle Paul also states in Romans 10:13-15, “For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”<sup>9</sup> Preparing and sending preachers of the gospel is a biblical mandate in which GCI actively participates, and this project has been an effort by many people to help develop a group of eleven Pastoral Interns as they are joining in the ministry of Jesus under the umbrella of GCI.

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<sup>8</sup> The Holy Bible, *New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 662.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 630.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **GCI PASTORAL-INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

Why does a denomination that has existed for nearly nine decades, suddenly find itself in urgent need of a program to train its clergy? Most churches have had to adjust their established training methods to accommodate the changing needs of the times. But my denomination, Grace Communion International, has had to rebuild almost from scratch.

This has been a consequence of our unique experience over the last twenty years, as we transformed from being a rather exclusive cult to joining mainstream orthodox Christianity. This has been a mixed blessing for those of us involved in our church's administration. While it has left us in danger of running out of experienced and qualified clergy, it has also allowed us to rethink the role of pastor and thus prepare a new generation of leaders who can shepherd our congregations in the coming decades.

In my service as a pastor of Grace Communion International (GCI) in Fayetteville, NC from 1991- 2006, I had the great joy and challenge of mentoring and training three different young men who were pursuing their call to pastoral ministry. Little did I know that these shared "life-on-life" experiences would be the seeds for growing a broader denominationally based Pastoral Internship Program. My personal journey alongside these interns did not make me an expert. But it did give me a rich

experience that caused me to think more deeply and objectively about the design and function of a formal Pastoral Internship Program.

What I learned through this initial experience of training interns inspired the initial design of the formal program launched in the spring of 2010. The GCI Pastoral Internship Program is still very much a work in progress. We are practicing, evaluating and recalibrating, then practicing again, all the while attempting to hear and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Carl Savage and Dr. William Presnell refer to a similar approach to learning with movement from practice to theory and back to practice.<sup>1</sup>

On a personal note, I want to make it clear that I have done my work as Pastoral Internship Director for GCI out of passion. There is no question that GCI needs an effective program to develop future pastors. But “need” doesn’t necessarily inspire the quality and care that a program of this nature requires. Throughout my years in vocational ministry I have possessed a deep sense of calling and a “fire in my belly” that drives me to work with young, emerging pastoral leaders. I no longer serve as a pastor of a congregation working alongside a young intern, but my current role allows me to launch dozens of other teams of interns and pastors. My passion and my experience have motivated me to take on oversight of the GCI Pastoral Internship Program, and this same passion drives me to undertake this research project.

### **My Early Experience of Training Interns**

When I was asked to take on the leadership of the GCI Pastoral Internship Program in 2010, I quickly realized that I would need to design and grow a new program

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008), 64.

from scratch. I began by reflecting on my past experiences of working with the three interns that I had worked with in Fayetteville, NC.

My first intern was a Master of Divinity student who asked me to give him practical training in the life of my congregation. Jonathan and his family were from my hometown and I had known him for most of his life. This gave us a strong relational foundation. He asked me to help him in specific areas where he needed experience. Jonathan made my role easy. I gave him ministry experiences that matched well with his formal education, such as interjecting ideas with the worship team while he was studying worship in seminary. Jonathan and I enjoyed the evaluation and discussion that arose from his practical “on the job” training. In reality his learning experiences were “our” shared experiences as he was gaining skill and confidence in ministry and I was gaining skill and confidence in training a younger protégé.

When Jonathan was asked by denominational leadership to move into a pastoral position it took me by surprise. In my opinion, he was not yet ready. But it seemed the pressing needs of the denomination dictated that Jonathan be commissioned before he had the necessary experience. This emphasized to me the importance of making sure an intern would be groomed by having more than one significant church-related experience, and working alongside another veteran pastor would greatly enhance the intern’s development.

Micah was my second intern. Although he was still quite young, He expressed a desire to be in pastoral leadership. The denomination assigned him to me.

At this time, we did not have a formal application process for internship. Nor were there any assessment tools to create a personality and skills profile for Micah.



Micah has remained in ministry, but in my estimation his development was hindered because he was elevated to the position of intern before he clearly understood his strengths and weaknesses. Micah would aggressively challenge his supervisors and instructors and showed a lack of teachability. In essence, the student prematurely started acting as if he was the teacher, and demonstrated the wisdom of the Apostle Paul's advice given in I Timothy 3:6 to not elevate a new convert too quickly.

I met my third intern, Bill, while working at a youth summer camp. I was impressed by his zeal for the Lord and love for people. I intentionally recruited Bill and created a position for him as an intern and a youth worker in my secondary ministry at Youth for Christ. (During this time I worked in a dual career role as a church pastor and as Executive Director for Fayetteville Area Youth for Christ). Bill's skills in music and technology were quite helpful in working with teenagers, but his growing love for theology and preaching were moving him toward pastoral ministry. Bill lacked formal education for ministry and it presented some challenges, but the greater difficulty for Bill was, frankly, too much of me. Being supervised by me on two fronts didn't leave Bill enough space to reflect and evaluate. He was very active in many aspects of ministry, but in my estimation the sense of his being in Christ and reflecting more deeply on what this experience meant was stunted. Bill has acknowledged this and fortunately he established a meaningful relationship with a Life-Mentor after he moved beyond the internship.

Overall, these early experiences have proven to be fruitful. Jonathan and Bill progressed from being interns to Senior Pastors with GCI congregations. Micah went his own way and founded a small independent church. And I had learned some lessons which

have helped me to design and initiate a denomination-wide training and mentoring program.

### **Why We Wanted and Needed a Formal Internship Program**

In the introduction I gave an overview of how our preparation of pastors was tied directly to Ambassador College. In its heyday, the Worldwide Church of God operated three colleges (two in the US and one in Britain). Herbert Armstrong was the Chancellor of all three, and characteristically recommended that these were the only institutions of higher learning that church member's children should attend. "Worldly" colleges and universities were very much a second choice, and of course, seminaries administered by other denominations were totally off limits. Almost without exception, the denominational leaders of the WCG congregations were chosen from the graduates of our own colleges. Likely candidates were hired upon graduation as Ministerial Trainees, to work for a while under an experienced "senior" pastor.

There was not a formal training process. The hierarchical structure of our ministry meant that "seniority" was based more on a track record of loyalty rather than genuine pastoral skills and the development of professional qualifications. Thus, the training of new pastors was a rather haphazard and unstructured process. There was no real assessment – a man was ordained when his "superiors" deemed him "ready." Success was often measured more by executive ability rather than genuine "fruits" of ministry.

This process served us adequately while the WCG remained exclusive. Our ministry had little incentive or need to seek qualifications beyond the denomination's requirements. The dramatic doctrinal changes that shook up and reshaped the church after the death of the Founder changed that.

The one remaining college closed in 1996 for financial reasons. By this time, the church could no longer afford to hire the graduates as ministerial trainees. As we were beginning our transformation into orthodoxy, there was a growing need for pastors to become more professional, with recognized qualifications. Although the college had eventually become accredited, the great majority of graduates had not received acceptable seminary training.

In the upheaval caused by the doctrinal changes, many long term pastors left. However, the church was able to continue for a while as the flywheel effect of the old structure maintained the status quo. The remaining full-time ministers were supplemented by a large number of bi-vocational pastors, who had stayed with the church even as their pastors and other congregational leaders left. These men and a few women effectively saved the church, stepping into the breach, and keeping the congregations going.

In those desperate days, the priority was mere survival, and there was not much thought given to the long term. However, the need to train and replace ministry was a ticking time bomb. Many – perhaps most – of the bi-vocational pastors were unqualified beyond providing “first aid” to our traumatized congregations. They had expected to have to serve in the position for a year or two. Many are still serving after nearly twenty years!

Also, another reality we had to face was the aging of our existing ministry. Our founder, Herbert W. Armstrong remained in charge until his death at the age of 93. He refused to consider retirement and this established a trend, but not everyone has the desire or the capacity to keep going until they drop. The average age for our pastors at the time of my project began was 61. So as we negotiated our doctrinal change, we also had to

change our view about pastoral retirement. With the majority of our clergy on the cusp of retirement something needed to be done.

By early 2010 it had become obvious that we needed replacements for our large number of pastors who would soon be approaching retirement age. We also needed opportunities for our younger, emerging leaders who seemed to be sensing a call to pastoral ministry but did not know how to pursue that call in our denomination. The obvious answer to both needs seemed to be the development of an intern program to place our younger emerging leaders with a senior pastor for development and training in pastoral ministry.

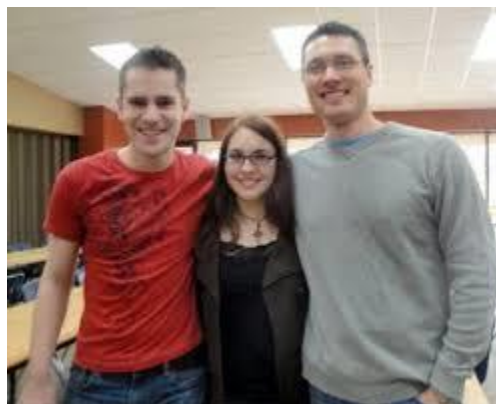
Dr. Dan Rogers, Director of Church Administration for GCI/USA, was well aware of this looming need for developing new pastors. Dan had also been aware of my experiences working with the three interns. The concept was introduced in a telephone conference call with the Church Administration and Development Team. It was decided that I had the experience and expertise to research and develop such an Internship Program for our denomination.

As I began to develop the program, I realized that the solution was not to reinvent an exclusive college providing assembly line pastors. We needed a process where experienced GCI pastors could oversee the development of younger, emerging leaders, as I had done. But it needed more organization, better preparation and more layers of care. Now that GCI has accepted its position in the wider world of Christianity, we also recognized the need for our clergy to be fully professional. We needed to choose and train candidates from the younger generations, in a program that would have the right combination of formal training, personal initiative and maturing spirituality. These

important factors shaped my doctoral project as I worked alongside my colleagues to create the greater Pastoral Internship Program.

### **Meet the Pastoral Interns**

Since the beginning of the GCI Pastoral Internship Program in 2010 until the beginning of my doctoral project in the summer of 2012, we have graduated three Pastoral Interns. This original group of interns proved to be outstanding pioneers who established a high standard for the ones who have followed after.



Skyeler, Hillary and Jason

- One graduate was interviewed and accepted by our GCI congregation in Kansas City, KS. He joined the congregation under the continued supervision of the senior pastor who subsequently retired in June 2013 and the Pastoral Intern then became the senior pastor.
- Another Pastoral Intern discovered his path was in youth ministry and because of his love for his home community he joined with the local Youth for Christ chapter and started running an effective campus ministry out of the Middle School from which he graduated.
- The third graduate was a young lady who is now an ordained elder and serving well as an associate pastor in a GCI congregation, and completing her Master of Divinity degree.

The group of eleven Pastoral Interns who participated in the Doctor of Ministry project along with their respective Life Mentors represented a wide variety of men and women. They included nine men and two women ranging in ages from 22 to 47. Some have yet to achieve undergraduate degrees and some already hold Master's level degrees. Six participants are married and five are single. Three of the interns received part-time pay, while the other eight are volunteers. All of the interns live in the USA.

(See a chart of the Pastoral-Interns in Appendix A)

I was pleased with the diversity of the group and I believe it was an excellent representation to shape and fashion what was becoming the new GCI Pastoral Internship Program.

### **Community of Practice**

Even though the first three interns in this fledgling program were smart and teachable and able to thrive, the system itself had deficits. The initial group of pastors who supervised the training of the interns did not have prior experience in mentoring Pastoral Interns, and so they too were learning as they were attempting to train.

There was the temptation for the pastors to fall back on methods that they had experienced in their training. As I explained before, the quality of this training depended very much on the luck of the draw. Sadly, some pastors saw their interns as cheap hired help, and used them to mow the lawn, baby sit and wash the car. Thankfully there was no such abuse with our first three interns, but nuances of holding the interns back and not including them in meaningful ministry activities did take place. Treating the Pastoral Intern more like an assistant who could quietly sit in on meetings, create the church bulletin, and preach once every six weeks was more or less how the training operated.

I realized that the GCI pastors who were serving as Pastor Trainers to the Pastoral Interns were also on a learning curve and needed training too. I certainly wanted to do my part to shorten this learning curve for the pastors who were taking on the important work of training Pastoral Interns. Dr. Charles Fleming one of my Advisory Team members introduced me to the concept of “Communities of Practice” (COP) as a suggested framework for the GCI Pastoral Internship Program. As Dr. Fleming was witnessing the program unfold, he described COP and our program in the following entry:

It seems to me that what you have in mind is to develop a “Community of Practice.” Wegner, McDermott and Snyder define communities of practice as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.<sup>2</sup>

I think that you already have many of the ingredients of a COP. For example, you are already:

- Bringing together interns so they build relationships among themselves and can share knowledge (the annual Intern Gathering).
- Bringing together mentors so they build sound relationships among themselves and share knowledge (the memos you sent to Ted, John and me is an example).
- Creating the context for on-going conversations (the Discussion Starters are at the heart of your project).
- Pulling together a list of skills, practices, etc. to share.
- Matching Pastoral-Interns with Pastoral-Trainers for an immersive two year experience.

**RELATIONSHIPS** that are foundational to pastoral development and building a COP

- ✓ **Supervisory:** Cultivating the context for the intern to learn through modeling, conversation and by delegated opportunities; the attitudinal approaches and the practical “how-to” skills of pastoral ministry within the supportive and accountable structures of the denomination.
- ✓ **Formational:** Having a life-mentor that focuses on the unique strengths, dysfunctional tendencies, and needs of the *pastor-as-a-person*; both modeling and providing opportunities for intern to appreciate how vital a life-long commitment to spiritual disciplines is to his/her life and ministry.

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<sup>2</sup> Etienne Wegner, Richard McDermott, and William Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 4.

- ✓ **Peers:** Cultivating a context for interns to become friends-in-community we offer them all the benefits of such sharing and, hopefully, embed the principles of a COP into the DNA of the GCI pastorate.

I realized that by the grace of God I had intuitively begun the formation of a COP that was showing potential for becoming the new and improved program that we desired for GCI. The difficulty for me was how to approach further development of the internship program in conjunction with my Doctor of Ministry project and keep the focus sharp and fit the scope of this document. Drew University Professor, Dr. Stanley Menking was a Godsend in his preparatory course where he taught me and my fellow students to see our projects as one slice of the larger pie. I decided to choose the formational piece of the pie that Dr. Fleming described as the Pastoral Intern having a Life Mentor to help with reflection and deeper spiritual formation. I determined that this piece had gotten the least amount of attention in our past programs and my personal experience having worked with Bill weighed in heavy on this decision.

My journey into and through this Doctor of Ministry Project was a virtual roller coaster of challenges from faulty past systems, to lack of experience and resources, to the joy found in new experiments and discoveries. The real clincher for me was the realization that what was taking shape through this project was beyond a program, but rather the development of a community with shared values and practices that would become the new and improved GCI Pastoral Internship Program.



## CHAPTER 2

### GCI CHURCH-BASED MODEL AND THE LEADERSHIP PATTERNS OF JESUS

Leadership development and the building of an entirely new Pastoral Internship Program for GCI has been a challenging, yet fulfilling experience. I have read dozens of books about mentoring and leadership development. I have found “The Leadership Baton” by Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones and Bruce Miller one of the most helpful. This book recommended a model for “church-based” training that inspired me to build the GCI model described in this Doctor of Ministry project.

The authors of “The Leadership Baton” asked the following questions: Why not train leaders by allowing them to participate in real ministry as we pursue the fulfillment of the great commission given to us by the Son of God? Why not develop church leaders with a focus on Godly character, in the context of community, as we build close relationships with one another? Why not reflect with emerging leaders on their ministry experiences as we develop them, being concerned with faithfulness and obedience while developing biblical knowledge and ministry skills?<sup>1</sup> My response was “yes we can” and I have been striving as an “architect” of GCI to build such a program. It is also my contention that this is how Jesus developed his disciples. I will develop this point in more detail in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton* (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan 2004), 52.

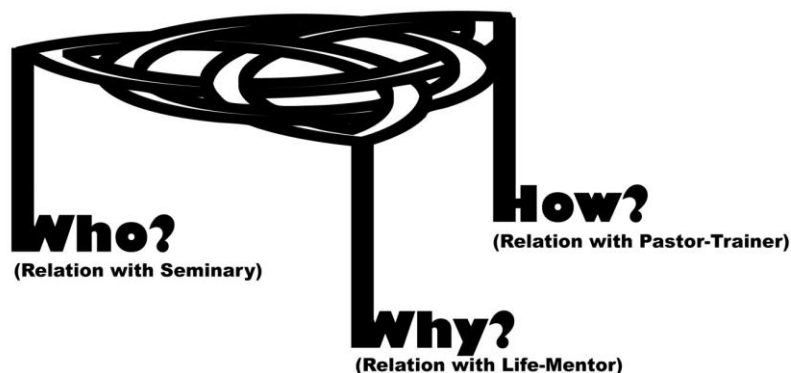
The “Leadership Baton” recommended that in the course of any great and noble pursuit it is wise to begin with the end in mind. GCI’s ministerial training techniques had previously centered around a flawed concept, where selection and promotion were based more on loyalty and availability than a genuine calling and competency. So it was crucial that we identified the type of leader we hoped to produce through our new Pastoral Internship Program. We eventually agreed on the following statement to define what type of leader we expected to develop through our church-based training model:

**By God’s grace, we want to produce educated leaders who deeply follow Jesus and love people, are skillful in ministry and mission, and who lead out of the assurance of the Lord’s calling and the Spirit’s gifting.**

Forman, Jones and Miller described their church-based system for producing leaders using the categories of head, heart and hands. The head portrayed leaders with Godly wisdom, the heart portrayed leaders with Godly character, and the hands portrayed leaders as Godly servant-leaders. This model served them well for their desired qualities in the leaders they ventured to produce.

In the church-based model I was developing for GCI I used the questions of “who, how, and why” as my categories. “Who” was connected to the intern’s seminary relationships and our need to produce educated leaders. “How” was connected to the intern’s relationship with the Pastor Trainer and our desire to produce leaders skilled in ministry and mission, and “Why” was connected to the intern’s relationship to the Life Mentor and to have him or her assured of the divine call on his or her life, and then to operate within his or her unique personal gifting from the Spirit. I have called this model the “Three-legged Stool of the Pastoral Internship Program.”

## The Three-Legged Stool of the Pastoral-Internship Program



The authors of “The Leadership Baton” realized that it was overly simplistic to think that we could turn back the clock to the first century and duplicate the exact same way as Jesus working with his original followers. However there are some simple yet profound principles inherent in the training approaches of Jesus that inform our methods for the twenty-first century. These have shaped the theological foundation for my Doctor of Ministry project. I describe the timeless ministry principles of Jesus using the questions of “who, how, and why” as my categories.

In Chapter One I commented on supervising Jonathan’s internship and I mentioned how his parallel roles of full-time student and part-time intern worked quite well together. I have come to see how theological education is significant in answering the “who” question – Who is God? The practical experience of serving in the church setting alongside a seasoned pastor addresses the “how” question. How do I effectively practice ministry? But there was a missing leg of the three-legged stool in Jonathan’s training. We never really explored the “why” question. Why am I doing this? All three

questions - “who,” “how” and “why” - must be answered, and all three are an integral components of the church-based system that I have designed for GCI.

I found confirmation for my idea in the book “Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life” by Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton. The authors say, “Habits are developed through a combination of knowledge, skill and desire. Knowledge tells you “what to do.” Skill answers the question “How do I do it?” And desire provides the motive and answers “Why do it?”<sup>1</sup> Sorting through these questions during online seminary training, serving side by side with a pastor in the setting of the church and community, and discussing the meaning of it all in ongoing conversations with a Life Mentor, is GCI’s crucible for developing enduring habits in our emerging leaders and shaping pastors for the future.

### **The “Who” Question**

According to Dr. Gary Deddo the central question of theology is “Who?” Our human tendency is to quickly move away from dwelling on the depth of knowing God and the ongoing transformation that comes from this deeply meaningful relational connection. We find it easier to move rapidly to the “how” and “what” questions – “How do I live the Christian life?” “What does God require of me?”

Who is God? This enormous question is an experiential and academic pursuit that continues for a lifetime, and on into eternity. Jesus was adamant with the original disciples on the important understanding of knowing who he was. In Mark 8:27-29 Jesus begins with “Who do people say that I am?” and probes deeper by asking “Who do you say that I am?” Getting the “who” question right is paramount if we are to accurately

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress 1992), 52.

represent Jesus. Our answers to the other questions of “how” and “why” depend on how we answer the first question of “who”. Our image of God will have direct impact on how we in ministry operate and why we do what we do.

GCI’s view of God centers on the doctrine of the Trinity. Our view goes back to the early Church Father Athanasius who declared that the Father is indeed uniquely “un-begotten” as the Father, the Son and the Spirit are also “un-begun,” or share the life of the Father which has no beginning. The God of salvation lives eternally in relationship; and the story of salvation tells us that God always goes out from God’s self in love, sharing the divine being in a communion of life.<sup>2</sup> This triune God who is communion which means shared relationship, thoughts and emotions always interweaving and interpenetrating each other, is on mission making communion with his human children including us into his life and love.

Dr. Gary Deddo says, “What Jesus discloses for us and preserved for us in the responses of the apostles and their writings is that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who have their being by being in triune holy love from all eternity before there was a creation. For Jesus is who he is in his eternal relationship of holy love to the Father and eternal Spirit. This is the deepest level of God’s self-revelation, where we discover who God is in God’s inner and eternal triune life.”<sup>3</sup> And the discovery of finding a God who is for us as Father, Son and Spirit with the mission of drawing all of humankind to himself through Jesus sets an accurate image of God from which Christian ministry should flow – anything less compromises the Gospel.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God; a Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Deddo, *Scripture – God’s Gift. Odyssey*, Spring 2013.

Nothing is more real than Father, Son and Spirit. This foundational truth is the bedrock on which GCI wants all interns to launch into ministry; to participate in what is real. As Dr. Paul Fiddes says, “Participation in God is pastoral experience – we come to find the relevance of a personal God to pastoral concerns, and we come to find the personal God who is known in pastoral experience.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The “How” Question**

So then, how is the Gospel effectively preached? How are the saints gathered, trained, equipped and sent into active ministry? How do the church members get the helpful pastoral counsel they need? How are the ceremonies of baptism, blessing of children, weddings, funerals, and Eucharist planned and conducted? How is seminary training transmitted into effective preparation and delivery of impactful sermons and Bible studies? How does a pastor actively live out his or her life in Christ and in community with the household of faith? How does a pastor continue to be a faithful, growing disciple of Jesus and join him in making more disciples?

All of these practical applications of ministry are more than just ‘job skills’ to be transmitted from an experienced minister to a novice. Jesus was deeply concerned about the original disciples getting the “who” question right, in his instruction to them in John 15:1-11 we see Jesus making sure that all of their ministry efforts would be connected back to his power and presence just as the grape branches are to the vine. The answer to the “how” question of participating in Christ’s ministry is found in a deep, connected, abiding relationship with Jesus.

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<sup>4</sup> Fiddes, 55.

Jesus did an outstanding job of supervising the development of the original disciples in their journey into deeper ministry. In Matthew 9:37 Jesus made the broad statement about the harvest was ripe and ready, but the workers were few. He added the need to pray for the Lord to send workers. Then in Matthew 10:1-42 Jesus went further to send the original twelve disciples out into the “harvest field” in teams of two, and he gave them just enough instructions to guide and shape their experience. When the disciples returned from their short-term ministry experience Jesus made time to hear their reports and give them evaluation and further instructions. The learning for the original followers was a mix of modeling, instruction, experiential assignments, and coaching from Jesus. The mentoring of Jesus followed the careful, progressive process of “watch me, do it with me, you try it on your own and we will review together, and then I am returning to heaven and you go forth empowered through the Spirit”.

Much has been said about the leadership style of Jesus. However I believe that there are three basic principles of the ways Jesus demonstrated the “how” of ministry. These three principles epitomize what we have attempted to practice in GCI and are passing along to our Pastoral-Interns. The following principles demonstrate a strong emphasis on how Jesus grew his disciples through being in relationship.

### **Invitation to Participation**

Jesus prayed all night about whom to invite as his followers (Luke 6:12-16). He then invited them into a voluntary relationship. Once they entered the relationship of student to teacher they were deeply challenged as he taught with authority, preached the coming Kingdom of God, authenticated that he was the Messiah through the performing of miracles, demonstrated a prayerful life in complete dependence upon the Father and the

Father's will, attracted more followers, and all the while making his way toward Jerusalem and the cross. As my professor Dr. Russell Duke from Grace Communion Seminary outlined in a lecture from his class on Pastoral Leadership, "Jesus involved himself with the developing the talents of his disciples through inspiration, correction, exhortation, command, and encouragement, during the daily work with the disciples." The invitation to follow was an intensive, daily "life-on-life" experience with Jesus in a wide variety of situations. It was much more involved than showing up to a couple of planned church activities. Everything Jesus did was focused on developing his disciples. Thus they became the early fathers and mothers of the church he was establishing. The approximate three year time span the disciples spent with Jesus was the ultimate apprenticeship.

### **Intimacy – The Practice of Presence**

Jesus spent a large amount of quality time with his followers. Mark 3:14 tells us that "And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and they he might send them out to preach."<sup>5</sup> Learning how to do ministry is "caught more than it is taught," and at the very heart ministry is relational. Jesus knew this and this is why he says in John 10:14-15 "I am the good shepherd; and I know my own, and my own know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay my life down for the sheep."<sup>6</sup> The shared life experiences with Jesus were rich and meaningful, and in part it was an apprenticeship in learning how to approach ministry. But much more than just learning the trade and acquiring job skills was being transferred to the disciples. They were on a relational

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<sup>5</sup> New American Standard New Testament (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation 1977), 73.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.



journey of coming to know Jesus as teacher, then friend, and ultimately, after his death and resurrection, knowing him as personal Lord and Savior. It was this knowing of Jesus that was their true key to fully participating with Jesus in his ministry. It was through being together that practical applications were learned by the disciples. In Luke 11:1 the disciples observed Jesus praying and through the simplicity of shared life they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. The passions, priorities and ways of being of Jesus were caught by the disciples through shared life-on-life experiences.

### **Inquisitive and Reflective**

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus protected his followers from the wolves. He did not send his disciples out ill-prepared, but gave them clear instruction as found in Matthew 10:1-42. It is noteworthy to mention that he sent them in groups of two so they were not alone, but rather had the encouragement and companionship of another maturing disciple. Also these first missionary trips were short-term and intended to be learning experiences. When these mission trips were over Jesus would take the time to retreat with the disciples ask them questions and reflect on their experiences. The Gospel of Mark records nine different occasions documenting Jesus' lifestyle of utilizing retreats; sometimes alone to commune with the Father and other times joined by his disciples for times of reflection, renewal and preparation. In the ultimate sending of the disciples known as the Great Commission in Matthew 28:20, Jesus concludes with the assuring promise that he will always be present with his disciples through the power of the Spirit. Therefore Christian ministry is never done apart from Jesus, but always with him and through him.

## **The “Why” Question**

This noticeable pattern of Jesus using retreats for the development of the disciples brings us to the “why” question. The intern should be able to ask, “Why am I doing this, and what do all of these experiences combined with the academic learning mean for me”? In Matthew 13:1-52 we see how, after Jesus teaches the multitude in a series of parables, the disciples met with him privately. They asked “Why do you teach in parables and what do they mean?” So Jesus took the time with them to reflect, ask questions and evaluate. This process is especially helpful if the intern has a mature, experienced friend who serves him or her faithfully as a cheerleader, sounding board, and confidante. It is in the reflection of the “why” question that clearer understanding of God’s calling and gifting are better discerned.

In GCI we have an educational track for Pastoral Interns entering the formal program called Grace Communion Seminary, an accredited online seminary. We also have seasoned leaders in established churches that are serving as Pastor Trainers to the Pastoral Interns. The unique aspect accomplished in this project is the intentional addition of the third support person called the Life Mentor, and the designated meeting times of twice of month with the supplemental tool of the Discussion Starters. Having the Pastoral Intern address and re-address the “why” question was the real heart of my doctoral project.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

The ultimate goal for us (God’s created children) is participation in the life and love of Father, Son and Spirit. Our perceived image of the triune God will impact our actions and ministry. Therefore the goal is not mere imitation; Jesus is not just an

example or model to follow. Jesus is our living and present Savior through whom we live and breathe, and are empowered to join him in his ministry to our world – this means following both his example and his lead through the power of the Spirit.

How we answer the “who” question decides how we answer the “how” and “why” questions. Who Jesus is and who he is to us individually and corporately as the church is at the core of who we are, what we do and why we do it. Why and how we do what we do, as we participate in what Jesus is doing in the world around us, flows from who Jesus is and who we are in him. So it is vitally important that our Pastoral Interns know who God is, and who they are in Him. This church-based model for developing interns is constructed on these foundational truths.

The need for true ministers of Jesus Christ to pass along what they have received from the Lord via their mentors, to younger, emerging leaders is as old as the foundation of the church. Effectively passing along the ministry of Jesus through deep, meaningful relationships to younger qualified men and women is the essence of what I have sought to accomplish in the oversight responsibility of the Pastoral Internship Program for Grace Communion International.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE PROJECT – MENTORING: DISCUSSION STARTERS FOR PASTORAL INTERNS IN GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL**

Although my earlier attempts to train three interns in Fayetteville, NC were not as successful as I would have liked, they were rich and rewarding learning experiences. In the first example with Jonathan the problem was the timing and procedure for advancing an intern to the next level of service. The second example with Micah highlighted the need for proper application, interviewing, and assessment of the candidate at the entry level. The third example with Bill demonstrated the need for the fledgling intern to have not only a supervising pastor with enough experience and also to have a competent mentor who listened and supported without judgment.

All these problems needed to be analyzed and remedied if our new program was not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

I am convinced that the relationship of the Pastoral Intern to the Life Mentor is an integral component of a successful Pastoral Internship Program. This then has become the focus of my Doctor of Ministry project. A key component was to create and field test a selection of pastoral essays, designed to initiate and stimulate ongoing conversations between intern and mentor over the two year term of the internship.

The Pastoral Interns who participated in this project worked in a formal relationship with a Senior Pastor who served as a supervisor that we called “Pastor Trainer.” The Pastoral Intern was also asked to choose another more experienced person

who possessed the combination of real-life ministry experience and the respect and admiration of the intern. This person served the Pastoral Intern as a “Life Mentor.” The pastoral essays that we called “Discussion Starters” were the key tool to support the relationship of Pastoral Intern and Life Mentor (as a side note the Pastor Trainers had access to the essays and freedom to use them as well).

Having the Pastoral Interns identify appropriate Life Mentors proved to be the hardest part of this process so far. The tendency of the intern was to find a person that seemed accomplished in ministry, rather than the seasoned person who was a good listener and cheerleader. It underlines the point that it is easier to tackle the “how” questions rather than the “why?”

I determined that the Life Mentor and Pastoral Intern would meet twice a month and incorporate the use of the Discussion Starters. Having the Pastoral Intern continually address – “Why am I participating in the internship program and what does this all mean?” was the deeper level purpose of the ongoing conversations with their Life Mentor.

### **Project Phases**

My project involved multiple phases. Phase One involved writing of the Discussion Starters. This was accomplished by a writing team that also served as my Advisory Team for the entirety of the project. We felt that a series of ten essays would give us enough educational variety and adequate time to make a difference to the interns. We quickly realized that writing these initial ten essays was a project unto itself, and I will describe the process in greater detail in later in this chapter.

Phase Two was field testing of the Discussion Starters. The group of Pastoral Interns, along with their Life Mentors worked with the initial ten essays over a five month period and filled out survey forms after each session.

In Phase Three all of the Pastoral Interns and a representation of the Life Mentors gathered in June 2013 at the annual GCI Intern Gathering. During these meetings the Pastoral-Interns and Life-Mentors were interviewed in focus groups for further evaluation of the Discussion Starters, and general discussion about the overall process. And along with the Advisory Team, I gained valuable feedback from this review of the pilot stage. The information obtained from the interaction between the interns, mentors, and pastors allowed us to make significant revisions to the initial essays, and see what could be improved as we develop the final product.

Phase Four Dr. Donna Ciangio, my Academic Advisor was able to join me and the Advisory Team at the conclusion of the Intern Gathering. This was very useful, as Dr. Ciangio was able to hear directly from those helping me develop the program.

### **Meet the Advisory Team**

I was blessed to have the help from a competent and experienced Advisory Team. Three of these are respected denominational elders in GCI and have had rich and varied experience in the development of ministers in this country and around the world. Ted Johnston is the key leader for GCI's Ministry Development department which provides ongoing pastoral training through educational seminars and writings. Dr. Charles Fleming oversees GCI pastors in the Caribbean and is an adjunct professor with Fuller Seminary. John Halford, originally from England, has supervised pastors in several different nations, and at age 72, John still serves as a consulting editor for GCI publications. The

fourth member, Michelle Fleming is a middle school math teacher who is serving as a volunteer Pastoral Intern in Orlando, FL.

The Advisory Team members are from Alabama, Florida, and Indiana, and I live in North Carolina. We communicated mainly with e-mail and telephone calls. We also met twice in face-to-face meetings. I also had meetings with individual team members at various conferences. At first I thought the distance would be a challenge, however, the frequency of contact worked out well and we developed a good working rhythm.

The long-term goal I had in mind was to create a collection of 25 or more essays that addressed various aspects of pastoral formation for emerging pastoral candidates in GCI. These essays were written to stimulate conversations between Pastoral Interns and their Life Mentor during the two year course of a formal internship. For the sake of this project, which I viewed as a pilot stage, I asked each Advisory Team member to write two essays. We called these essays “Discussion Starters” and we field tested them with our current group of Pastoral Interns and Life Mentors.

Before I discuss the results from this field test, I need to describe the process of writing these Discussion Starters.

In my Doctor of Ministry classes at Drew University I took a course called *Reading: A Spiritual Discipline*. In this class I learned concepts related to writing that helped me form a flexible strategy for the team to follow as they helped choose essay topics and wrote the collection of pastoral essays.

### **The Primary Role of the Pastoral Essays**

Before we could launch into the writing phase of the project it was wise to ask “What is the expectation for this essay collection?” The pastoral essays are valuable in

introducing ministry concepts that the writing team believed are enduring principles to establish a framework for the interns and shape their future vision in serving as pastors. The expectation was that the pastoral essays would be a significant tool for informing, influencing, and challenging the Pastoral Intern in his or her journey toward becoming a pastor. These essays were to undergird the values of the denomination as they are informing, influencing, and challenging the Pastoral Intern.

The late theologian Ray Anderson made an astute point that further illustrated the purpose for this project:

*“First of all, when theological thinking is practiced in abstraction from the Church in ministry, it inevitably becomes as much unapplied and irrelevant as pure. Secondly, when the theological mind of the minister is being educated primarily through experience, an ad hoc theology emerges which owes as much (or more) to methodological and pragmatic dogma.”<sup>1</sup>*

Anderson’s insight helped to further refine my purpose for the creation of the Discussion Starters, since these essays are intended to trigger discussions with the Pastoral Intern and Life Mentor, to help them integrate the seminary educational component with the practical daily ministry experiences of church life, so that theory and practice come together.

Another important factor that needed to be understood was that these essays were “discussion starters,” not “conversation finishers.” Certainly we deeply considered the topics, the content, the format, and overall quality of the essays. But the intention was to create an environment for the intern to engage in a meaningful conversation with the mentor that could spark discussion about the specifics of their experience as they took

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<sup>1</sup> Ray Anderson, *Theological Foundations for Ministry* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark Ltd, 1979),



their first steps in ministry in the context of their specific stage of development. We recognized that quality interaction along these lines can be hard to initiate, and even harder to stay focused.

The framework that Walter Bruggeman described in *Spirituality of the Psalms* painted a picture of the type of discovery that we hoped our interns would experience. Bruggeman was cautious about ascribing a strict grid to his interpretation of the Psalms however he said “it does seem clear that there are moves and seasons in the life of faith.”<sup>2</sup> He went on to say that the Psalms draw our entire life under the rule of God, where everything may be submitted to the God of the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> These movements of life under the rule of God are categorized as orientation, disorientation and new orientation. Seasons of orientation are times of satisfaction, well-being and constancy when God is celebrated for his reliability and sovereignty. Disorientation is the times marked with trial, suffering, hurt, anguish, alienation and death that evoke self-pity, confusion, rage and a desperate search or resentment toward God. The season of new orientation has the overwhelming interventions of God to refresh and revitalize in new and surprising ways. These movements make up the whole of our lives and are foundational to discovering, knowing and trusting in the God of the Gospel. It is this personal relationship that is the crucible for a pastor’s development, from the first cautious steps to the end of life.

Each member of the Advisory Team had personal experience and knowledge of the seasons and movements of God eloquently described by Bruggeman, and used this backdrop as the context from which to write. The Discussion Starters were not intended

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Bruggeman, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), ix.

<sup>3</sup> Bruggeman, *Spirituality of the Psalms*, 2.

to make ministry sound as if it is an easy, clearly marked path that is a straight line from “A” to “B.” It is a challenging undertaking that must be done with Jesus as the senior partner, and he leads us along a winding road with many turns and surprises.

The pastoral essays have played a significant role for our interns, and yet they must be viewed as a supplementary tool to the Pastoral Interns development. In reality the essays were a support tool added to the mix of seminary education and the actual work hours spent under the guidance of a Pastor Trainer in the real-life ministry setting of church life. The pastoral essays became an extra measure to inform, influence, and challenge the intern in the maturation process. Being that the Discussion Starters were intended to be a support tool from the start made the burden of writing a bit lighter, but still the effort was made to produce a quality instrument that could be used for a vast number of interns over a lengthy period of time.

### **Choosing Christian Works for the Project**

I was first inclined to think in terms of writings that displayed depth in content and meaning, and that transcended age and culture. This line of thinking raised the idea of “classic works.” Italo Calvino addresses the concept of “the classics,” and he defines “a classic as a book which has never exhausted all it has to say to its readers.”<sup>4</sup>

My team and I explored this notion of classic works and how they would relate to our writing. In my class *Reading: A Spiritual Discipline* I discovered David Richter’s concept about the creation of a canon containing a selection of authors the critics would consider to meet the standards of books with enduring value. Richter said “the great contest about the canon continues, and that the work done by those who have tried to

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<sup>4</sup> Italo Calvino, *Why Read the Classics* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), p. 5

widen the area of awareness in the study of culture is scarcely finished or secure.”<sup>5</sup> It was great to hear that the discussion is open, but equally perplexing to know that the gate does not swing wide enough to include Christian writings like C.S. Lewis, Karl Barth, Henri Nouwen, Eugene Peterson, Ray Anderson or many others. Even though literary critics have ignored Christian works this was the task I and my team faced. What Christian writings would and could we deem as classic to be included in our body of work to fit the needs of our audience?

My team and I considered going the route of drawing from works by early church fathers and the reformers. In my research I found a systematic approach authored by Martin Luther. John Doberstein in *The Minister's Prayerbook* illustrated Luther's right way to study theology through Oration (prayer), Meditatio (reading and re-reading of scripture), and Tentatio (spiritual affliction, trial and temptation).<sup>6</sup> This provided useful insight and a framework for pastoral formation, and corresponded well to the earlier mentioned thoughts of Bruggeman. This was a route that I opened for my team members to pursue. We still had to address what works from the present era we would choose to provide a voice to the GCI Pastoral-Interns. Did such classic works with timeless value actually exist?

Back in 1978 the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association began offering the ECPA Christian Book Awards (formerly known as Gold Medallion). It was their effort to recognize quality in Christian writing and to encourage excellence by presenting this prestigious award each year. Through a meticulous judging process the committee would recognize five finalists in each of seven categories: Bibles, Fiction, Children, Inspiration,

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<sup>5</sup> David Richter, *Falling Into Theory* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), p. 195

<sup>6</sup> John Doberstein, *The Minister's Prayerbook* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1986), 287-289.

Bible Reference, Non-Fiction **and** New Author. We were thinking that now we are on to something helpful, and perhaps we could assemble a library from this list of award winning books from the past 24 years.

*The ECPA award process has been operated by a governing body of judges who determined which Christian books are making the most valuable contribution based on certain criteria. The highest standard was the number of books sold – the voice of popular opinion. After surveying the list of award winning books from 1978 to present day it was easy to observe that a wide cross section of Christian authors with a wide range of theological differences were represented. It was clear to our team that we simply could not use the ECPA book list for the references on our work of the Discussion Starters. The school of popular opinion would not serve our purpose at all because we were not simply looking for “best-sellers.”*

There was not an existing, reliable list of classical Christian books to draw from in the quest to complete my project. Instead of giving up the quest, in an “aha” moment it struck me that the writing team working alongside me was a well educated and well read group of folks who have been serving in vocational ministry for a long period of time (the team represents 160 years of collective service). Their knowledge base was broad and the scope of how much reading has already been accomplished was vast. We approached the task of landing on a short collection of books that would fit the need for GCI pastoral development. Instead of dwelling on works we had not read it made better sense to revisit and reread some of the great works of which we were already familiar.

The group decided to follow Calvino’s direction of identifying in their personal libraries the classic books that are never exhausted, and then picked up on his further

advice of re-reading these works with the same sense of discovery as the first reading.<sup>7</sup> This narrowed down the search for books and authors we thought our interns would find useful. Keeping in mind that we were not working to create a perfect tool that was meant as the “be-all” for the development of interns, but rather a good, supplementary tool that was intended to assist alongside the apprenticeship of a supervising pastor, accompanied by the learning provided through seminary. Again, this was the “three-legged stool” that fueled the forward progress. Also the simple goal of starting the conversation between Pastoral Interns and Life Mentors was far less daunting than thinking we had to somehow create a canon of classics from the long list of Christian authors.

The wide cross section of theological views mentioned in the ECPA list raised a matter that helped narrow the field for the works we passed along. The focus of GCI toward Trinitarian-Incarnational theology was a huge factor in selecting the short list of books and articles. However this did not totally discount the worthiness of authors who were not overtly Trinitarian, but if an author allowed a hyper-Calvinistic slant or an Armenian bias to drive their writing then that disqualified the work from this project.

Theological views are weighty issues that influenced the team’s selection of books and articles, and closely associated are the pressing needs of GCI that I outlined in the introduction. One particular example that showed up in the original essays was the much needed value and practice for GCI leaders and churches to become more missional-minded, and therefore actively encouraging our interns to grow into missional leaders. In the introduction of *The Missional Leader* by Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk the authors succinctly stated a view of the church that fits all ages: “A missional church is a

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<sup>7</sup> Calvino, *Why Read the Classics*, p. 5

community of God's people who live into the imagination that they are, by their very nature, God's missionary people living as a demonstration of what God plans to do in and for all of creation in Jesus Christ."<sup>8</sup> This was a choice illustration of the convergence we are promoting through the Discussion Starters. This focused topic was meeting a deficit for GCI and also filling the role of a book that my team viewed as a classic Christian work. This was a guiding principle that moved the project forward.

### **Writing Style and Formatting of the Discussion Starters**

Based on the personalities of the Advisory Team, the notion of ministry concepts flowing out of stories was the preferred style that we immediately choose. Leonard Sweet vehemently endorses the practice of storytelling for the desired outcome of story-catching. Sweet calls for a radical shift in ministry practice from problem-solving methodology to conversation-starting, metaphor-exegeting, story-catching/storytelling, systems-thinking, preferred-futures approach.<sup>9</sup> Stories not only inform, but they inspire and make the challenges seem negotiable. The writing team was directed to use stories as the basis of their essays, and each writer made an effort to contribute stories from their personal experience.

We were challenged on what would be the best way to deliver the books and articles to the Pastoral Interns and Life Mentors. Purchasing and shipping physical books to the Pastoral-Interns and Life-Mentors was too costly and out of the question. In the *Reading: A Spiritual Discipline* class having PDF files that could either be stored on a computer or printed off for hard copy served the students quite well. This is a great model

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 2006), XV.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008), 11.

that we imitated as it provided an introduction to a wider scope of writers, and it did not cause the Pastoral Intern to get bogged down into the chore of reading complete works (especially while the intern was also doing seminary work). Using the downloadable copy PDF file for the Discussion Starters and simply making references to the books being cited worked very well for passing the material to the Pastoral Interns and the Life Mentors.

Determining the format for the essays, the layout style, specific font, etc. so that it would be appealing to the Pastoral Interns ranging in ages from 22 to 47 years of age was an assignment given to Michelle Fleming, the youngest team member, who is also actively serving as a Pastoral Intern. Michelle got input from her peers. Ted Johnston who oversees the production of many communication pieces on behalf of GCI did the graphic design.

### **Discussion Starters Summarized**

There were many factors at play in the writing phase of this project, and it was vital that the Advisory Team had clarity about our purpose. There was an overarching primary purpose and a number of secondary purposes that provided an overall sense of order and purpose.

The primary purpose of the Discussion Starters was to be a support tool to start meaningful conversations between the Pastoral Interns and Life Mentors. These ongoing conversations in turn were intended to be the third leg of the three-legged stool described in chapter two. In essence these ongoing conversations were intended to be mini-retreats; breaks from the usual routine for the Pastoral Intern to address and re-address the question “Why am I engaged in this intensive experience called an internship?”

There were several secondary purposes that the Discussion Starters were designed to accomplish:

- The Discussion Starters support denominational values of GCI, and also address particular needs of GCI.
- The Discussion Starters join together the elements of academic theory with practical field experience.
- The Discussion Starters cite a long list of credible Christian resources and in so doing point the participants to the voices of multiple teachers. In fact, by using a team of GCI writers, over and above the singular voice of the Program Director, the quality of the Discussion Starters was greatly expanded and enhanced.
- The Discussion Starters are authentic, true life stories that were born out of personal experiences through which the team of writers lived.
- The Discussion Starters were designed with an educational quality to expose the Pastoral Interns to topics they may not have addressed or even anticipated.
- The Discussion Starters were limited to no more than two pages in length and were required to contain a short list of open-ended questions to stir the thinking of the Pastoral Intern. The brevity was intentional so that it left ample time for conversation with the Life Mentor.

As I compiled this list of purposes, I am realizing just how demanding a project like this was. I owe a lot to my colleagues and the quality of their work is evident in the essays they each contributed.

(The finished project of the original Discussion Starters can be viewed in Appendix B)



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD TEST**

The writing process with my Advisory Team members was a dynamic and satisfying experience. The general consensus was that we produced quality essays. The long-term goal of producing 25 or more Discussion Starters remained, but it was important to gain feedback from the Pastoral Interns and Life Mentors on progress so far, to determine effectiveness of the tool and ways we might make improvements.

Phase two of my project was to field test the original ten Discussion Starters and request evaluation from the users. The broader goal was to learn from this intermediate phase and then to re-engage the writers with a clearer understanding of how to refine our techniques, and develop more effective essays for GCI interns in training.

#### **The Context for Using the Discussion Starters**

My study through the Gospels and the life of Jesus was the driving force for how I approached the overall development of the internship program. The Gospel of Mark highlights Jesus' inside-out rhythm of life.<sup>1</sup> Nine times Mark gives examples of Jesus going on spiritual retreat either alone with the Father, or joined by his disciples. These times included physical rejuvenation, reflection and evaluation, additional teaching and

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Jensen, *Subversive Spirituality* (Pickwick Publications, 2009), 26.

training, celebration and worship. An obvious benefit of the habit of retreating is the spiritual, physical and mental recharging, and renewed focus to go back out to the mission field.

I viewed the time a Pastoral Intern spent with his or her Life-Mentor to be in this same spirit as Jesus with his disciples. The time the intern spent with his or her mentor was a “mini-retreat” to pause from the regular doing of ministry and seminary study. The Discussion Starter essays were designed to jumpstart the conversation. Each Discussion Starter sprang from the personal experiences of the five writers, introducing ministry concepts that could be new and challenging. The essays all had a measure of self-disclosure, which I hoped would help promote a safe and caring relationship between the intern and the mentor, always keeping in mind the third leg of the three-legged stool, “Why am I participating in this internship program and what do these experiences mean for me?”

To further enhance this “inside-out rhythm of life” I organized an annual “Intern Gathering” for the community of interns, pastors, and mentors to retreat, recharge, and re-engage. The Intern Gathering has grown into a vibrant community of practice with people who share a concern and passion for developing Pastoral Interns and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly and share best practices. During the Intern Gathering in Oregonia, OH, along with my Advisory Team, I gained deeper insight to the usefulness of the Discussion Starters through focus groups.

## The Survey Questions

To obtain first perceptions of the Pastoral Interns and Life Mentors concerning the Discussion Starters I choose to do a closed survey. The participants gave answers to six questions with a range of responses from one to five (five being superior, four being excellent, three being good, two being fair, and one being poor). I chose this method based on the recommendation of Arlene Fink who says, "...they (closed surveys) have proven themselves to be the more efficient and ultimately more reliable. Their efficiency comes from being easy to use, score, and enter data. Also their reliability is enhanced because of the uniform data they provide."<sup>1</sup> The short survey concluded with one open question soliciting comments from the participants allowing us to obtain unanticipated answers that provided additional insight.

In Fink's book, *How to Conduct Surveys*, she recommended that questions be concrete and close to the respondent's experience. Also each question should be meaningful to the process being measured and the language should be clear and avoid specialized terms.<sup>2</sup>

My goal was to keep the survey simple and user-friendly, covering the full range of content that I, along with my Advisory Team recognized as important. The closed survey for evaluating the Discussion Starters as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 2009), 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

## Intern Survey

Evaluation Scale:	(5) Superior	(4) Excellent	(3) Good	(2) Fair	(1) Poor
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall experience</li> <li>2. Overall content</li> <li>3. It challenged me</li> <li>4. It helped me</li> <li>5. It was relevant to my situation</li> <li>6. It provided stimulating discussion</li> </ol>					
<p>Comments (please provide any suggestions you have for improving the discussion guides and/or the overall experience)</p>					

Before disclosing my findings from the survey it is important to remember that the participants in this pilot program were eleven Pastoral Interns along with their respective Life Mentors. They included nine men and two women ranging in ages from 22 to 47. Three of the interns received part-time pay; the other eight were volunteers.

All eleven interns participated in a portion of the essays, but only two participants completed all ten over the course of the five month program. The average number of responders for each Discussion Starter was seven out of the total group of eleven. This sporadic activity was due to work schedules and time limitations of the interns and some participants explained that they chose to engage in the ones that looked most appealing to them.

The two most important factors I sought to measure were the overall opinions of the value of the Discussion Starters and the quality of the time spent in the discussions they started. With these objectives in mind the questions of “overall experience” and “it was relevant to my situation” were uppermost in importance.

The scores for “overall experience” averaged 4.11 for the entire group of Discussion Starters. The highest score was 4.60 and the lowest score was 3.75. Receiving

a score that reflected an “excellent” response was confirming that the Discussion Starters were well received and a quality component of the internship experience.

The scores for “it was relevant to my situation” averaged 4.07 for the ten Discussion Starters. The highest score was 4.66 and the lowest score was 3. These scores for this critical question reflected high marks and overall approval. The scoring feature of the survey revealed that two of the Discussion Starters were least helpful to the group, two were clearly most helpful, and the other six had achieved a high, acceptable range hovering close to 4.

The “comments section” provided a wide assortment of perceptions ranging from confirmations to helpful suggestions for improving the program. Some of the comments below:

“It was great to have the Discussion Starters to share with the Life-Mentors. It helped more with my Mentor who I don’t know as well because it gave us a place to really start digging deeper into life experiences.”

“This starter resonates well with my life at the moment as I begin to transition from my internship to a more permanent position. I could see moments in my own journey which relate to some of the moments in Ted’s life.”

“One issue that I am finding is with the books that are recommended to read in conjunction with these Discussion Starters is a good one. But to be frank, I can’t see myself ever actually reading these books in the same time frame as the internship. The expense of buying so many books and to read them along with the essay is not reasonable.”

“The overall message of the article was useful and valid. Some of our newer Pastoral-Interns may not be able to relate as well if they were never exposed to Ambassador College and that very unique and distant past. This could leave some readers feeling as though they are outside the ‘circle.’”

“I appreciated the parts in Pastoral Coaches relating to personal ministry, like keeping your focus on God for your benefit and the benefit of your ministry. I would enjoy continued discussions about ministry/life balance such as how to manage ministry with jobs, family, etc. and about maintaining your relationship with God in the midst of it all.”

“This discussion was a wonderful reminder of God’s greater plan in our lives. As Carrie said, “it is more important who I am rather than where I am.” The process of our personal development is more important than striving to get places faster, or jump over hurdles, etc.”

“I especially liked this Discussion Starter on “Busyness and Doubt.” It addresses two issues most, if not all of us, face in ministry. I liked the question about battling doubt. It’s an open-ended question that lets you know it’s OK to have doubt, so how do you face it. This is my favorite thus far.”

“The questions at the end of the Discussion Starter “Missional” were just excellent. I very much like discussing ‘Hope Accounts’ and how God increases those accounts. I also like the concept of the new imagination. This particular Discussion Starter is best after the intern/trainer relationship has been developed for a period of time.”

“A possible addition to the experience would be to include a forum for interns to discuss their answers together. I realize we have a Facebook group for interns, but it is not really being utilized right now. If the discussion starters could become part of the internship requirement, we might see more use and the dynamic of interns sharing more as peer-to-peer would grow.

The “comments section” responses are a significant contributor to the overall findings and will be commented on in detail in the “discoveries” section of this chapter.

The survey revealed that the initial writings from the Advisory Team had done a good job to address meaningful topics for the interns to discuss with their mentors, and the intentionality of starting discussions was working in the majority of situations. The “comments section” revealed that the participants were thinking and evaluating objectively and felt free to share their critical ideas that will shape the evolution of the internship program.

### **Focus Groups**

According to authors Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, the purpose of conducting a focus group is to listen and gather information. It is a way to better

understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service.<sup>3</sup> In my case it was to gain better understanding about how the interns and mentors feel and think about using the Discussion Starters as part of the internship process. The authors go on to explain that these groups work best with 5-10 people under the facilitation of a skilled interviewer. And under the conditions of a relaxed, permissive environment the participants enjoy sharing their ideas and perceptions. This was the type of environment we created at the Intern Gathering for the meeting of the focus groups.

The Advisory Team members were paired off to serve as the facilitators of two separate groups – the Pastoral-Interns and the Life-Mentors. I asked Charles and Michelle to take the Pastoral-Interns and John and Ted to take the Life-Mentors (along with attending Pastor-Trainers). They were armed with the following list of questions:

Focus Group Questions:

- Tell us your name and how long you have been participating in the pastoral-internship program and in what capacity.
- How was it that you first entered the relationship with the Pastoral-Intern (or the Life-Mentor)?
- What were your first impressions of participating in the directed conversations provided by the Discussion Starters?
- In what ways are the Discussion Starters helping to enrich the pastoral-intern experience?
- What topics do you recommend to be added to the menu of Discussion Starters?
- The pilot program had you interacting with two lessons per month. What rhythm would you suggest for future pastoral-interns and life-mentors?
- Is there anything else we should have talked about, but didn't?

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<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 2009), 2.

The facilitators had 90 minutes to dialogue with their specific group and I purposefully did not interact with either group, but I hovered about the building listening to the din of noise as the conversations took place. The following reports were submitted by my Advisory Team:

**To: Greg Williams**

**From: Charles and Michelle Fleming**

**Subject: Notes and observations from the discussion moderated on Saturday June 8th**

This focus group of Pastoral-Interns revealed several important elements that will guide our ongoing development of the GCI Pastoral-Internship Program. First of all it is important to clarify that out of 11 participants in this pilot project that 7 actively participated for the full five months of the pilot program and provided valuable input via evaluations forms. All 11 participants attended the annual Intern Gathering in Oregonia, OH and took part in the ongoing training and shared further opinions in their specific focus group.

**First impressions of the Discussion Starters:**

- Helped develop relationship with Life-Mentor without previous relationship
- Helped deepen relationship with Life-Mentors with established relationships
- Good content, could be used to do small group Bible Studies
- Need for “front end” orientation as to the purpose of the Discussion Starters

**Pros:**

- Benefited from having conversations with Life-Mentor and Pastoral-Trainer
- Created a space to carve out time and process ministry
- A nice pause from daily routine
- Books were not necessary
- Met the goal of starting conversations

**Cons:**

- Books not provided
- Many of the questions were too long and involved

**Suggested topics to be added:**

- Team development
- Time management
- Transitioning from intern to pastor
- Meeting the needs of a congregation (specifically senior adults)
- Life skills (specifically financial management)



**Suggested improvements:**

- Reduce the frequency of discussions to once a month
- Provide an intern website with Discussion Starters as a resource to be used as needed
- Make the purpose more clear
- Simplify the terminology – instead of “Pastor-Trainer” just use “Pastor”

Thank you for the opportunity to be involved!

Charles and Michelle Fleming

**To: Greg Williams**

**From: John Halford and Ted Johnston**

**Subject: Notes and observations from the discussion moderated on Saturday June 8th**

The meeting was for the Life-Mentors along with the Pastor-Trainers to discuss the effectiveness of the Discussion Starters. However, it became quickly obvious that only a little more than half of those present had used them, and some did not seem to know they existed. That was in one way disappointing, but it led to a discussion that was perhaps even more illuminating.

The reason why the Discussion Starters had not been used was not due to any inherent flaw with the product itself. It was because the Pastor-Trainers were not actually starting discussions in a systematic way, or exercising their leadership to promote this relationship between Pastoral-Intern and Life-Mentor. They did not seem to realize it was a part of their role.

With this in mind, we focused the discussion on the responsibility of a Pastor-Trainer to have a structured and focused approach. Everyone agreed that there was a need for discussions to be a component of this process. Some of the pastors then looked at the Discussion Starter notes and agreed that these were good themes, and provoked perceptive questions. We stressed that these were only intended as pump primers, and were not “discussion destinations.”

It became obvious that many of the Pastor-Trainers were not approaching the job in a systematic way. There was more of an *ad hoc* teaching, allowing circumstances and serendipity to guide the relationship. We discussed at some length the responsibility a trainer has to an intern, which is similar to the old idea of apprenticeship. The apprentice was “bound” in a legal contract, during which they would give labor in exchange for on the job training and practical experience. By the end of the apprenticeship period, the

trainer had a duty to have taught his student the trade, and the apprentice was “released” to begin his or her own career.

Although we don’t need a legal contract, this is a good model to follow. The Pastor-Trainer has a “duty of care” to make sure the Pastoral-Intern knows what is needed.

In the larger group meetings many of the interns said they needed more clarity in what was expected from them. They were appreciating and enjoying the experience, but seemed a bit frustrated by its vagueness. In a teaching situation, this is nearly always the teacher’s fault. **Therefore, our main “take away” from that meeting (and the whole weekend) is that we need to put some thought into defining the duties and responsibilities of a Pastor-Trainer.**

Before concluding the meeting, everyone agreed that the Discussion Starters should play a useful role, and there was then a flow of ideas for further examples.

These included:

- Developing the art of listening non-judgmentally to controversial topics.
- Seeing the importance of knowing both sides of potentially divisive topics like abortion, homosexuality and evolution.
- Recognizing different personality types and how they experience spirituality.
- Listening ‘up’ – to what God may be teaching you.
- Listening ‘down’ to what people may be trying to tell you.
- Handling rejection.
- Pitfalls in choosing leadership in the church situation.
- Balancing congregational needs with personal needs and family life.
- Confidentiality.

We appreciate being involved, and are ready to help in whatever you need in developing this important program.

John Halford and Ted Johnston

### **Discoveries**

The discoveries during this pilot phase were extensive. The first need was to design and install a better more comprehensive orientation for all the parties involved, Pastor-Trainers, Pastoral-Interns, and Life-Mentors. There was a special notation that the Pastor-Trainers need extra attention to better understand their level of care for the

Pastoral-Interns. The improved work on the front end of the process will set the course for better development throughout the two years of training.

Secondly, simplifying the terms of the participants to Pastor, Intern and Mentor made good sense and it was less cumbersome for the young emerging leaders to identify the various roles within the system.

The third change was to reduce the number of prescribed meetings from twice a month to once a month. The further notion of having the intern and mentor meet ten times per year for each year of the internship was adopted.

A fourth adjustment was to simply make references to books that are recommended for further reading specifically related to a particular Discussion Starter. Purchasing and reading of books related to the Discussion Starters will not be a requirement.

A fifth point submitted by a sharp intern was to be sensitive about speaking too often and freely about the historical context and systems of the old Worldwide Church of God. Any references to the distant past will need to be framed with adequate detail.

The sixth adjustment was to make better use of the existing Facebook page. These discussions can be expanded to include a broader audience for a wider range of input and support. This adjustment supports and builds the “Community of Practice” we desire for the internship program.

A seventh point was to encourage the writers to review their earlier contributions, in the light of the field testing, and make any adjustments. The writing team was happy to receive the feedback and even more motivated to continue the writing process.

Both focus groups suggested valuable topics for future Discussion Starters. It was interesting to see the harmony of suggestions from each of the groups.

The survey findings and the focus group comments confirmed that the questions in the Discussion Starters were doing their intended job of stimulating meaningful conversations. They were also helpful in deepening the relationship between intern and mentor.

### **Concluding Thought**

Overall the Discussion Starters were a success. They proved to be relevant to the current circumstances of the interns and they have helped the interns negotiate their way through and beyond the two year internship experience. The Discussion Starters appear to be answering the crucial question of the third leg of the three-legged stool, “Why am I participating in this internship program, and what do these experiences mean for me?”

Feedback from pastors, interns, and mentors was overwhelmingly positive and it was agreed that we should go forward with the Discussion Starter component of GCI’s Pastoral-Internship Program, albeit with the recommended revisions and additions. The group dynamics of the pilot phase was a rewarding experience that has helped to fine tune the quality of the overall program. And the really good news is that GCI will be the recipient of a “state of the art” training program for developing future pastoral leaders.

## CHAPTER 5

### FURTHER FINDINGS AND THE WAY FORWARD

My previous experiences of working with a team to develop a program and get it up and running have always been hurried. The urgency of needing the program or service short-changed the development process and quality was compromised. When I entered this Doctor of Ministry program at Drew University, one my goals was to develop a program to rebuild the GCI ministry that would be effective in meeting our present needs and would lay a sound foundation for the future. The pilot phase of preparing and testing Discussion Starters was a significant part of what I had in mind. It has taught me some valuable lessons about working closely with a team and seeing the value of field testing and modifying the product. I am confident that these skills will continue to help me in future projects.

My Advisory Team and I accomplished what we initially set out to do and we identified significant issues that would have to be confronted if the internship program is going to be the “best it can be.” The learning went well beyond the mechanics of the Discussion Starters.

#### **Deeper Discoveries**

As the Advisory Team reviewed the initial ten Discussion Starters, they began to see the emphasis of our original work focused more on the “how” questions than on the “why”. I stated in chapter four, “The Discussion Starters appear to be answering the

crucial question of the third leg of the three-legged stool, “Why am I participating in this internship program, and what do these experiences mean for me?” I used the word “appear” because some of the interns commented that they felt they have made safe transitions from internship to the next level of ministry as a Pastoral Resident. The Discussion Starter on “Calling” was the top rated essay out of all the original ten, and it definitely had the interns focus inwardly and reflect on the overall meaning of the internship experience.

We found that a sizeable percentage of the participants were picking and choosing Discussion Starters according to their personal preference rather than working through them in the order that they were distributed. This raised the question, “Was this a problem? Were they deliberately not complying, or does it reflect the learning style of a younger generation?” Many of our interns, pastors and mentors are volunteers, with limited time. Were we wise in insisting they stick to an imposed schedule?

In retrospect, I think I made a mistake by not explaining that the Discussion Starters were an integral part of my Doctor of Ministry project. This might have led to better participation. However, I believed it was best not to focus on my educational need, as I was asking for help in the development of a program that will far out live my immediate project. The subject of orientation goes much deeper than simply explaining what the Discussion Starters are and how they should be implemented. To be effective, orientation has to address all aspects of the roles of interns, mentors and pastors. It must set out clearly and unambiguously what will be expected from everyone during the two years of training.

For the GCI Internship Program to fully blossom and grow, other team members have to be added to the national team. During this pioneer phase, I have personally spearheaded the program, calling on other pastoral leaders to help when I needed it. However, as I worked with the Advisory Team, it became obvious that to be successful as a denomination wide process, the development of interns needed a dedicated team to lead and manage its progress.

In our field test we learned that our use of technology was not exactly “generation-friendly.” Attaching the Discussion Starters to emails had seemed an obvious way to distribute them. But this is not the preferred method of communication for the interns who are in their twenties. This was why some interns did not fully participate. Connecting the Discussion Starters with a central website was discussed as a preferred option.

The Intern Gathering revealed another problem that had to be addressed. Among the volunteer interns, there were a few who were secondary leader types and better suited to assist rather than lead. Had they applied to be a part of the formal program in a paid position they most likely would have not been accepted.

By attending the annual Intern Gathering, the interns could see more clearly what was involved in the program. The interaction with the other participants helped some of the secondary leader types to reassess if and where they fit. The exposure aspect displayed value as a recruiting method, but the need to get more detailed and defined with the interns who were accepted into the program was compromised because the mixture of the group convoluted the depth of teaching and training that could take place.

Observing the outcomes of our earliest wave of interns led us to understand that our program has not been and never can be a simple straight-line path from Pastoral Intern to Senior Pastor. The internship is an immersive two-year experience of discovery for a young person who has expressed a desire for ministry and senses a possible calling. Our job is to train and observe as best we can over two years, recognizing that some may discover through this process that Pastoral Ministry is not for them. That can be disappointing for all concerned, but we must see this attrition as an aspect of the success of the program and not a failure.

To this point in our internship program the participants have all been home grown fruit. They have been young men and women who have grown up in GCI, with one exception. I will share his story in “The Way Forward” section.

### **The Way Forward**

The continued writing of Discussion Starters should be a really smooth process. We will drop the two low scoring Discussion Starters from our list of selections. The writing team will go back to work with the renewed clarity to write a better balance of essays that address the “why” question as much as the “how” question. The writing team now has the benefit of the recommended list of topics that was supplied by the focus groups. The writers will continue to write in a story-telling style and share out of their personal experiences.

The old Discussion Starters combined with the newly written ones will be stored and made accessible on the new GCI Internship website. We will designate two or three introductory Discussion Starters and two to close. The other essays will be presented as



an optional menu from which the interns and their mentors can select topics that best fits their needs. We will recommend that the intern and mentor have ten meetings a year.

A three day orientation is being designed for new interns to attend along with their supervising pastor. This orientation will address basic training in ministry skills and will include guidelines on the roles of interns and pastors. The capstone will be the creation of a *Development Plan* that will be unique to each pairing of intern and pastor. The *Development Plan* will be the roadmap for the two year journey of the internship.

After three years of overseeing the GCI Internship Program on my own, I will now be hiring an experienced leader, Jeff McSwain who has led a successful para-church ministry and has a successful track record of developing young leaders. Jeff will oversee the training for orientation, focusing on the unique skills of youth outreach and personal fund raising. He will also join me in the ongoing effort to recruit quality candidates into the internship program.

After a thorough orientation, it is important to have follow-up coaching to keep the interns and pastors on course. I will also add a third staff member, Anthony Mullins who has been a protégé of mine for 15 years and is both gifted and passionate about coaching young, emerging leaders. Anthony will coordinate and monitor the progress of the interns and pastors, ensuring that they are meeting the expectations and making progress. Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton, the authors of *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* say, “A coach is particularly important when you step into a new responsibility... A coach is also helpful when you bog down in a responsibility.”<sup>1</sup>My experience has taught me that poor orientation and the lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress 1992), 73.

coaching are two critical areas linked to frustration and failure. We are determined to see this does not happen.

A newly designed GCI Internship website is being developed. This site will include videoed interviews from current interns, pre-screening tools for prospective applicants, a reporting system for active interns, a link to the GCI homepage, and a link to the GCI Internship Facebook page. The Discussion Starters will be available on the website. To give them greater exposure they will be featured as a monthly post that can lead back to interaction with the Webmaster and spill over into discussions on Facebook.

In going forward we must stay true to the application process and trust the feedback. In particular we must value the personal references from people whom the applicant has been serving alongside, and know the applicant best. The effectiveness of our application process is especially a factor as the volume of interns increase. We are striving to identify focused and motivated young people who meet our desired profile and we must not allow our need for new leaders to compromise our acceptance standards. I refer back to chapter two where I stated the desired outcome of the internship program:

**By God's grace, we want to produce educated leaders who deeply follow Jesus and love people, are skillful in ministry and mission, and who lead out of the assurance of the Lord's calling and the Spirit's gifting.**

The Intern Gathering has served a purpose for the start up of our program, but to move forward it is important to create venues that are serving clearer and more specific needs. This is why the Intern Gathering will eventually be replaced by the Intern

Orientation. We will use other venues such as our youth focused *Converge* conferences and regionally based pastoral conferences to promote the GCI Internship Program.

We will also remain flexible in dealing with the case-by-case situations with a volunteer who is working at the ground level with a pastor, to provide assessment and coaching. Volunteer interns will be encouraged to participate at their level of interest and availability. However, our priority will be to provide a full range of support for paid interns during their two-year internship experience.

We have also decided to stop using the term “GCI Pastoral Internship Program.” I feel that “GCI Internship Program” is more accurate. Our experience has shown us that some participants who matriculate through our program end up in areas other than pastoral ministry. And this is okay! Of course we are striving to train and develop young people who can serve as pastoral leaders in our existing and new churches, and if our success rate is in the 60% range, we will actually be thrilled. There is a “Leadership Pathway” diagram in Appendix C that illustrates our current system of entrance and progression.

In conclusion, I would like to present an unsolicited testimonial from Dustin Lampe, a young man who is one of our first interns to complete the pilot program. Dustin Lampe is a young man that I recruited out of Friends Seminary who joined GCI and became part of the Internship Program in a GCI congregation in Cincinnati. To risk employing a pastor from outside our own ranks was a bold move for a denomination that has been through almost two decades of cult recovery. I found Dustin’s story deeply encouraging and reassuring.

## **A Brief Endorsement of Grace Communion International**

By Dustin Lampe

November 20, 2013

Can God really work freely in denominations? The question lingers with an air of suspicion and doubt. Denominations are about political systems and human power structures, which often underlies this question. Indeed wrong use of power is a temptation for any large organization. But do we see the alternative temptation; be little churches that are not tied to a denomination and have little popes that abuse power and the little system in little corners all over the world.

Grace Communion International has been a denomination of love, grace, and empowerment. The strong leader's make their presence known with friendly words of love and encouragement. As a "weak" newcomer, I have indeed been one who has been given much more than I could give back. My experience with this denomination has to do with a big organization coming together and proclaiming weakness in a way that says, "only God could make us strong in our mission together."

I came into GCI because I believed they were answering the "Who we worship" question right. GCI is all about Jesus as the vicarious victor and conductor for people of the faith. Not only that, but they offered a plan for a person called to Christian leadership and in love with God a *way* to grow into that calling. They offered not a hard core of leaders in which a person has to prove themselves worthy to enter into, but people with open arms and hearts ready and willing to encourage a young pastor on the path of ministry.

Rather than being forcefully conformed to a pre-disposed image, I have been able to grow and blossom more fully into who God has called me to be. This denomination has submitted themselves to God in such a way that they trust that God will do infinitely more than they could ask or imagine in their own strength and power.

Can God work in denominations? My experience confirms, He is and He does in extraordinary ways!

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In the introduction to this Doctor of Ministry Project, I explained that I was given the challenge to rebuild and oversee a Pastoral Internship Program on behalf of GCI. I also said that this project has allowed me the marvelous opportunity to think more critically, research more extensively, and work in community with other GCI ministers to

build a program that can effectively serve young, emerging leaders. Even though there is much yet to learn and accomplish, I can say confidently that we have made great progress. This project has helped me refine my thinking, and I am increasingly confident that we are preparing properly for the future.

The responsibility of recruiting, training, developing and sending pastoral leaders on behalf of Jesus Christ and his church is a heavy one. I recognize that the final selection and the fine-tuning must come from God, but we can strive to create environments where theological education, practical ministry experience and meaningful reflection can converge to be an environment for a potential pastor to clearly discern and prepare for his or her calling. It is essential that this happens under the supervision of a patient and experienced pastor along with the establishment of an open, transparent relationship with a listening, affirming mentor. Also each intern should feel a part of a community of practice, connecting with other GCI interns for peer-to-peer support.

As I begin to wind down this initial phase of my work, I envision a future project that will challenge the interns with an assignment similar to the one being developed by this current writing team. Virginia Woolf, notable author and critic, challenges the reader to consider that the quickest way to understand the elements of what a novelist (or any author) is doing is not to read, but to write, and to make your own experiment with the dangers and difficulties of words.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this will be an exercise for interns in the future? What wisdom and practical aspects of ministry would the interns pass along to the ones who follow them? What stories will be worthy of their writing and re-telling? Having a finishing assignment for the intern to write his or her personal essay on what the

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<sup>2</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Second Common Reader* (Boston, MA: First Harvest/HBJ, 1986), 259.

internship meant to him or her makes a lot of sense, and can be of great value to those who follow.

The promise and expectation of these future stories excites me and have been the incentive to drive my work thus far. Paul's inspired words from II Timothy 2:2 echo in my mind: "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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."<sup>3</sup>

### **Statement from Greg and the Advisory Team**

We ultimately pray that these Discussion Starters will be a catalyst pointing hundreds of young, emerging interns toward their life-long journeys of learning and leadership. May you hear the Father's call, fully join Jesus in His ministry, and faithfully follow the lead of the Spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> The Holy Bible, New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 662.

**APPENDIX A**  
**PASTORAL-INTERNS**

The table below provides an overview of the Pastoral-Interns who participated in the doctor of ministry project, where they are located, and information about their developmental status.

CURRENT PASTORAL INTERNS	LOCATION	PASTOR – TRAINER	LIFE – MENTOR	START DATE/ TERM	FUTURE PLACE- MENT	EDUCA- TION	FUNDING
1. Steve Dobritch	Youngstown OH	John Dobritch	Dave Botha	Jan 2012 – Dec 2013		Working on BA/ plans to attend GCS	Congregation and CAD
2. Carrie Smith	San Diego, CA Interviewed with Pikeville, KY	Mark and Anne Stapleton	Barb Egbert	April 2012- March 2013?	Assessed/ New Pastor Training/ Ordained	MS Counseling/ BA Early Ed/ enrolled in GCS	Congregation and CAD
3. Chris Sayson  (Possible Church Planter)	Tipp City, OH	Jim Valekis	Anthony Mullins	Feb 2012 – July 2013		BS Bus Mgmt/ Enrolling in GCS?	Congregation and CAD
4. Dennis Elliott	Hickory, NC	PD Kurts	Stephen Webb	Able to replace PD when needed	Needs Assessment	Enrolled in GCS	GCS Scholarship
5. Joe Lamb	Cincinnati East	George Hart	Wane Creager	Ongoing		BA Christian Counseling	
7. Bill Ratzman	Des Moines, Iowa	Karl Reinagel	Doug Johannsen		New Pastor Training	BA/ Enrolled in GCS	
8. Michelle Fleming	Orlando, FL	Steve Schantz	Greg Williams	July 2012		MA/Enrolling in GCS	GCS Scholarship
9. Craig Kuhman	Toledo, OH	Stuart Mahan	Rick Shallenberger	Oct 2012	Needs Assessment	Enrolled in GCS	
10. Terry McDonald	Cleveland, OH	David Botha	George Simph	Ongoing			
11. Jon Kuhn	Columbus, OH	Jeff Broadnax	John Karlson	April 2013			





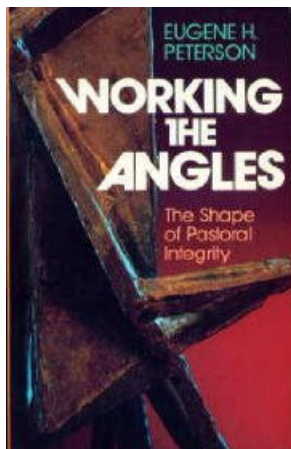
**A Group Shot from the Intern Gathering June 2013**

**APPENDIX B**  
**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

## PASTORAL COACHES

### *GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by Greg Williams



Recommended reading:  
*Working the Angles* by Eugene Peterson, pages 1-18.

### ***Working the Angles***

It's popular to write a series of books as a trilogy (e.g. The Hunger Games). The book recommended for this discussion is Eugene Peterson's *Working the Angles*. It's the middle work of a series written to pastors. Work number one is *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* and number three is *Under the Unpredictable Plant; an Exploration in Vocational Holiness*. I highly recommend this series for the growing pastor.

The introduction in *Working the Angles* provides a simple illustration from trigonometry to help the pastor stay true to his called profession. Peterson related the three visible aspects of ministry (preaching, teaching and administration) to the three visible lines that when connected constitute a triangle. The lesser noticed interior angles of this triangle are the private aspects of ministry that Peterson identifies as prayer, scripture and spiritual direction.

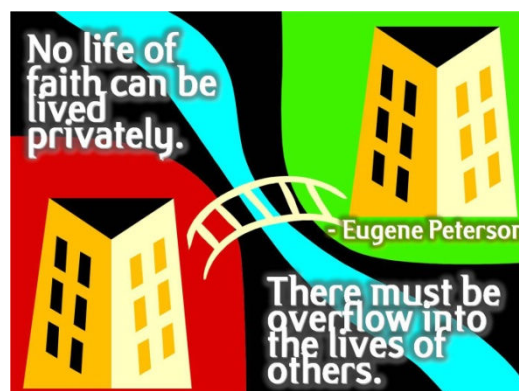
### **Ministry Interview**

The year was 1986 and the setting was the office of Joseph Tkach, Sr. My wife Susan and I were being interviewed to enter into full-time ministry as a Ministerial Trainee in the Glendora, California congregation of the Worldwide Church of God.

Were we nervous? You bet! Susan speculated that we would be quizzed with Bible questions. I was not sure what to expect, but I knew that Mr. Tkach was a straight shooter and this would be clear and to the point. What actually transpired was a curveball to me; a young, emerging minister who was eager to achieve and make a good impression (and a little bit full of himself).

Mr. Tkach offered a warm, enthusiastic greeting and seated us in front of his desk. He briefly stated some particulars about the job offer, and quite rapidly turned his attention to Susan. Mr. Tkach peppered Susan with questions – “Do you know that you will share Greg with the entire congregation? Do you know that he will be gone from home many evenings out of the week? Do you know that ministry responsibilities happen at any time on any day and usually when it is not convenient?” Susan was attentive to the questions and her responses met Mr. Tkach's satisfaction. He then congratulated us and sent us on our way.

I thought to myself what a strange interview. Why didn't he address me more, wasn't I the one being hired? In fact, I felt a bit slighted by the interview. Susan left the office smiling contentedly. Being a naive 26 year old husband and burgeoning minister I mistook her smile being related to the absence of Bible questions.



The primary purpose of a pastor is to point people to God, and to stay attentive to his activity in our lives and world. This purpose can only be accomplished if the pastor himself or herself is living a life of abiding in Christ. This is where Peterson got the notion of “working the angles.” The basics acts of praying, reading scripture and giving spiritual direction determine the shape of everything else.

Working the angles happens in the quietness of the day to day life of the pastor. It is similar to the world class athlete who continually trains and performs repetitive motions and techniques until they become memorized by the brain and muscles – then in that instance on the public stage they stick the landing, they are the first to break the tape, or they make that acrobatic catch that no one else could.

Athletes and pastors alike need coaches. The athlete needs a motivator who can get him moving when he is tired and complacent; an analyst who can help dissect the slight body movements that can achieve enhanced performance; and a psychologist who can say the right words to encourage the extra burst of mental drive.

Pastor's coaches are spiritual practitioners and theologians who span a vast spectrum of cultural conditions and represent a variety of temperaments. These coaches speak out of their personal journeys with the Lord. They resist categorization, are impatient with labels and refute formulas. Peterson says that they continually catch us off guard and challenge us with surprise.

My interview with Mr. Tkach was one of those surprising situations. Twenty-six years later I have come to fully appreciate this unorthodox interview. Mr. Tkach knew that I must have a calling and competencies for pastoral ministry based on the recommendations of my Pastor-Trainer. His concern was for my dear wife. Did she know what she was entering? Did she anticipate the personal and family sacrifices? His loving concern still touches my heart deeply.

Mr. Tkach Sr. was a pastoral coach to me in ways that he would not have known. The list of such coaches in my life is long and diverse. I have been extremely blessed to have had a choir of Godly voices in my life.

Several such voices are being made available to you through this series of discussion starters:

- John Halford is an author and pastoral leader whose British wit adds flavor to the honest (catch you off guard) information and insights he will share.
- Ted Johnston is a pastoral leader and seminary instructor who works the angles--offering focused Christian education through his writing, training, teaching and consulting ministry.
- The dynamic father-daughter team of Charles and Michelle Fleming bring a joy and caring that is reflective of their island heritage. Charles, who is from Grenada, works with great passion to develop GCI pastors in the Caribbean. Michelle, who is a pastoral intern (and thus writes with that voice) is passionate about ministry and about her "tent making" job of teaching math to middle schoolers.

This team of coaches is pulling and praying for you. The sole intent of their series of discussion starters is to enrich your development as a pastoral intern.

### Discussion starter questions

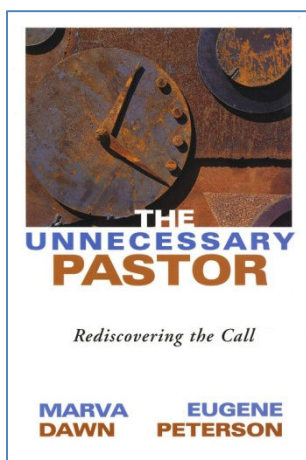
This essay has described the need that pastoral interns have to both abide in Christ and to have a pastoral coach. The following questions are intended for personal reflection and then interactive discussion between Pastoral-Intern and their Life-Mentor.

1. What do you think of Peterson's point that the primary purpose of a pastor is to point people to God and to stay attentive to his activity in our lives and world? What factors do you think distract pastors from this primary purpose?
2. How has your private life (especially of "working the angles") prepared you for your public life?
3. If you are married or engaged, does your spouse (or spouse to be) have a clear, informed understanding of what you are embarking on as you enter pastoral ministry? If you are not currently married or engaged, how does your calling to ministry mesh together with dating?
4. As you know, in the pastoral intern program, we are inviting you to develop a lifelong practice of having coaches and mentors in your life. Knowing yourself, what are some of the qualities you would look for in a coach or a mentor?

## IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

By John Halford



Recommended reading:

*The Unnecessary Pastor*  
by Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson, introduction and chapters 1 and 4.

### My Early Years

As I reflect on my early years of ministry, two words come to mind: frustration and anxiety. It wasn't "hell on earth," but it would have been much more pleasant and productive if those who trained me understood ministry as we do now.

I attended Ambassador College from 1962 to 1966, first in England, then in California. Although the stated purpose of the college was to train leaders for the growing work, there was a contradiction. Students were not supposed to want to be ministers, and to let it be known that this was your ambition was a kiss of death on your chances.

The official line was that God had to call you into the ministry—it was not something you sought for yourself. So whereas we were constantly reminded that we were the "elite" of the church, and Ambassador was the "West Point" of the church, it was a West Point where the cadets were not supposed to want to be soldiers!

I never could quite figure this out and perhaps that is why those responsible for teaching me could never quite figure me out. That, and being English in what was then a monocultural environment, left me bemused and frustrated. I tried my best, but nothing I did seemed to impress those "over me," who would (so I thought) decide my future.



Life was full of contradictions. In one memorable week, I was informed that the young lady I was engaged to was not converted and I should delay getting married.

At about the same time, she was told by others that I was not converted and so she should not rush into marriage. Also, I was told that I did not have ministerial potential. The same week, I was hired as an assistant in the Church's ministerial office, a greatly coveted job, and a sure sign that I was "headed for the ministry." I looked for some logic in all this, but now realize it was just that the left didn't know what the right was doing.

### An Eye-Opener

Working in the ministerial office with about a dozen ministers was an eye-opener. I began to see that, beneath the benign surface, ministry was intensely competitive. In that office, there was a strict pecking order based on rank. The manager who was highly political, was widely touted to be "the next evangelist."

In those days, at the end of their junior year, it was traditional to send likely ministerial candidates into the field to work with experienced ministers for the summer. I was not selected, even though I was already working as a ministerial assistant. That turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

My boss did not know what to do with me that summer. So he assigned me to the nearby Glendale church, working with Lowell Blackwell. I was warned to be careful—Lowell had a reputation for being a maverick. Also, I was warned to not get too close to another elder, because he was "going nowhere in the work"—his name was Joseph Tkach, Sr.!

That summer with Lowell transformed my view of ministry. Yes, he was a "maverick"—he didn't care about politics or his reputation. He served the people with dedication and humility, while tolerating my immature efforts. He showed me that ministry is about serving those "under" you, not impressing those over you. The Apostle Paul wrote about this issue in given guidelines regarding selecting elders—see Colossians 3:22, Galatians 3:30 and Ephesians 6:5-9.



In those early years of ministry, I found encouraging advice in 1 Samuel 2:3: *Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.* I also was helped by Proverbs 29:26: *Many seek the ruler's favor, but justice for man comes from the LORD.* Never forget that the ultimate judge of your ministry is the fruit it produces (Mathew 7:16, 20).

In my early years, the epitome of success as a student (while pretending you didn't want to be a minister), was to get married right after graduation, then drive off with your bride in a new fleet car to an assignment in the field ministry. Doing so meant that you had "arrived." Predictably, I had not. After graduation, I continued working at headquarters and was asked to take further classes. I was considered, and felt like, a failure. But I never forgot the lessons I learned from Lowell Blackwell. I will always be grateful to him.

A year later, my wife Pat and I were assigned to Melbourne, Australia. It was decided that I should be ordained before I left, although some felt I was not ready. When being ordained in front of an audience of over 3000 people, the man ordaining me was obviously reluctant—a reluctance reflected in his prayer. That haunted me for several years. But that is history now, and it has all worked out.

### The Problem and Its Solution

Looking back on those early years, I realize now that I was not the hapless victim of an evil or corrupt system. We were all victims of a dysfunctional system that was based on rank, by which one climbed the ladder of "success." The system attracted ambitious, career oriented candidates. But many of those who achieved "success" dropped away when the ministry entered tough times, no longer carrying the same prestige. However, many of us who were definitely the "second and third team" stayed with it. This isn't a new problem – read Philippians 2:20.



About 15 years ago, some of us suggested that we abandon our ranks system. The idea was approved. We all realized that it had no place in our newfound environment of grace.

Thankfully, our system today is much better. Those holding leadership positions now see themselves as servants and friends of those they lead. Also, our appraisal system is much better at helping identify those who have a genuine call from God to serve in ministry. We're far from perfect, but you can have confidence that you will be trained and evaluated prayerfully and respectfully by those who have learned, sometimes the hard way, what the ministry of Jesus is really all about.

### Discussion Starter Questions

First, read the following scripture, then discuss the questions that follow.

**Acts 12: 25** *Barnabas and Saul, once they had delivered the relief offering to the church in Jerusalem, went back to Antioch. This time they took John with them.*

**Acts 13:13-14** *From Paphos, Paul and company put out to sea, sailing on to Perga in Pamphylia. That's where John (Mark) called it quits and went back to Jerusalem.*

**Acts 15:36-41** *After a few days of this, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit all our friends in each of the towns where we preached the Word of God. Let's see how they're doing." Barnabas wanted to take John along, the John nicknamed Mark. But Paul wouldn't have him; he wasn't about to take along a quitter who, as soon as the going got tough, had jumped ship on them in Pamphylia. Tempers flared, and they ended up going their separate ways: Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus; Paul chose Silas and, offered up by their friends to the grace of the Master, went to Syria and Cilicia to build up muscle and sinew in those congregations.*

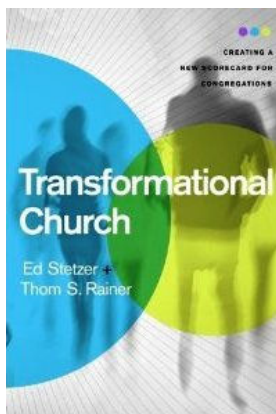
**2 Timothy 4:9-13** *Get here as fast as you can. Demas, chasing fads, went off to Thessalonica and left me here. Crescens is in Galatia province, Titus in Dalmatia. Luke is the only one here with me. Bring Mark with you; he'll be my right-hand man since I'm sending Tychicus to Ephesus.*

1. What can we learn from these passages?
2. Who was right about Mark—Paul, Barnabas, or both? (Note how God's call on a person's life involves a network of relationships.)
3. In your experience, are there any "gaps" where legitimate needs/ questions have not been addressed? What could be added to the process that might be helpful to you and other interns?

## PLACE AND SPACE

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by Greg Williams



Recommended reading:  
*Transformational Church*  
by Ed Stetzer & Thom Rainer,  
pages 173-198.

In the host congregation, the student-pastor experiences “church community” through relationships with the congregation’s pastors, ministry leaders and members—all part of an extended church family.



Church community is strong when the members are “plugged in”—given a sense of belonging and ownership. Community is strong when the members understand that serving is normal behavior.

Church community is strong when the congregation’s leaders are actively involved—connecting with the members, and encouraging the members to serve actively in ministry.

When a Pastoral-Intern finds his or her place within church community, they experience their own sense of deep belonging, which leads to their own active and meaningful participation in the life of the church.

When I was a pastoral intern and then an assistant pastor (1986 to 1990), I served with two different pastors. I was impressed with how both invited me into their lives, both professionally and socially. They welcomed me into their homes, we exercised together and we shared occasional dinners out with our spouses. We shared life as both co-workers and as friends. An intern receives a rare treasure when given opportunity to serve alongside a pastor who opens a “personal place” for them.

### Space

Though helpful, the experience of *place* is too general without the accompanying role of *space*, which is provided through open and authentic relationships between the intern and their Pastor-Trainer and the intern and their Life-Mentor.

In the relational space between the intern and their Pastor-Trainer, the intern is helped to experiment with ministry; and then to reflect, converse and deliberate on those experiences.

### How might someone prepare for a lifetime of pastoral service to the church?

This big question is faced by pastoral interns. Grace Communion International (GCI) helps people find the answer through the *Pastoral Internship Program*.

Pastoral ministry is first a calling from God and then a craft that is learned. In the Pastoral Internship Program, learning occurs through three layers of relationship:

1. The intern’s relationship with their *Pastor-Trainer*, who is practiced in the art of ministry.
2. The intern’s relationships with the ministers and members within their *host congregation*.
3. The intern’s relationship with their *Life-Mentor*.

### Place

During my years as a church pastor, I served as the Pastor-Trainer to five different young men. I could not have done so without the enthusiastic support of the host congregation, The Carpenter’s House in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

This small but forward-looking and gracious church became known as a “boot camp” for pastors-in-training. At first, they found the idea a bit humorous. However, by the time we were interning our third pastor-in-training, a commitment to preparing young leaders for vocational ministry had become a core value for that church.

Interns in the GCI Pastoral Internship Program find *place* within the host congregation. The intern is included in the ongoing ministry of that church and there finds a place to participate, to experiment and thus to learn.

In the relational space between the intern and their Life-Mentor, the intern is able to go deeper in their reflection—discerning more clearly God’s call on their life and considering how ministry weaves together with their family and other life issues.



The Life-Mentor plays a non-supervisory role. By offering a listening ear and words of encouragement, they provide a safe space for deep, reflective learning.

Within the relational space provided by both the Pastor-Trainer and the Life-Mentor, the intern finds valuable opportunity to look back and forward. Here there find truth-telling, meaningful strategizing and enhanced, qualitative growth.

### Discussion Starter Questions

This essay has described two critical aspects of a productive interning environment: *place* and *space*. The following questions are for the intern’s personal reflection followed by interactive discussion between the intern and their Life-Mentor.

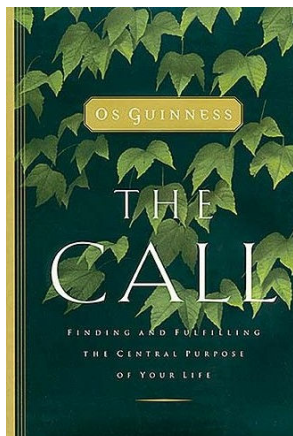
1. How well are you connecting and joining into the life of your host congregation? In what ways are its leaders and members allowing you place and space in their lives?
2. How open and honest are you and the pastor with one another? How about the relationship with the Life-Mentor? How can you enhance your ability to communicate honestly with love and respect in both relationships?
3. Your Pastor-Trainer is serving as a “Paul” in your life and the Life-Mentor is a type of “Barnabas.” Who is your Timothy, or Mary or Martha? In what ways are you connecting and investing in him or her?
4. The reading in the book, *Transformational Church* will expose you to the concept of “Community.” Stetzer and Rainer speak of community in terms of small groups. How are small groups working to deepen community in your host congregation? In what ways are small groups contributing to your personal development?



# THE CALL TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by Ted Johnston



Recommended reading:

*The Call* by Os Guinness,  
Pages 1-55.

God’s calling to landscape architecture came to me through the advice and counsel of other believers who knew me well. That’s how God often speaks. But in the case of his call to pastoral ministry, God spoke to me more directly. It was not that I heard his voice audibly, nonetheless, I heard him clearly. There was a deep, compelling sense that this is what I *must do*.



## Hearing God’s call

As Christians, we want to follow God’s direction for our lives. Also, we believe that God has a particular calling for each of us. That calling is the central purpose for our lives and involves how the Holy Spirit is leading us share with Jesus in his ongoing ministry on earth. That sharing potentially involves all sorts of life vocations. The question is not which vocation is “better,” but, “to which vocation has God called me?”

In this discussion starter, I will share my story and related insights from Os Guinness’ helpful book, *The Call*. These are given to help you think about God’s call on your life—potentially to pastoral ministry within GCI. My prayer is that this tool will help you hear God’s word to you clearly and then respond, not out of a sense of mere obligation or duty, but with “the obedience that comes from faith” (Romans 1:5, NIV).

## My story

Following graduation from high school in Indiana, I attended Ambassador College in Southern California. There I started working part-time as a landscape draftsman. My boss noted my ability in that area and suggested I pursue a degree in landscape architecture.

I took his suggestion and transferred to Cal Poly, earned a degree and then entered that profession where I worked for 15 years. I found that vocation very satisfying, and I believe God called me into that profession for a time. However, as often happens, God had another call on my life, for which I was being prepared—full-time pastoral ministry.

For a time, I tried not to let that inner voice dissuade me from the career I had been pursuing for 15 years. It’s not that I had anything against pastoral ministry (I was participating in pastoral ministry as a volunteer); it was just that vocational pastoral ministry was not on my “radar screen” at the time. However, the inner voice never quieted. In fact, it grew louder, until I could no longer ignore it.

Leaving a successful vocation mid-career made no sense “on paper.” It meant halving my salary. It meant pulling up roots and moving my young family (wife plus two children). In short, it meant huge upheaval. But God would not let me rest.

And so I began discussing the issue with trusted friends, some who were pastors. Most tried to talk me out of it—they were concerned that the sacrifice was too great. I respected their viewpoints, but God’s calling to me was far louder than their advice.

To help clarify his will, God sent circumstances, which presented the proverbial, “fork in the road.” The consulting company where I worked decided to move me to Arizona to start a new office. And so my family was looking at upheaval no matter which fork I chose.

Clearly, God was nudging me—not forcing my choice, but facilitating it. I’m convinced that either choice would have worked out for good. But I felt deep within that God’s will for me was pastoral ministry. So, that’s the fork I chose over 25 years ago. And that changed everything. Has it been easy? No. Has it been rewarding? Absolutely; in many ways.

### Your story

Will the way God calls you be just like the way he called me? Not likely— God works with each of us in deeply personal ways. He knows you better than you know yourself, and so he will speak to you accordingly.

I encourage you to listen carefully and prayerfully—and to do so in the company of other mature believers. I spent many hours on my knees asking God to speak to me clearly—to reveal his will so that I might understand it and obey it. God heard my prayers and answered. And he has always been faithful to help me obey his call, despite many obstacles and doubts. For that I give him thanks, and I ask that he grant you the same grace. I trust that he will.

#### Discussion Starter Questions—part 1

As we leave my story, here are two questions for you to discuss with your Life-Mentor:

1. Are you hearing a call from God to vocational pastoral ministry? In what way has God spoken? What has been your response?
2. If you’re not sure concerning this call, what are you lacking that would bring you to a point of certainty? What do you think you should do in seeking that certainty? Is it even necessary to be certain?

### Advice from Os Guinness

In *The Call*, Os asks and answers a question of great relevance here: “How do I find and fulfill the central purpose of my life?” Of course, there is no single answer. In fact, there are myriad ways. Os quotes Søren Kierkegaard who wrote that, “The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wants *me* to do; the thing is to find a truth which is true *for me*, to find the *idea for which I can live and die.*”

First and foremost, God calls us to himself—to a life that is *by him, to him and for him*. As you embrace and follow him, he will reveal to you what he has for you to do *with him*. This call typically concerns his direction about a particular life vocation.

God calls us to what he has created us to be, not a negation of who we are. As Os writes on page 25, “only when we respond to Christ and follow his call do we become our real selves and come to have personalities of our own.” Indeed, obeying God’s call leads us beyond mere success to real significance.

It should be emphasized that God’s call is not only to “church work.” We make a mistake in seeing some callings in life as secular and others as sacred. In Christ, all vocations have great redemptive value—they are all part of God’s good work in us, for us and through us.

How do we know what vocation is God’s will for us? There is no single or simple answer. However, Os offers the following helpful clues—discuss these with your Life-Mentor and evaluate your experiences to date.

#### Discussion Starter Questions—part 2

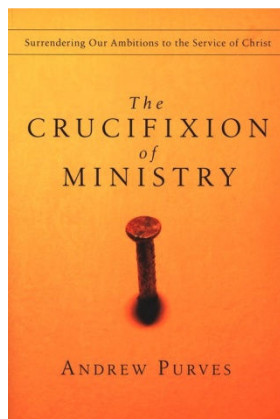
1. God normally calls us along the lines of our giftedness. But note that this is giftedness to serve others, not simply to please or prosper ourselves or our own family.
2. God’s call to us will not be merely individual—it always is in the context of a call that involves other followers of Jesus. This is why seeking the input of other mature believers is crucial.
3. God gives special callings at certain times, but we need not wait for that, because he always is calling us to follow and serve him. Thus, there is no excuse for sitting around waiting for a special, supernatural call. Sometimes God is waiting for us to take a step forward.
4. Because we live and minister in a fallen world, we should not expect a perfect alignment of our gifts, desires and calling. There will always be struggle and doubt, and Jesus walks there with us as part of our calling to his service.
5. In some ways, there will be *clarity* to our call; but in other ways, there will be *mystery*. If you are looking for absolute clarity, you will not likely find it. Sometimes the clarity will come only as you look backward to past events, now made clear through the perspective of time. Remember we walk by faith, not sight.

May you hear God clearly and obey him in faith, so that with Martin Luther, the great theologian and reformer, you can say, “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.”

## THE CALL TO PASTORAL MINISTRY, part two

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by Ted Johnston



Recommended reading:  
*The Crucifixion of Ministry*  
by Andrew Purves,  
Pages 11-72

In the early years of my ministry, I did not have the theology to adequately explain what I was experiencing. The theology I held at the time viewed Jesus as caring, yet as distant—the one who had ascended, leaving us here on earth to minister on his behalf. Yes, he would send resources (spiritual gifts, power, etc.) and, yes, we had access to him through prayer. Yet Jesus was far away in heaven; not here.



Despite my rather faulty theology, I continued to experience Jesus' personal presence. Then, thank God, my eyes were opened to a theology that not only explained my experience, but greatly enhanced it.

My growth in understanding began with a study of the doctrine of the Trinity. I came to appreciate the nature of God as the loving union of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit—one God; three persons. For me, one of the most important aspects of this understanding was to realize for the first time that the Holy Spirit is not merely the power of God but God in person. When we "have" the Holy Spirit, we have God himself.

As a result of this understanding, my perspective on ministry changed. I began to experience it less as what I was doing *for* God (with some power that he provides),

Last time I shared the story of my calling to pastoral ministry. We then gleaned insights from Os Guinness' book, *The Call*. One of the most important is that God calls us to himself—to a life that is *by him, to him and for him*. As we embrace and follow him, he reveals what he has for us to do *with him*.

An understanding that ministry is not merely what we do *for* God, but what we do *with* God, has unfolded in my life over time and has transformed my approach to ministry and all of life. Let me explain.

From the beginning, I viewed my call to ministry in a deeply personal way. As I mentioned last time, God grabbed hold of me and would not let go. My sense at the time was, "I must obey." Therefore, I did.

In the early years of my ministry, my thought was, "Lord, I must do this for you!" Do not get me wrong—I deeply enjoyed my service to Christ. However, I viewed it as *my* ministry. From my perspective at the time, Christ was in heaven—closely watching what I was doing and sending help when needed—but not personally present.

Then my understanding began to change. At first, the change came through experience. I remember times when I would be sitting with church members in counseling, or in a funeral home, or at a hospital bedside, and there I came face-to-face with some of life's most difficult, tragic situations—ones way beyond my experience and ability. Yet, as I sat with them, often in befuddled silence, I would have the unmistakable sense of God's personal presence. I would experience him being right there, ministering to this congregant. It was as though there were three people in the room—the member in need, me the pastor and Jesus himself.

and more and more as what I was doing moment-by-moment *with* God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There was great comfort and joy in this realization. However, there was more to know about God and about ministry. A few years after my study of the Trinity, I was introduced to what we in GCI refer to as “Incarnational Trinitarian Theology.” This theology is centered on Jesus Christ—emphasizing his humanity (the doctrine of the Incarnation) and his divinity (the doctrine of the Trinity). These doctrines tell us not only about Jesus himself, but about all humanity, because through Jesus’ divinity (which is eternal) and his incarnation (which continues) all humanity is united to God, in Christ, by the Spirit.

You are probably familiar with this theology, but if not, I urge you to read GCI’s booklet, *The God Revealed in Jesus Christ*—you will find it on the GCI.org website. Viewing God, humanity and all creation through the “lens” of this theology has radically transformed how I see all things, including Christian ministry.

Trinitarian theologian and seminary professor Andrew Purves writes from an incarnational, Trinitarian vantage point in his book, *The Crucifixion of Ministry*. I urge you to read the whole book, but if you do not have time now, please do read pages 11-72.

Purves urges us to recognize that the eternal Son of God (we know him as Jesus Christ), through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit, has united himself to all humanity. That means that he is, through the Holy Spirit, personally present with and ministering to all people—some who know it, and many who do not. Jesus is actively ministering on earth, through the Spirit, in ways that are fulfilling the Father’s mission to the world.

Here is where you and I come in. As followers of Jesus, we are called and gifted by the Holy Spirit to share with our Lord in the ministry that he is now doing in people’s lives. Purves urges us to crucify (put to death) any ideas that we might hold about this being “my ministry.” Doing so is essential if we are to trust fully in Jesus, and in doing so, to participate in Jesus’ ongoing ministry in the world.

As I have more deeply understood and sought to live out of this stunning truth, my ministry has been transformed. Now my early experience of Jesus’ personal presence in ministry were being explained and affirmed--being made much more “real.”

Now when I am with people, I am looking for what Jesus is already doing in their lives and I try to listen for my Savior’s call to join with him, through the Spirit, in what he is doing. What joy that is! And what challenge!

May you hear God’s call to that ministry! May you experience the personal presence and activity of our Triune God and then share actively in what Jesus is doing, in the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the Father’s mission.

### Discussion Starter Questions

Please read Purves, pages 11-72 and discuss your understanding of the following key points:

1. “The first and central question in thinking about ministry is *Who is Jesus Christ and what is he up to?*” (p. 13).
2. “If anything worthwhile is to happen, Jesus has to show up...Only the ministry of Jesus is redemptive” (p. 9).
3. “Ministry should be understood as a sharing in the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ, for wherever Christ is, there is the church and her ministry” (p. 11).
4. “The crucifixion of our ministry is staggering good news. Now ministry is...possible for us, probably for the first time, as gospel” (p. 26).
5. “Don’t preach to grow your congregation; preach to bear witness to what the Lord is doing, and let him grow your church.... Develop a Christological hermeneutic for all you do and say” (pp. 44, 45).
6. Why is the question, *What would Jesus Do?* inadequate and misleading? (p. 51).
7. “It is not our ministries that make Christ present; it is the present, living Christ who makes our ministries possible” (p. 53).

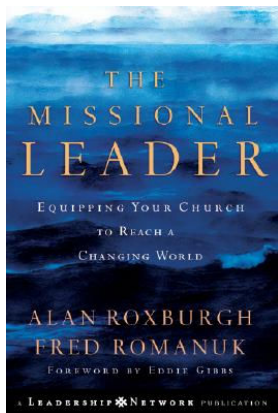


# MISSIONAL

*An idea that changes everything*

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by Charles Fleming



Recommended Reading:

*The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* by Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, pages 15-35.

“Missional” is a popular buzzword in many Christian circles. In a world where ideas come and go, is being “missional” another passing fad? Perhaps, but maybe not. Maybe being *missional* will be a “splinter in the mind”—like Neo was for Orpheus in the movie, *The Matrix*. Such “splinters” transform lives; and churches.



The book, *The Missional Leader*, has been a “splinter” in my mind in two ways. First it has given me a radically new paradigm or worldview—one that, though new, has felt strangely familiar (like Saito’s “half-remembered dream” in the movie *Inception*). Secondly, it has given me a new skill-set useful for living “on mission.” In these two ways, *The Missional Leader* has built into my life what is sometimes called a “Hope Account.”

## A Hope Account

Roxburgh and Romanuk argue convincingly that we are living in a time of “discontinuous change” that brings entire cultures to tipping points, yielding something entirely new. They observe that these changes frequently leave church leaders with a sense of hopelessness, no longer able to believe “that God could or would do anything new among their people or under their leadership.”

According to the authors, the solution to this hopelessness is to cultivate a “new imagination” that is able to see the new ways that God is working in the world. With this new imagination at work, church leaders and whole congregations begin to make deposits in their Hope Account.

According to Roxburgh and Romanuk, hope is “the most important currency a congregation has to spend.” For them, hope is a combination of *belief* in a God who is present and active and *expectation* that this God will actually do something for, with and through them.

In order to build up this Hope Account in a congregation, the authors suggest using interactive Bible Studies and sermons focused on God’s involvement in the ordinary lives of ordinary people—giving people opportunity to “share their own stories...so as to connect their stories with the Biblical narrative.” With this approach, a biblical and theological narrative begins to shape the congregation’s understanding of how God is at work in the world and is drawing the members of the congregation to join with God in his mission.

As I read *The Missional Leader*, I realized that over the past 14 years I have been given my own Hope Account and thus, like Saito, I have received a new, empowered reality.

## Splinter in my mind

“You are excellent managers, but your churches probably will not long exist if you do not develop apostolic eyes.” That comment became lodged like a

splinter in my mind. My supervisor made this comment to a roomful of Regional Directors about 14 years ago. As I heard these words, I knew I was being challenged to “re-make” myself. Here is the context: In 2000 I had already been in ministry for more than 20 years. I had experienced one of the most radical transformations a denomination can make. GCI had moved from cult-like legalism to orthodox Christian doctrine and practice. All this meant that I was already in the process of being “re-made.”

His comment about us being “excellent managers” resonated with me. Recently, I had completed a Master’s degree in management. This was the fulfillment of a promise I had made to God back in 1986. In the 1980’s I served in Jamaica and was frustrated by the over-centralization of the denomination. I told God that I thought our worst problem was bad management (not bad theology!) and told him that if he ever wanted to assemble a team of competent middle managers I was willing to do whatever it takes to be equipped to serve on such a team.

Looking back, I see where God took me seriously because a few years later, I was moved into middle management and given a chance to go back to school. So, here I was in 2000, being told I needed “apostolic eyes.” When I asked what that meant, I was told I needed to be able to see mission opportunities and be the kind of leader who could motivate others to get involved. At the time this was not very satisfying. But the splinter was implanted and began to work.

So I went back to school to find out what “mission” is and how to recognize it. By the time I read *The Missional Leader* in 2010, I realized that it describes what God had done to and for me since I began responding to the implanted splinter. He used a rhythm of *doing and reflecting* – work and study – to create a context wherein I could connect my experience with Scriptural narratives to see how he is at work in my world. Not only has this given me new skills, it has fundamentally changed my worldview. By God’s grace, I have become a missional person. My identity now is *to be* a witness (Acts 1:8). For me, mission is not just something I do—but the heart of who I am.

### Half-remembered dreams

In this, I am not alone. GCI has been turned around by a series of “splinters” embedded in many receptive minds. Many have turned from an internal mindset focused on serving an organization to a mindset that is also

concerned for the plight of people outside the organization, including the poor in the regions we serve.

Of course, we had justified our internal focus with scriptures—ones like Matthew 26: 11 where Jesus proclaims, “The poor you will always have with you.” We took this to mean that we can (and therefore should) do nothing about the poor. But we came to realize that this conclusion was a misuse of this verse. We noted Mark’s addition: “You can help them [the poor] any time you want. But you will not always have me” (Mark 14:7). Aiding helpless people is what Jesus did while on earth and what he continues to do through his church.

Our transformation has led to an amazing outpouring of support for practical mission. The Holy Spirit is helping us become missional with Jesus, by turning our half-dreams and vague inner stirrings into something quite tangible.

As our Hope Accounts have grown, missional creativity, initiative and energy have begun to flow.

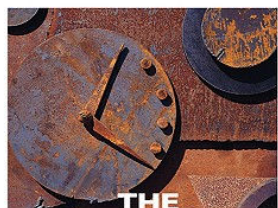
### Discussion starter questions:

1. What is the state of your personal Hope Account? Can you think of ways in which God may be offering to help you increase it?
2. Have you ever experienced an activity, church service or other gathering in your congregation where you felt members were recognizing God’s Vision for their missional engagement as a result of listening to each other, member-to-member? If so, what was that like? If not, why do you think that is not happening? How could you help?
3. Has a person or experience ever implanted a “splinter” in your mind? What was that idea? What did you do about it? How do you distinguish between a kingdom-enriching splinter and a negative splinter? How long are you willing to wait and work for a “splinter” to be resolved (.e. to bear fruit)?
4. Do you agree that we are living in a time of “discontinuous change” where our culture may “tip over into something new”? What do you see as the biggest changes that are occurring? Are they all good? All bad? How do they challenge/help us? Pick one and discuss how you might overcome or use it in your context.

## FEED MY SHEEP

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by John Halford



### THE UNNECESSARY PASTOR

*Rediscovering the Call*

MARVA  
DAWN

EUGENE  
PETERSON

Recommended Reading:

*The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call* by Marva Dawn & Eugene Peterson, pages 241-249.

In 1994, when I was working in England, I was driving through the countryside on a beautiful summer day. The sky was blue with puffy white clouds and the scenery was picture perfect. Wild flowers lined the narrow roads through the picturesque fields and farms.

But something was missing. There were no animals. No sheep in the fields or cows gathering under the trees. No pigs grunting in the farm yards.

When I reached my destination – the home of a church member who was a farmer – I asked him what had happened.

“We had to kill them all,” he said sadly. “This whole region was infected with foot and mouth disease. We had to slaughter all our livestock.”

“You had to kill them all!”

“Sadly, yes. They all had to go.”

Though no worse than a bad case of flu in humans, once foot and mouth disease is found in a herd of animals, none of them can ever be used for anything to do with human consumption.

“They have no commercial value. We can’t afford to keep them alive. They have to go.”

The economic reality of modern agribusiness dictates that an animal must be thought of as an APU (Agricultural Production Unit), and if an APU has no commercial value, it has to go. So whole herds and flocks of healthy animals were destroyed. .

The farmer told me how much they hated to do this. “We are not businessmen at heart. We are shepherds and herdsmen. We don’t like to think of our creatures as just units of production. But that is what farming has become.”

The Biblical model for a pastor is that of a shepherd, watching over a flock of sheep. Nowhere does the Bible describe the job as a manager or business executive. Sadly, that is what the job has become for many pastors. For them, religion is a commercial enterprise where success means following the techniques and methodology of the business world.

Progress is measured by numbers of new people attending, magazines distributed and radio and TV coverage. The mega church, run like a commercial operation, has become the model for successful evangelism.

In such an organization, the individual can become lost in the overall system. Pastors tend to look at how to “use” people to advance the program and sell the product. Individuals become “Evangelical Production Units,” valued in terms of their “potential” and the pastor’s role is to “manage” the resources with maximum efficiency.



This was not what Jesus told us to do. His instruction was “Feed my sheep,” not “Get my ducks in a row.”

Jesus’ idea of a shepherd was that of a loving servant, knowing his sheep by name, looking out for their welfare, seeking the lost ones and paying special attention to those in trouble. We need to be careful not to exchange the humble role of a shepherd for the perhaps more glamorous and superficially more rewarding role of a dynamic manager.

What is our attitude toward those we have been called to serve? Have we organized our churches and lives around “using the members to get things done?” Are our people valued for what they can do, rather than for who they are?

Before Jesus was crucified, he prayed for his disciples: “While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. *None has been lost* except the one doomed to destruction.” Will we be able to say the same? Will Jesus be pleased to hear us say, “Of the ones you gave me, I guess I lost most of them? But it’s no great loss. They were a pretty useless bunch who just were not with the program. But look, I have recruited some replacements, built a mega church with several ministry teams and many missions...”

As you begin your career as a pastor, it’s a good time to think carefully about these things. It is all too easy to lose sight of what counts, looking instead at those God has entrusted to your care as mere resources to be used in carrying out predetermined programs and ideas. Imagine how Jesus’ conversation with Peter in John 21 would have gone had this been the case:

*After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”*

*“Yes, Master, you know I love you.”*

*Jesus said, “Then get these people organized, so they can be used.”*

*He then asked a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”*

*“Yes, Master, you know I love you.”*

*Jesus said, “Then make sure they are all using their gifts to best advantage.”*

*Then he said it a third time: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”*

*Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, “Do you love me?” so he answered, “Master, you know everything there is to know. You’ve got to know that I love you.”*

*Jesus said, “Well, the way to prove that is to make this church grow.”*

But that is not how the conversation went, was it? Jesus’ command, restoring Peter to ministry, was simply, yet profoundly, “Feed my sheep!”

How was Peter to do that? How are we to do that today? Well, a key understanding that we derive from Incarnational Trinitarian Theology is that we are called to participate in what Jesus is doing. And so we must ask, how is Jesus now feeding his sheep and how may we participate? Truly, this is our calling, and food for much thought, discussion and prayer.

#### Discussion starter questions:

1. The recommended reading is a treasure trove of information. Why have the authors titled the book, *The Unnecessary Pastor*?
2. Read Jeremiah 23:1-4. To what extent do these verses, directed at the priesthood of ancient Israel, apply to us today?
3. Read 1 Peter 5:2-3. In what way could a pastor find his or herself, “lording it over those entrusted to you?”



# DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by Ted Johnston

## Introduction

Throughout my 25+ years in vocational ministry (as church pastor, district pastor, youth ministry director, and church health trainer and consultant) a common denominator has been dealing with conflict. I must confess that doing so has not been one of my favorite tasks. However, it's been one of the most productive.

I've learned that conflict is a normal and inevitable fact of church life. I've learned that rather than indicating that something is terribly wrong, conflict may actually be a sign of church health—showing that members actually care and thus are willing to risk emotional turmoil for the church they love. Conflict can also indicate positive movement (no movement=no conflict).

However, I've also learned that conflict can be an indicator of a lack of church health, typically resulting from spiritual immaturity, including pride and self-centeredness.

I've seen conflict dealt with productively—in ways that facilitate needed change by increasing awareness, raising excitement and adding vitality. Unfortunately, I've also seen conflict dealt with poorly, sometimes with long-lasting, disastrous results.

Be sure of this: conflict is coming to a church near you! When it does, the pastor (perhaps you) and other leaders will need to “step to the plate” to help their church deal with the conflict. Thus, knowing how to do so productively is vital. I pray that this discussion starter will help facilitate a lively dialog on this important topic.

To prepare for that dialog, please read the rest of this document and then three related online documents (click on the not links):

- ***Managing Church Conflict Creatively***  
[http://ag.org/top/church\\_workers/intper\\_gen\\_conflictmanag.cfm](http://ag.org/top/church_workers/intper_gen_conflictmanag.cfm)
- ***GCI Church Administration Manual, Chapter 8: Grievance, Discipline and Appeals Processes***  
<https://online.gci.org/live/StaticContent/Manuals/Church%20Administration%20Manual.pdf>

## Cycles of church conflict

Experts note that church conflict tends to occur in cycles. The first typically starts following three to six month long “honeymoon” period. The second comes 18-24 months later, and the third about five years after that. This pattern of course, may vary in your locale. But it is helpful to know that conflict comes and goes, reminding us to not overreact when it does (overreaction is a typical “rookie” mistake that can do a great deal of harm).



I faced my own “rookie” conflict just a few weeks after beginning my first assignment as a senior pastor (in 1990—I had hair then!). My “honeymoon” period didn’t last as long as the “experts” said it should. After only a few weeks on the job, one of the leading male members showed up at my door and handed me an 18-page long, handwritten letter that listed all the reasons that he could see that I would not make a good pastor. I gotta tell you, that hurt my ego! But, thank God, I did not overreact; I did not get mad; I did not get defensive.

Instead, I listened (a vital conflict resolution “tactic”). In fact, I listened deeply (thank you Jesus!). What I learned then (and even more deeply in several long discussions later—some with his wife), was that there were deep-seated hurts in his soul. Though certainly I was not perfect as a pastor, most of his lashing-out at me had little to do with my performance. And so it often goes with conflict. Take time to listen and to pray, and through prayerful listening learn what is really going on. The real source of conflict sometimes is hidden away.

## Sources of conflict

When you encounter conflict, you'll want to identify the contributing factors. Here are several possibilities:

- **Poor communication** concerning the roles of church leaders (including the pastor), policies and procedures, leading to confusion about overlapping responsibilities and goals.
- **Abuse of power and absence of leadership.** These often are at the root of church conflict
- **Personality clashes.**
- **Attitudes.** Differences of feelings or perspectives cause conflict. The more attitudes are shared, the less conflict will exist.
- **Substantive conflict.** Misunderstanding or disagreement over facts, goals, or strategy causes conflict.
- **Emotional conflict.** This occurs when a clash of personal values is at the root.

## Environmental factors

Churches that are strong in the following environmental qualities are well equipped to deal productively with conflict when it arises:

- An atmosphere of love, trust, inclusiveness and mutual respect
- Shared leadership with collaborative decision-making/problem-solving processes
- Regular evaluation and feedback
- Clarity of vision and mission
- Mutual accountability among members and leaders
- Understanding of and openness to change
- Ability to deal with life's ambiguities and paradoxes
- Emphasis on spiritual formation

## Unproductive strategies

Here are unproductive approaches to conflict resolution:

- **Avoiding:** refusing to discuss the conflict or to listen to the other's argument.
- **Mind-reading:** attributing ill-motives to the other by assuming you know their intent.
- **Silencing:** Crying or yelling to silence the other.
- **Gunny-sacking:** Unloading stored-up grievances; brining up past complaints to avoid discussing the current issue.
- **Manipulating:** Getting the other person into a receptive frame of mind, then presenting your demands to the now-weakened opponent.
- **Rejecting:** Withholding love and affection from the other in conflict.
- **Blaming:** singling out one person on whom all the responsibility for the problem lies.

- **Triangulating:** Unhelpfully looping third parties into the conflict who are not directly part of it (including you). This is a form of blame-shifting.
- **Demoralizing:** making them feel less than worthy to get your own way; using emotional force to make the other compliant.
- **Fighting below the belt:** Inflicting emotional damage by bringing up other's inabilities and failures.

## Productive strategies

Here are several approaches to conflict resolution that tend to lead to success (though there are no guarantees).

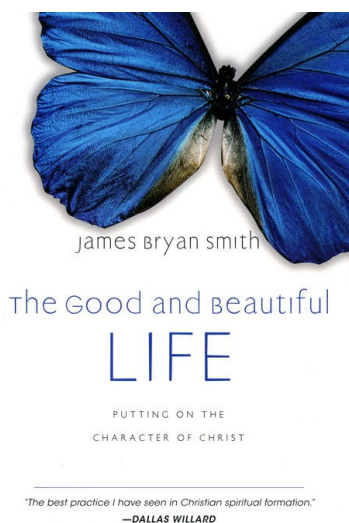
- If needed, announce that a cooling-off period is necessary before discussing the issue.
- Take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings using "I-Language."
- Listen deeply: be open to the other person's opinions and arguments (listen lovingly to what you don't like).
- Try to see the situation as the other person sees it. Validate their feelings (validation does not necessitate agreement).
- Grant the other person permission to express their thoughts, concerns, complaints freely and openly.
- Avoid power tactics that suppress or inhibit the other person (like "You owe me").
- Focus on the here and now—not on issues that occurred in the past.
- Focus on the person(s) directly involved in the conflict (not their mother!).
- Express your own feelings with candid honesty (but remember that "a soft answer turns away wrath").
- Don't plan a strategy to try to win a war. Instead, aim for understanding and agreement with respect to the immediate source of conflict.
- Express positive feelings for the other and for the relationship.
- Offset harsh words by expressions of caring and commitment (remember the "soft answer").
- Be sensitive to the other person's insecurities and only bring up issues that the other person is able to handle—be satisfied with incremental progress.
- Last (but certainly not least) is praying—invoke the presence and power of the Lord Jesus, who through the power of the Holy Spirit is the Reconciler. If the other person is open to it, you might spend time in prayer with them and for them (and for yourself!).

As you discuss these unproductive and productive strategies I encourage you to share "real-life" instances when you've used them (or they've been used on you!). How did it feel? What were the results? What would you do differently now?

## FORKS IN THE ROAD & DEAD-ENDS

*GCI pastoral intern discussion starter*

by Mychelle Fleming



Recommended reading:

*The Good and Beautiful Life*

by James Bryan Smith,  
pages 205-220

Now I spend considerable time weighing the pros and cons of multiple routes that seemingly would take me in opposite directions. Life on this road is often fragile. Everything can change in a moment—bringing life to a screeching halt. I have discovered that life on this road, rather than linear and simple, is messy, deep and often complex. I have learned that to successfully navigate, it is vital to have God’s direction. I have learned that his directing voice is heard most clearly when I am still.

When I hear and follow God’s direction, I find that the forks in the road of life are no longer so agonizing. I find that frequent and sometimes unexpected stops on the journey teach me that God’s will is more about *who* I am rather than *where* I am.

“Driving to feel infinite,” was a phrase my circle of friends often repeated in our early years of college. It came from Stephen Chobsky’s coming-of-age novel, *The Perks of Being a Wall Flower*, which we read the summer before our freshman year. I now see the phrase as a rather cheesy cliché that conveyed a false sense of depth as we journeyed from the safety of childhood into the adult world away from home. We were clinging to a rather naïve hope that the road had “infinite” opportunities and possibilities. We celebrated that hope listening to the music of John Mayer, Janet Jackson and, I hate to admit it, the Goo-Goo Dolls.



With God’s guidance, I now experience forks in the road of life as opportunities to pause and observe what God is doing, and as invitations to participate with him. I have come to see that what sometimes appears to be a dead-end is actually a road under construction. God, working for my good and his glory, turns forks in the road and apparent dead-ends into

opportunities to get out of the car and join him in what he is doing to build his kingdom.

Last year, when the movie based on the book was released, I found myself reminiscing, though now understanding the silliness of thinking that life presents “infinite” choices. It was easy for me to feel that way growing up. My childhood was like a wide-open highway with well-lit, easy to read signs telling me where to turn and what to expect ahead. Now the road has many twists and turns, the occasional fork in the road and some dead-ends.

Not long after graduating from college, I experienced what appeared to be a dead-end on my journey. During college, I had attended a Presbyterian church where I worked as a nursery director. But once I left college, I felt called to find a new church where I could plug in. Finding that community proved to be a big challenge.

Churches in the area had groups built around life stages—college students, young families and singles. None of these seemed to fit my situation. At first, I was quite discouraged; wondering if there was a place for me in the body of Christ. As I began to share my feelings with friends, I discovered that many of them felt the same way. And so we decided to start a small group of our own, made up of our co-workers, former classmates and family.

Today our group is thriving, with a cross-section of ages, races and life-stages. We support each other and engage the community around us. What looked at first like a dead-end, was actually a road under construction!

A Biblical example of God turning an apparent dead-end into an opportunity, is the story of Mark in the book of

Acts. As a young man, Mark was invited to join Paul and Barnabas' mission trip to Pamphylia. Mark joined, but left early to return home. A sharp disagreement arose between Paul and Barnabas concerning how to work with Mark—Barnabas wanted to continue to partner with Mark, but Paul wanted none of that. As a result, the two apostles went their separate ways.



All this seemed to indicate a dead-end for Mark's journey as a missionary, and a fork in the road in Barnabas and Paul's relationship. However, scripture hints at the work that God did to redeem the situation. The relational split between Paul and Barnabas did not end their effectiveness in God's mission; both continued, though on separate roads, to spread the gospel. Mark's return home was not the end of his journey as a missionary.

Sometime later, Paul wrote from prison to Timothy, instructing him to bring Mark to him, noting that, "He is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark apparently learned and matured (probably with Barnabas' mentoring). As a result, Mark and Paul reconciled.

One of the books my small group read together was *The Good and Beautiful Life*. In chapter 12, James Bryan Smith discusses living the Kingdom life day-by-day through abiding in Christ:

To abide means to rest and rely on Jesus, who is not outside of us, judging us, but inside us, empowering us. The more we are aware of our identity in Christ, and of his presence and power that are with us, the more naturally we will do this.

Daily reminding myself of God's sovereignty and active involvement in the smallest details of my life gives me strength to face with faith and hope the twists, turns, forks-in-the-road and apparent dead-ends. My prayer for us is that we continue to abide in Jesus and, in doing so, experience the fulfillment of what he promised his followers:

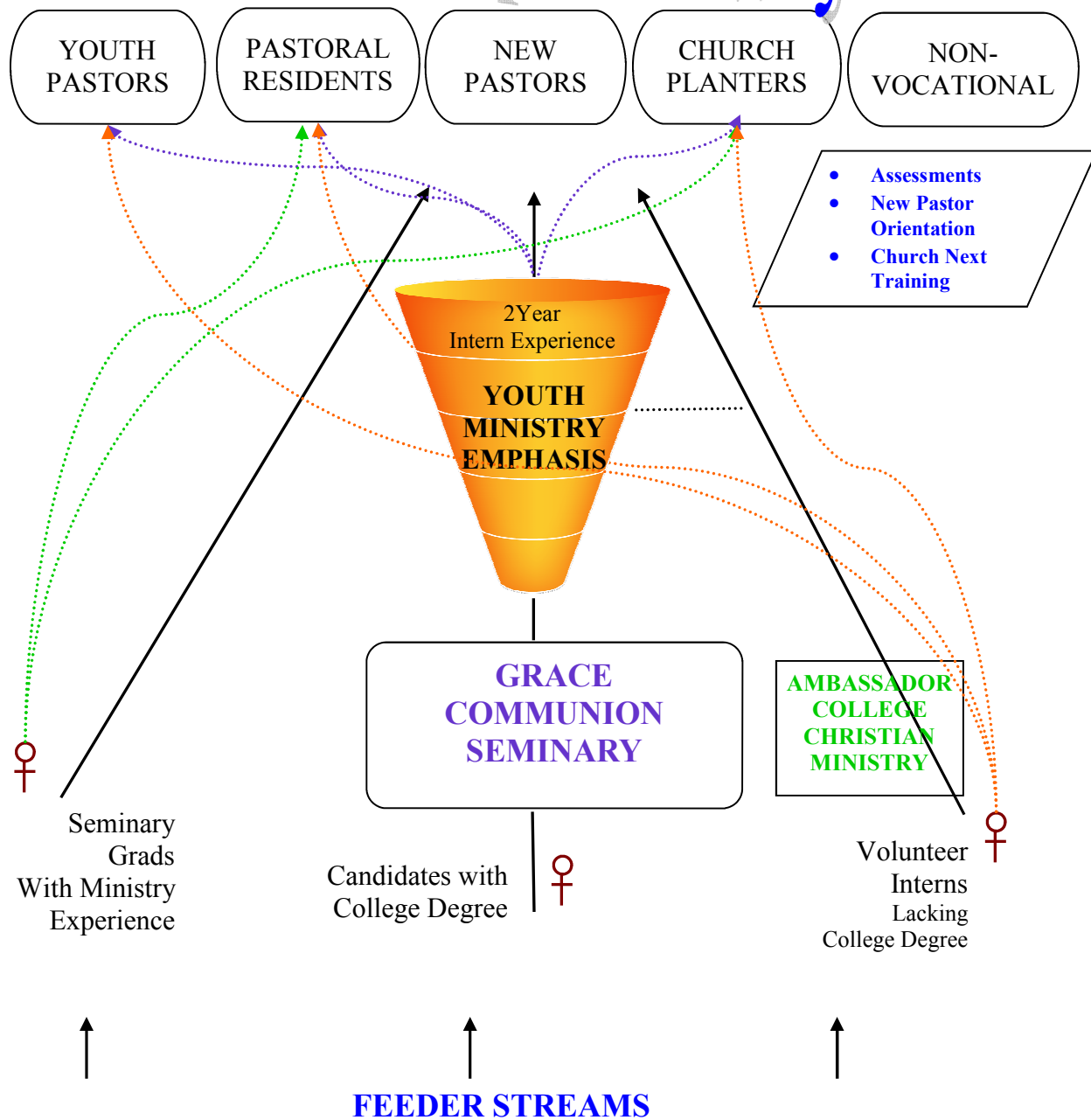
"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15:7-8).

#### Discussion starter questions:

1. Are there any areas of your life or ministry that are on "cruise control"?
2. What "dead ends" have you seen redeemed?

**APPENDIX C**  
**LEADERSHIP PATHWAY**

# Leadership Pathways



GCI Generations Ministries Connections  
 Referrals from known leaders  
 Prospects from internship website (video interviews from  
 Current Interns are a strong draw)  
 Contacts through conferences



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Arminianism:** A theological system based on the teaching of Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) and further developed by some of his followers, leading to its formulation in five key tenets:

1. election (and condemnation on the day of judgment) was conditioned by the rational faith or non-faith of man
2. the atonement, while qualitatively adequate for all men, is efficacious only for the man of faith
3. unaided by the Holy Spirit, no person is able to respond to God's will
4. grace is resistible
5. believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace

**British-Israelism:** A term applied to the belief that the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, having gone into captivity in Assyria, became "lost" to history upon their release. Moreover, it holds that these "lost" tribes migrated around the world, and that Caucasians populating the nations that formed the British Empire (including the U.S. and Canada) are descendants of these ten tribes.

**Discussion Starters:** A one to two page document that highlights a ministry concept and directs the readers toward a published book or article for further reading. In essence it is a pastoral essay that is designed to stand alone as a brief ministry lesson that concludes with a section that directs the Pastoral-Intern and Life-Mentor toward questions related to the interns present and future ministry situations. The primary purpose is to start the ministry conversation between the Pastoral-Intern and the Life-Mentor.

**Grace Communion International (GCI):** A Christian denomination active in about 100 nations with 290 congregations in the United States. GCI is an active member of the National Association of Evangelicals. We pursue our mission of living and sharing the gospel.

**Hyper-Calvinism:** A theological system based on the teachings of John Calvin (1509-1564), whose theology is typically referred to as "Calvinism" or "Calvinistic Orthodoxy." Various followers of Calvin further developed his theology, including Theodore Beza (1519-1605), arriving at what is often referred to as the "five points of Calvinism," remembered using the fairly recently devised mnemonic "TULIP." Some consider these five points a distortion of what Calvin himself taught, and thus are characterized as "hyper-Calvinism" (though the term is used in various ways). The central assertion of hyper-Calvinism is that God saves every person upon whom he has mercy, and that his efforts are not frustrated by the unrighteousness or inability of humans. Here are the five points:

1. "Total depravity," also called "total inability," asserts that as a consequence of the Fall, every person is enslaved to sin and thus unable to choose to follow God and be saved.
2. "Unconditional election" asserts that God has chosen from eternity those whom he will bring to himself. Those so chosen receive salvation through Christ. Those not chosen receive the just wrath that is warranted for their sins against God.
3. "Limited atonement," also called "particular redemption" or "definite atonement", asserts that Jesus's substitutionary atonement was definite and certain in its purpose and in what it accomplished. This implies that only the sins of the elect were atoned for by Jesus's

death. Calvinists do not believe, however, that the atonement is limited in its value or power, but rather that the atonement is limited in the sense that it is intended for some and not all.

4. "Irresistible grace," also called "efficacious grace", asserts that the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom God has determined to save (that is, the elect) and overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the gospel, bringing them to a saving faith.
5. "Perseverance of the saints" (or perseverance of God with those God has elected unto salvation. This asserts that since God is sovereign and his will cannot be frustrated by humans or anything else, those whom God has called into communion with himself will continue in faith until the end. Those who apparently fall away either never had true faith to begin with, or, if they are saved but not presently walking in the Spirit, they will be divinely chastened and will repent.

**Life Mentor:** The Life-Mentor is an experienced minister who has been selected by the Pastoral-Intern and is approved by the Pastor Trainer. The Life Mentor is first and foremost an encourager and confidante to the Pastoral-Intern. The Life-Mentor reads the "Discussion Starters" and then engages with the Pastoral Intern in the bi-weekly conversations to consider and wrestle with the broad aspects of Christian ministry that are raised in the essays.

**Millennial Kingdom:** A term applied to the promised 1,000-year-long-reign of Jesus Christ over the nations. Some, called "post-Millennialists," see this Kingdom as having been set up already in the church, and continuing during the "church age", which will end at Jesus' visible return from heaven. Others, called "pre-Millennialists," see the Kingdom as beginning with Jesus' future return in glory. For some, the length of this Kingdom rule of Jesus is literally 1,000 years. For others, 1,000 years is symbolic of a long, but unspecified length of time. A third category, called "a-Millennialists," see the Kingdom as a spiritual concept that now exists and will continue forever.

**New Covenant:** A term applied to the form in which God's enduring covenant with humanity was realized in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the sending of the Holy Spirit, which inaugurated the New Testament church, which is the New Covenant people of God.

**Old Covenant:** A term applied to the form in which God's enduring covenant with humanity was codified for the nation of Israel (the Old Covenant people of God) through the Law of Moses. The Old Covenant regime, with its sacrifices and offerings looked forward to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which ushered in the New Covenant, thus bringing the Old Covenant to a close.

**Pastoral Intern:** A Pastoral-Intern is a person who is sensing a deeper call to Christian ministry and desires to grow in experience and education under the guidance and care of GCI. Paid positions are limited, but volunteer internships are readily available for qualified male and female candidates.

**Pastoral Internship Program:** GCI offers a two year training experience to qualified applicants who are interested in spending 20 hours per week serving in the ministry of a GCI church under



the supervision of an experienced pastor, and also pursue a master degree in pastoral studies. The intern has a Life-Mentor who tracks with him or her during the two year journey to help the intern discern what the experience means and where it is leading for the future.

**Pastor Trainer:** The supervising pastor with whom a Pastoral-Intern is placed for the two year program. The Pastor-Trainer works with the Pastoral-Intern at the beginning of the internship to design a development plan that will map out the areas of exposure and responsibility that will set the course for the two year experience. The Pastor-Trainer works closely with the Pastoral-Intern to transfer ministry skills, and conducts quarterly reviews to mark progress and make necessary adjustments to the development plan.

**Trinitarian-Incarnational Theology:** A theological system that developed primarily in the East with the teaching of Athanasius and the Cappadocian church fathers, emphasizing the twin core doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. It continued to be the primary thrust of the Eastern Orthodox Church and found resurgence in the West under the teaching of some of the Scottish Reformed theologians and others, including in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Karl Barth, Thomas Torrance and his brother James Torrance. Currently, there are theologians and church leaders in many denominations who embrace and teach in accordance with this theology. Its basic tenets are as follows:

1. The Triune God created all people to participate through the vicarious (representative-substitutionary) humanity of Jesus Christ in the love relationship enjoyed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. The Son became human, the man Jesus Christ, to reconcile all humanity to God through his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension.
3. The crucified, resurrected and glorified Jesus is the representative and the substitute for humanity at the right hand of God, and he draws all people to himself by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. In Christ, humanity is loved and accepted by the Father.
5. Jesus Christ paid for all our sins – past, present and future – and there is no longer any debt to pay.
6. The Father has in Christ forgiven all our sins, and he eagerly desires that we turn to him.
7. We can enjoy his love only when we believe that he loves us. We can enjoy his forgiveness only when we believe he has forgiven us.
8. When we respond to the Spirit by turning to God, believing the good news and picking up our cross and following Jesus, the Spirit leads us into the transformed life of God's kingdom.

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