

ANOTHER WAY: SUSTAINING THE HEALTH AND LONGEVITY
OF BLACK URBAN CHURCHES THROUGH A CO-VOCATIONAL
FRAMEWORK

A dissertation submitted to the
Theological School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

Advisor: Dr. Chris Boesel

Kevin Middleton
Drew University
Madison, New Jersey
May 2023

© Copyright 2023 Kevin Middleton

ABSTRACT

ANOTHER WAY: SUSTAINING THE HEALTH AND LONGEVITY OF BLACK URBAN CHURCHES THROUGH A CO-VOCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Kevin Middleton

Acts Church - Yonkers, NY

The Black church has played a vital role in the history of the United States as a center of social, political, and spiritual empowerment for African Americans. However, as Millennials and Gen Z are the rising generations for leadership in the church, there is a need to integrate culture, finances, and vocation into the life of the church. In response, this paper outlines a co-vocational framework for the Black urban church that supports the inclusion of all people and their gifts, so that the work of ministry can be seen throughout the marketplace and culture. This co-vocational framework produces a goodness (tov) culture, a new integration of emotional and spiritual health, and a shared leadership model to encourage congregants to feel they are essential to the work of Jesus in and out of the church.

The work is informed by my lived experiences as a Black millennial person, preacher, and teacher. A contextual understanding of the current landscape of the Black urban church is discussed, alongside an overview of the history of the Black preacher, to understand how we've arrived where we are today, and a review of a co-vocational ministry framework, each of its contributing parts and the culture it creates.

Overall, this paper suggests that a co-vocational ministry framework can help the Black urban church address the challenges it faces, including burnout, lack of leadership development, and ineffective mission mobilization. The co-vocational ministry

framework in practice presents a methodology to assess the missional culture of a Black urban church, understand and implement tov habits, engage and enact emotionally healthy spirituality, and present a model for a shared leadership style. This assessment and implementation process includes questionnaires, meetings, workshops, courses, sermon series, internal ministry changes, and empowerment for all congregants. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the ongoing conversation about the Black urban church's role and inspire further research and innovation in the area of co-vocational ministry frameworks.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dearest wife, Dominique, and my adoring sons, Honor and Atreus. I am nothing without you.

This work is also dedicated to the church that God put in my heart, Acts Church, and the friends and family that God has led to continue His story with us. I am so excited to embrace “Another Way” with each of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>List of Tables</u>	<u>viii</u>
<u>Acknowledgements</u>	<u>ix</u>
<u>Glossary</u>	<u>x</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Purpose Statement</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Kevin Middleton, Pastor, and Educator</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Unlearning and Learning to Find Another Way</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Another Way</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Chapter One: Contextual Overview and The Co-vocational Framework</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Contextual Understanding</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>What is the Co-vocational Ministry Framework?</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Chapter Two: Problem Statement</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>The Rise of the Single-Styled Charismatic Leader</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>The Characteristics of Anti-Covocational Culture</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>The Undoing</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>Chapter Three: I Will Show You a Better Way</u>	<u>47</u>
<u>From Gifted Leader to A Gifted Church</u>	<u>47</u>
<u>Tov Habits & Emotional Health</u>	<u>48</u>
<u>Shared Leadership</u>	<u>61</u>
<u>What is a Missional Church?</u>	<u>76</u>
<u>Chapter Four: Methodology: A Co-Vocational Ministry Framework in Practice</u>	<u>82</u>
<u>Assessing the Current Missional Culture of the Church</u>	<u>83</u>

<u>Tov Habits Assessment and Implementation</u>	<u>85</u>
<u>Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (EHS) Assessment and Implementation</u>	<u>88</u>
<u>Shared Leadership Assessment and Implementation</u>	<u>92</u>
<u>Chapter Five: Final Thoughts</u>	<u>96</u>
<u>Bibliography</u>	<u>98</u>

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Church Audit	84
Table 2. Questions and Conversation Starters	90
Table 3. Shared Leadership Categories	93

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks to both my faculty and professional mentors, Dr. Chris Boesel and Dr. Roger Ball. Your patience, guidance, correction, and encouragement were what carried me through this process. Thank you both for your time and thank you both for your brilliance.

I would also like to give special thanks to my wife, Dominique, and my entire family for your absolute support and rallying as this was no small undertaking. Your prayers, support, and love are what sustained me through it all, thank you.

I also cannot forget the Black men and women who inspired me to pursue this degree. Rev. Dr. Tamarah Henry, Rev. Dawrell Rich, Dr. Eric Mason, Dr. Charlie Dates, Dr. Phillip Pointer, and Dr. Dharius Daniels were all people who inspired me to seek education and add to the work and legacy of The Black church - Thank you.

Finally, I would like to thank Jesus. For seeing in me what I could not see in myself. Thank you for not giving up on me. Thank you for everything.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Black urban church	A body of Jesus-followers, who relate to the experience, lifestyle, or culture of African Americans living in economically depressed inner-city neighborhoods; likely characterized by BIPOC people.
Co-vocational ministry framework	A structure for ministry where leadership and congregants see, acknowledge, and support each individual's contribution to the church and the marketplace as sacred and holy.
Anti-co-vocational culture	A leadership model that creates a church culture where the power structures, decision-making, and missional ownership of the church are focused on one person.
Missional Culture	A community of believers that sees itself as being sent into the world to participate in God's mission of reconciling everything to himself; it emphasizes the importance of being outwardly focused, engaging with the needs and concerns of the surrounding community, and demonstrating the love and grace of Jesus no matter what you do or where you are.
Tov	A Hebrew word that translates to "good" or "goodness;" It is used in the Old Testament to describe God's character and His creation as inherently good; it has been popularized as a concept that also incorporates the idea of holistic flourishing.
Emotionally Healthy Spirituality	A concept introduced by Pete Scazzero that emphasizes the integration of emotional health and spiritual maturity
Five-Fold Ministries	Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds/pastors, and teachers (APEST), each representing a distinct gift within the church to build up the saints for ministry as seen in Ephesians 4:12.
Shared Leadership	A collaborative and decentralized approach to leadership that involves multiple individuals or teams sharing responsibility, decision-making, and accountability for the overall success of a group or organization.

INTRODUCTION

The Black urban church is at a pivotal point in its life, especially as Millennials and Generation Z are aging, and societal dynamics are shifting. Millennials and Generation Z are the present and future of church leadership and congregants. To sustain the life of the Black church, the church must provide an answer to their search for a spirituality that integrates with their professional life and speaks to their emotional needs. Dr. Brianna Parker, the founder of Black Millennial Cafe, does work and research on the changing ties between younger generations and the church, noting that we're expecting the church to give to us just as much as we have seen our parents and grandparents give to it.¹ Millennials acknowledge the wins of the Black church in history, they see and praise the incredible work that the Black church in America accomplished during the 20th century and prior, which focused mostly on the fight for human/civil rights for African Americans. The Black church has historically been the center of hope and light in the Black community. They are known as social, political, and spiritual centers of empowerment and life in many Black communities.

However, as Millennials and Gen Z are picking up the baton, they are showing that more work needs to be done past social, political, and spiritual empowerment. As societal dynamics are shifting, we're seeing a need to integrate culture, finances, and

¹ Brianna Parker, "State of the Black Church: Network Leader Panel," Barna Group, 2020, video, 4:43, <https://vimeo.com/410925131>.

vocation into the life of the church, as it's been in the world.² Black Youth Project writers note,

In a time where Black people and youth are reclaiming their authenticity and culture, the Black church needs to immediately reform its practices... While we may not be going to church in the traditional sense, we are gathering together in unique spaces, both in person and online. As Matthew 18:20 states, "Where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them," wherever that may be.³

The Black urban church must not only follow but be part of pioneering this lead before it misses its opportunity to grab the attention of the rising generations.

I am one of those very millennials who gripes about the changing tides of the church and culture. I also have hopes that the urban Black church will implement frameworks and pathways that ensure its sustainability. To create the change that is necessary to perpetuate the health and longevity of the Black church, this work will outline a co-vocational framework that supports the inclusion of all people and their gifts. This co-vocational framework will produce a goodness (tov) culture, a new integration of emotional and spiritual health, and a shared leadership model. With all of this in place, congregants will understand and feel that they are also vital to the work of Jesus in and out of the church, and thus set out on mission. In this dissertation, I will

- (1) document my lived experiences as a Black millennial person, preacher, and teacher as part of the local Black urban church, and detail how that experience has produced and informed this work;

² Ibid.

³ "Millennials Aren't Skipping Church, the Black Church is Skipping Us," The Black Youth Project, December 31, 2019, <http://blackyouthproject.com/millennials-arent-skipping-church-the-black-church-is-skipping-us/>.

- (2) provide a contextual understanding of the current landscape of the Black urban church and define a co-vocational ministry framework;
- (3) overview of the history of the Black preacher to understand how we've arrived where we are today;
- (4) review the characteristics of an anti-co-vocational ministry framework; and
- (5) walk through each remedy for, and the identities of, a co-vocational ministry framework and how to put it into practice.

Each section of this work will detail how to begin creating a Black urban church that encourages a co-vocational ministry framework. This framework will facilitate a culture that embraces tov habits, emotional health, and shared leadership to mobilize the mission effectively and enduringly.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

This work, which highlights co-vocation as not just a minister with two or more jobs, but a holistic ministry context that embraces people's vocation as important and valuable to Jesus, and His work, is deeply personal to me. I've gone through a journey from seeing ministry as solely the work behind a pulpit and even venerating that position to acknowledging the all-encompassing work of all members of a congregation as ministers in the marketplace. Throughout this section, I will walk you through this journey and detail why this work matters to me and Jesus.

KEVIN MIDDLETON, PASTOR, AND EDUCATOR

My ministry settings are interdimensional since I do not see my calling to the pastorate or classroom as separate. I once felt like there was a stark duality to my call, but I no longer believe so. Further, I believe that when we dualize our calls, we can fall into the danger of preferring one over the other (usually the ministry). This puts the people we serve into categories and puts us at risk of losing who we truly are and how we are meant to show up in the world for the sake of others.

I serve as a high school English and Literature teacher and adjunct professor for English Literature. Additionally, I serve in the forming of a new community of growing Jesus followers in a new church plant. I see myself shepherding, leading, and ministering in both contexts. As an educator, I'm not only instructing in reading and writing techniques and training their critical thinking skills, but I also function as a counselor, mentor, guide, and friend on their journey to self-actualization. As a pastor, I'm not only acting as a counselor, spiritual guide, and inspiration for a Christian journey but, I'm also showing them how to deal with crises, how to wrestle with unanswered questions, and

how to be their best selves in a harsh world. It is as if God has arranged for both settings to show up as one, constantly feeding each other.

This is not always how I saw my life or calling. For as long as I can remember, I have always felt a strong call in my life to preach and pastor. From the tender age of 4, I remember sitting in church pews, loud praise, tambourines, an organ, and my pastor wearing a big fancy robe. In my mind, this is what the church looked like. Church was an experience. Church was something to hear, something to see, something to touch. We pushed our way through life Monday through Saturday and carved out Sunday to gather in fellowship, to praise his name, and to hear what he had to say over our lives. We did this, Sunday after Sunday; rain, shine, snow, sleet, it didn't matter, we believed God had something for us in the gathering. The Sunday gathering was always centered around the pastor or preacher. Worship had its place, giving had its place, and the announcements even had a place, but the preaching moment, and therefore the preacher, was *the* focal point of the gathering. My experiences in church shaped my understanding of what ministry was and what the church did.

When the time came for me to choose a college and decide on a major, it was no sweat. I was confident that I would attend Nyack College, a Christian School, with programs such as pastoral ministry and biblical studies because I wanted to be a pastor. My pastor strongly discouraged me from going to school for Bible and pastoral ministry. I'll never forget the words she shared with me, "Bible doesn't pay the bills; Skills and marketplace degrees will." These words shifted the trajectory of my life forever. I went on to become an educator, and I began to see the hand of God in my journey, guiding me and showing me that ministry exists in both spaces. I started to see the school and the

college become holy and sacred spaces just by my being present there—bringing goodness, order, and beauty into the world.

However, this belief took unlearning. When I first went to college, I saw the degree only as a means to an end. You can't attend seminary without an undergraduate degree, so I just saw getting my degree as a conduit for getting into my true passion—ministry. Furthermore, as a full-time student that worked part-time jobs outside my devotion to my church, I also viewed work as a means to an end. I need money, they need service. When all is said and done, I'm going to be a pastor. I held the belief that any work outside of being a pastor or working for a church was beneath me and unfulfilling in my true passion.

This compartmentalization was a toxic failure to see all life and work as sacred. Pete Scazzero asserts this claim in his Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course, “When most people reflect on their relationship with God, what we see is compartmentalization.” That is, we separate our spiritual life from other parts of our life, like home, work, and recreation. Before God, however, every aspect of our lives is sacred.⁴ My initial understanding of ministry as only within the walls of the church, and subsequent broadening thought of vocation as the sum of all parts of a believer, has led to this work.

More specifically, within the Black urban Church, the idea of co-vocation hasn't received adequate attention. Co-vocational research has been limited and tailored to a specific audience outside of those who would be identified as people of color and those who live in urban contexts. The term co-vocational has stemmed from the expression “bi-

⁴ Pete Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course: Session 8: Go to the Next Step to Develop a Rule of Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Session-8-Go-the-Next-Step-to-Develop-a-Rule-of-Life.pdf>.

vocational.” Bi-vocational simply means that “a person has two jobs simultaneously.”⁵ Bi-vocational ministries are usually encouraged in areas where financial sustainability is challenging for both the church and the pastor.⁶ It is seen as the “have-to” of certain leaders within churches because churches often cannot afford to pay their pastors. This has been the case in my experience as I’ve watched my pastors throughout the years work on their jobs as a “have-to” rather than an “I get to;” work is seen more as a “duty” than it is a “calling.” The co-vocational ministry framework seeks to integrate the secular and sacred and sees all work as a calling, for both laity and clergy. As I move forward in my work as a planter and educator in a Black urban context, I am challenged with the unlearning and learning needed, both personally and with my team, to develop a co-vocational ministry framework.

UNLEARNING AND LEARNING TO FIND ANOTHER WAY

Freedom School

Something fascinating happened during my first year of college. I chose counseling as my program of study because it seemed to be the closest thing to the world of pastoral ministry. In the upcoming summer, a friend of mine invited me to collaborate with her in a program called the Freedom School. The Freedom School concept was

⁵ Thomas Costello, “Excited about Bivocational Ministry? First Consider Pros and Cons,” *REACHRIGHT*, August 2, 2022, <https://reachrightstudios.com/bivocational-ministry/>.

⁶ Mike Pittman, “Blessings and Benefits of Bivocational & Covocational Ministry,” *Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, May 6, 2020, <https://ncbaptist.org/article/blessings-and-benefits-of-bivocational-covocational-ministry/>.

based on the temporary schools in the South during the 1960s that prepared Black people who were poor, semi-literate, and disenfranchised from active citizenship.⁷

Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President Emerita, wanted to fashion modern freedom schools located in distressed neighborhoods, focusing on children who struggle with hunger, depression, anger issues, low self-esteem, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and were also semi-literate. At these Freedom Schools, a group of college students, called servant-leaders, are tasked to bring the incredible world of reading to these K-12 children during the summer months to close the reading gap. I agreed to join my friend in her endeavor, especially after she told me about the pay. This was the first seed I believe God was planting in me to bring me to the place I am now. I don't think there was a moment in my life up until that point when I felt like my life mattered more than when I served at Freedom Schools. We were making kids happy. We were helping to close social and educational gaps. We were bringing joy to the hood. We even led a peaceful protest, in light of Trayvon Martin's death, and were able to lament with the children. God led me there to spark a fire, to show me that I had a love for sharing literature with children and to incite justice alongside and for all people.

New York Theological Seminary

A few years later, I went on to graduate with a Bachelor's in English with a minor in History. By this point, teaching had become a clear gift, but also a passion of mine. I began to connect this gift primarily with my love for teaching the Bible. As was my thinking at the time: If teaching the Bible was primary, teaching English was secondary. I

⁷ Marian Wright Edelman, "The Enduring Mission of Freedom Schools," *Children's Defense Fund*, June 15, 2007, <https://www.childrensdefense.org/child-watch-columns/health/2007/the-enduring-mission-of-freedom-schools/>.

lived the reverse of the thoughts of great spiritual thinker and mystic, Dr. Rob Mulholland, who said, “We must be in God for the world, and not in the world for God.”⁸ For me, church and ministry were central, and everything else was peripheral.

I immediately went on to pursue a degree in English Ed. for the sake of my profession, as a master's degree is necessary to teach in public schools in New York State. Afterward, I finally reached the place I wanted to be and had the freedom and the opportunity to attend seminary—I chose New York Theological Seminary. Finally, I would get to study what I’ve always wanted: theology. However, God had slightly different plans for me. I always wanted a Master of Divinity, but after prayer, good counsel, and valuable conversations, I felt compelled to pursue a master's in religious education. I sensed a calling to help churches with their discipleship and curriculum building. Likewise, I felt this was weak and needed attention, particularly in my Pentecostal context. This decision happened to also be around the same time that I was discerning whether I should continue teaching full-time. I contemplated resigning, taking a pay cut, and working at the church where I was interning as a church planting resident. The church planting organization I worked with candidly told me that they do not work with bi-vocational church planters. At the time, this rule felt aligned with my heart’s desire. Finally, God was moving me toward full-time ministry and I would devote all my time and energy to the church.

What God did through this program was much more than give me skills, he broadened my horizon to even see religious education outside of ministry contexts. I felt

⁸ Robert Mulholland, *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 47-48.

the compartmentalization closing. In the course work I took at New York Theologically, God was showing me that there is no secular and sacred divide— he fills everything. My Master's in Religious Education showed me that God was the first teacher, prophets were teachers, and Jesus came as a Rabbi. It taught me how the early church fathers were devoted to education and saw it as a way to know God and the world he placed us in more deeply.⁹

I learned that Martin Luther stood for a holistic approach to spiritual development. He believed nothing was more important than good schools, where students were not only prepared biblically but also trained to be God's representatives in areas of industry and government.¹⁰ Martin Luther, Augustine of Hippo and so many other church fathers that I had long revered and respected for their theology believed in a comprehensive education. They believed God was in the teaching of history as much as he was in learning the NT. They believed God was in the teaching of classical literature as much as he was in devotion. This news was an absolute momentous change for me. God was trying to get my attention about how I viewed work and faith. Ironically, during this time, the church I was doing my church-planting residency with was also doing a sermon series on "Faith and Work." We were being taught how to see our workplaces as ministries and spaces of hospitality, to steward and manage God's love and goodness.

⁹ Harold William Burgess, *Models of Religious Education: Theory and Practice in Historical and Contemporary Perspective* (Nappanee: Evangel Pub. House, 2001), 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

ANOTHER WAY

I've since learned that my journey to finding God outside a traditional ministry context is not an isolated experience. However, it is relatively new to the Black urban experience and thought. As called, "The Marketplace Christianity Movement," by Darren Shearer, since the 1930's an increasing number of Christians have been interested in the ways God manifests his presence in the marketplace. At first, this was widely a white male movement, by nature of the workforce in the 1930s through the 1950s. These men would facilitate spiritual meetings of businesspeople and farmers to spread the news of Jesus on their jobs. In the 1990s, many older working professionals began to consider a search for meaning as they approached retirement age. They needed a way to feel fulfilled outside their day jobs, and some began non-profit work, which they felt was ministry. For those who were not yet of retirement age, but still felt a sense of lack without a full-time ministry context, business leaders began to hire "corporate chaplains to provide spiritual and emotional support for their employees." However, it was not until the late 2000s that this wave hit Pentecostals—particularly Black urban Pentecostals. This hit as a "cultural transformation" focus, one that taught that Christians ought not to be in the world without being change agents.¹¹ The cultural transformation idea emphasized using Christlikeness and Christian behavior to impact culture, business, government, and wherever God placed you in the world from Monday through Saturday.

This view, although growing, is not universal. Many people were discouraging me from seeing that being a full-time English teacher would also permit me to do ministry as

¹¹ Darren Shearer, "The Marketplace Christianity Movement: A Brief History (1930 – Present)," *Theology of Business Institute*, last modified July 13, 2018, <https://www.theologyofbusiness.com/the-marketplace-christianity-movement-a-brief-history-1930-present/>.

a church-planter as well—including the church planting organization I desperately wanted to be part of. Furthermore, church planters, pastors, and leaders, also discouraged me from taking this route. They exclaimed, “It’s either one or the other, you cannot do both.” One pastor went as far as to exclaim, “Do you love your wife and family? If so, your marriage won’t last if you don’t quit your job, and you’ll be divorced due to the weight and the pressure of being bi-vocational.” Even with the adversity and opposition, I still sensed that God was leading me to press into a kind of “third way.” Another way of thriving in more than one space. Another way of living in your God-given call and space, while succeeding at being a good spouse and parent, all while taking care of your own emotional/social needs. There had to be another way.

Moving from Problem to Purpose

I was now seeing in others the compartmentalization of and aversion towards bi-vocational ministry that I once held. I felt a tugging from God to shift from this idea and press in toward another. I suddenly found it difficult to embed myself in faith communities that rallied around one charismatic individual, usually the senior pastor, without giving way for other leaders to grow or emerge. This culture and leadership style lends itself to a leader whose visibility is felt, heard, and seen through everything within the church community, in a way only Jesus should be. This particular leadership model creates a culture of veneration and power over a culture of respect for all and collaboration.

It was in these same faith communities where this central leader lacked the integration and maturity of spiritual and emotional health. It felt that this rose from a lack of vision around Jesus as the center of the church, and a lack of distributed accountability

and authority as a result. Some archetypal members exhibited behaviors such as being hyper-spiritual during services and gatherings yet failing to love others. Some people were characterized as mean-spirited, bitter, and clinging to the past. The leaders seemed too busy to address their own spiritual health, ignoring grief, spiritual bypassing, and using prophecy, words of knowledge, and the “joy of the Lord” as an excuse to avoid counseling and therapy. Within this culture, I also witnessed and have been a part of churches that bred narcissism, excessive financial offerings, and a heavy loyalty culture. I knew that church should not be or feel this way.

As younger generations are searching for and demanding more responsibility and education in and outside of churches, it is becoming more important that full-time pastors are skilled and knowledgeable about not only spiritual matters but also the world around them. This lends itself to a co-vocational framework.

While embracing the world we live in and learning of its depth and breadth, we become more relational.¹² When we go where people are and see people as they are, we are more likely to accept and love people as they are. This pathway changes the language we use, and the way we speak about those in the world. Let’s say, for instance, I go to work every day and my co-worker, who I enjoy working alongside, is a happily married gay man. I will likely carefully choose the words I speak about homosexuality from across the pulpit—whether I disagree or not. This lends itself to our habits and culture.

As leaders become more ingrained in our world and accept that God is within that world, they should notice the balance required to be committed to ministry within the

¹² Mike Ayers, “10 Ways for Every Pastor to Be More Relational,” *Gospel-Centered Resources from Midwestern Seminary*, April 20, 2021, <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/10-ways-for-every-pastor-to-be-more-relational/>.

four walls of a church and ministry in every other sphere. Noticing this requires a heightened self-awareness and proximity to others who are dependent on you. Once realized, this demands dependence on Jesus to help sustain this lifestyle properly and effectively. Indeed, we have seen a rise in burnout among pastors who lack the emotional awareness to set boundaries, stop their work, and embrace play and fun as also part of their ministry. This lends itself to emotionally healthy spirituality.

Lastly, as leaders embrace their limits and boundaries, it is made clear that the way forward and the sustainable way to make disciples who make disciples is to share leadership among all congregants. A church that embraces this shared leadership model will limit the lead pastor as the bottleneck and end-all-be-all and will instead surround this leader with other gifts such as more pastors, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers, seen throughout seemingly “everyday people.” Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, Dean of Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary, agrees by defining leadership as “creating an atmosphere and space where persons can bring their best selves and their gifts toward a shared vision. This is a space that should be defined by a commitment to respect the sacred dignity and worth of every individual and one that recognizes that no one’s person voice is more significant to the other.”¹³ A church that encourages each individual to see ministry in whatever industry or sector they work in will feel all the more impactful as the senior leader is trusting you to also own and perform the work of Christ.

¹³ “Putting the United Back into the United States: Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas of ‘Union Theological Seminary’ On The 5 Things That Each Of Us Can To Help Unite Our Polarized Society,” *Authority Magazine*, March 19, 2021, <https://medium.com/authority-magazine/putting-the-united-back-into-the-united-states-rev-dr-kelly-brown-douglas-of-union-theological-s-3339b31a6d89>.

What I learned and now know deeply is that the other way I was searching for is one where “we are called to care: for ourselves, for one another, and the whole earth. We are called upon to take seriously our relationship with God and all of God's creatures, both within and beyond the church. We are called to end our isolation from those who we’ve othered outside the church by living each day of our lives rooted in love, rooted in the Christ.”¹⁴ This other way is where all believers believe in the possibility and are equipped to serve all in the way Christ did, a Good Samaritan church. Another way is where we all see, acknowledge, and stop for the outsider, and make them the insider no matter where we are. We clean their wounds, mend their hearts, feed their stomachs, strengthen their souls, clothe their backs, and welcome them, whether they ever decide to step into a church or not because we’ll be where they are.¹⁵

In 2017, Yale Divinity School produced a “God at Work Everywhere” article detailing the ways their students are preparing themselves to be in ministry and the world. Lucinda Huffaker, Director of Supervised Ministries, introduces this idea by stating, “The idea is not ‘Christ versus culture’ – it’s very much Christ in the world, Christ in the marketplace. It’s God at work everywhere. Everyone has to face imagining the church of the future.” For this to be possible, we must be put in a position where we are all leaders, where we are all servants, where we are all kind, and where we are all healthy.¹⁶

¹⁴ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 24.

¹⁵ John 4:5-30.

¹⁶ “God at Work Everywhere,” *Reflections-New Voyages: Church Today and Tomorrow*, Yale University, last modified May 2017, <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/new-voyages-church-today-and-tomorrow/god-work-everywhere>.

The Vision

I believe that the church was intended to equip men, women, and children to thrive in their spirituality, walk in their calling, and live on mission in their God-given sphere. The gathering is meant to be a kind of hub, a base to which many return from their week to be re-fueled for the sake of the mission. What if we had lay members and leaders alike who sought to integrate their spiritual lives and their emotional health for the sake of themselves and their reflection of Christ in the world? What if they weren't satisfied with being "spiritual giants," but also highly devoted to all those around them to raise their practical skills, and emotional/mental health to help them through challenging times? What if our churches nurtured virtues like empathy and grace and put people first? A Black urban church that answered these questions would encourage a co-vocational ministry framework, facilitating a culture that embraces tov habits, emotional health, and shared leadership to mobilize its mission effectively and enduringly.

Next, I will provide an overview of the context and current landscape of the Black urban church and define a co-vocational ministry framework before moving into the problem at hand and my proposed remedy.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW AND THE CO-VOCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Chuck DeGroat asserts, “The evidence of ecclesial health is that everyone is built up, growing in maturity, moving from the emotional dysregulation of infancy to emotional and spiritual centeredness and stability in adulthood.”¹⁷ The idea is that “everyone is built up” is to mean that everyone, clergy and laity, professional ministers, and everyday saints, must flourish spiritually, emotionally, and professionally for any church to be wholly healthy. However, in Black urban churches, where there is a lack of systems and accountability, a power dynamic elevates pastoral leadership as the single apex of spiritual maturity. Jeff Wright, CEO of UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.) pundits,

In the African American community, the pastor is still the central leader. We have more leaders who are leading from positions of spiritual authority...than any other type of leader. Those leaders need to be equipped to know what is going on in the communities they serve. And so, it is really important that we understand what is going on in our churches and our communities and use that information to make a difference in what we teach, what we preach, and how we lead...¹⁸

When I use the term Black urban church, I am speaking of a body of Jesus-followers, who “[relate] to the experience, lifestyle, or culture of African Americans living in economically depressed inner-city neighborhoods.”¹⁹ The demographic of such

¹⁷ Chuck DeGroat, *When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community from Emotional and Spiritual Abuse* (Downers Grove: IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 146.

¹⁸ Jeff Wright, “State of the Black Church: Network Leader Panel,” Barna Group, 2020, video, 3:22, <https://vimeo.com/410925131>.

¹⁹ “Urban Definition & Meaning,” Dictionary.com, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/urban>.

a community will likely be BIPOC people. To be clear, the leadership issue mentioned above is found within more than one type of racially comprised church and is not found throughout all churches that are characterized as Black and urban. However, this research will speak specifically toward the Black urban Church with a history of single-styled leadership and a model that lacks integration of the congregation into the power structures, decision-making, and missional ownership of the church.

Within the Black urban church, there has been much pain, disillusionment, and tension as a result of this unhealthy single-styled leadership. Some churches are stalled, crippled, and paralyzed by leaders who are marked by charisma and narcissism. This results in several outcomes: (1) church members that do not feel that there is a genuine space for them to “show up,” meaning bringing their whole selves: gifts, talents, experience, and even orientation because these things will be overshadowed by the senior pastor; (2) churches that have emotionally unhealthy leaders who produce cycles of abuse, manipulation, and power; and (3) the mission of the church is stifled by a vision that only the pastor can heal, restore, empower, and share the message of Jesus.

Notwithstanding my firsthand experiences, pastors and the Black urban church are losing their credibility with younger generations—generations we must sustain to continue and thrive. The Barna Group released a study in 2022 finding that, “Fewer than half of American adults, including non-Christians, see pastors as ‘very reliable’ when it comes to handling spiritual matters.” As noted within this research on pastoral credibility, Dr. Glenn Packiam, in his book *The Resilient Pastor*, quotes this study and adds, “Churches don’t have much of a role in a community unless they can provide tangible

help or practical care. And people aren't likely to turn to a church for help when facing difficulties or crises."²⁰

To narrow this focus more, we'll look at Pew Research's 2021 study of "Faith Among Black Americans." They have found, "...young Black adults (ages 18 and older) are less religious and less engaged in Black churches...and those who do attend [religious services] are less likely to go to a predominately Black congregation."²¹ While these points are not yet widely documented or researched, they provide insight into the opinions of people who are choosing to leave the Black Church.

The Black Youth Project has documented a break away from the traditional Church to find experiences that embrace African practices, sexuality, and race. However, they make clear that it is not simply a search for something different that is turning young people away, but also the fact that unwelcoming and condemning rhetoric has filled many churches.²² This turning away has led those individuals to embrace a co-vocational framework, showing that God is wherever they may be, gathering at work, at brunch, at home, in the park, on the field, and more.

Similarly, Aswad Walker raises in "Top 5 reasons Black Millennials are leaving the church" that judgment, dismissal, and anti-intellectualism are among the motivations for the declining attendance within our churches. Anti-intellectualism has been tied to the view of some full-time pastors as anti-higher learning and shutting off from the world and

²⁰ Gary Randall, "Barna: 'Pastor's Losing Credibility,'" *Faith and Freedom Daily*, February 24, 2022, <https://blog.faithandfreedom.us/2022/02/barna-pastors-losing-credibility.html>.

²¹ Besheer Mohamed, Kiana Cox, Jeff Diamant, and Claire Gecewicz, "Faith among Black Americans," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, February 16, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/>.

²² The Black Youth Project, "Millennials Aren't Skipping Church."

new information. Particularly in the Black urban context, especially those within non-denominational churches without external polity, some pastors rise to their title in the church through nepotism and ministry status based on “fire,” “spirit,” and “emotion.” They often bypass Christian/Biblical training or any form of higher education, which is also deeply rooted in the Christian slave preacher tradition. This approach has been passed from generation to generation based on the view that something is right because the Bible teaches it. We should believe it even if we cannot read or do not understand it.²³

These thoughts are challenging to face but necessary. The future of the church relies on us to search and remove the worms that are eating away at the health, strength, and vitality of our Black urban churches. Here is a sobering question for Black urban churches to respond to: Can my current models of ministry, which center around a single individual or small leadership group, mobilize a congregation for missional work in an urban context for generations to come? Again, to find an answer to this challenge, I propose that Black urban churches encourage a co-vocational ministry framework, facilitating a culture that embraces tov habits, emotional health, and shared leadership to mobilize mission effectively and enduringly. Additionally, these driving questions will help in finding an answer to this thesis:

- (1) What are tov habits, why do they matter to Jesus, and how does co-vocational ministry create them?
- (2) How does a co-vocational ministry framework reduce burnout and lead to emotional health in leaders and thus congregations at large?

²³ Michael W. Austin, “Anti-Intellectualism in the Church,” *Christian Research Institute* (October 2022): JAF2394, <https://www.equip.org/articles/anti-intellectualism-church/>.

- (3) In what ways can shared leadership models create or collaborate with church polity and develop a system for succession?
- (4) How can the view of the laity as owners of God’s work mobilize faith communities?

WHAT IS THE CO-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY FRAMEWORK?

The word vocation comes from a Latin word, *vocatio*, which means a call or a summons. In recent years, the term “co-vocational” has arisen, coined by Dr. Brad Brisco, to mean, one whose primary vocation is in the marketplace and at the same time is called to serve a church. A co-vocational leader is “one who has a clear calling in the marketplace that he never intends to leave.”²⁴ ‘Co’-vocation points to an idea of “oneness.”²⁵ A oneness, which expresses unity. Brisco writes in his article *Co-vocational Church Planting: Rethinking Vocation*,

Co-vocation embodies the reality that if a person is called to be a dentist, a teacher, or a plumber; and at the same time are called to start a church, the different callings are not isolated from one another; instead, they are actually interlinked and equal. The language of co-vocation pushes against the temptation to compartmentalize different aspects of our lives. When we begin to understand that each of our callings are legitimate and necessary aspects of God’s mission; they can be leveraged together for His purposes.²⁶

A co-vocational ministry framework goes beyond pastors and their role in and out of church buildings. It sees, acknowledges, and supports each individual's contribution to the church and the marketplace as sacred and holy. Within this model, it can be shown

²⁴ “Bivocational and Covocational: Definitions,” Send Network, February 4, 2019, <https://www.namb.net/send-network/resource/rethinking-bivocational-church-planting-what-is-covocational-2/>.

²⁵ Brad Brisco, *Covocational Church Planting: Aligning Your Marketplace Calling & the Mission of God* (Denver: SEND Network of the North American Mission Board, 2018), 24.

²⁶ Brad Brisco, “Co-vocational church planting: Rethinking vocation,” *Send Network*, September 20, 2017, <https://www.namb.net/send-network/resource/covocational-church-planting-rethinking-vocation/>.

that every person in the body of believers is equally gifted, and none rise above the other in their service to each other and the community. It's the idea that Jesus' calling extends beyond the walls of church buildings, and therefore we are all partakers in demonstrating his glory.

The following section will recount the history of the Black church to understand in part how we have arrived at the single-style leadership models we see today. Further, we will unpack how this leadership model contributes to an anti-co-vocational ministry framework and how churches can walk back from that culture into one that welcomes all as participants in God's work.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM STATEMENT

THE RISE OF THE SINGLE-STYLED CHARISMATIC LEADER

The Black Preacher

The creation and development of the single-styled charismatic leader in the Black church can be traced back to slavery. As defined previously, this work will focus on single-styled leadership that is anti-co-vocational, whereas it lacks integration of the congregation into the power structures, decision-making, and missional ownership of the church. This model of leadership is marked by a lack of accountability and is “built on a foundation of strong communication skills, persuasiveness, and . . . charm to help get the most out of everyone. [This leader] tends to be passionate . . . and have strong convictions . . . [which] evoke strong emotions from their followers and teams.”²⁷

In the years during the enslavement of Black bodies, historians defined the Black church as the “invisible institution” otherwise known as “Invisible Churches.”²⁸ The Black church, independent, resilient, and emergent, arose as an act of protest against a system that denied the *imago dei* of Black souls, skin, and bodies. However, although minimal and reduced, Black people were able to find solace in their faith communities, but the experience, the moment, and the event culminated around the “man” of the hour—

²⁷ “What Is Charismatic Leadership?,” Western Governors University, March 23, 2021, <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/charismatic-leadership2103.html>.

²⁸ William H. Becker, “The Black Church: Manhood and Mission,” in *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1997), 179-195.

the slave preacher. These preachers stepped forth from among the congregation, although sometimes illiterate. They were seen as the “judges” and “prophets” who had the power to assert themselves in public roles of leadership.²⁹ As W.E.B. Du Bois asserts,

Leadership by charismatic preachers is one of the three dominant characteristics of slave religion: The Preacher is the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a “boss,” an intriguer, an idealist—all this he is, and ever, too, the center of a group of men, now twenty, now a thousand in number.³⁰

Black preachers of the time held an essence of divinity in this space. The slave preacher captures the heart, mind, body, and soul during a long, tough, and hard season of bondage. Preachers also held this believed divine agency due to them being the “gatekeepers” or stewards of the Bible’s sacred mysteries. Those who had the gift of literacy, or charisma that could guise as understanding, could claim all of their ideas were authorized by scripture. For example, the White man's power was held over the enslaved Black people not only due to the color of his skin but also the “God” who “sanctioned” him into that position of power. Contrastingly, the slave preacher, albeit having less power and agency than the white slave master, still had an incredible amount of authority and power being that he was a minister of God’s sacred and mysterious word. It is an understatement to say that the preacher in the invisible church was a colossal figure, they were much more than that.

From the late 1700s to the mid-1900s, Black preachers and pastors continued to sustain their relevance and roles within the Black community. Dr. Felton O. Best wrote in

²⁹ Ibid., 181.

³⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1961), 141.

his book, *Black Religious Leadership From the Slave Community to the Million Man March*, affirms “Historically, the Black church has been viewed as a social institution whose primary focus was to provide insight and economic relief to its congregates.”³¹

To an oppressed people, who were bound physically, socially, mentally, and even spiritually, the Black church was a haven, and its leaders were the angels leading the way toward liberation. The Black church wasn’t just a place where doctrine was taught, it was a place where the practical needs, whether physical or emotional, of its parishioners were met. However, there is a shadow side to this beautiful reality. Although Black people were able to find a sanctuary and secure a place in which their experience, desires, dreams, and spirituality were validated and celebrated, it all rose and fell on the Black preacher. This is where the narcissistic, single-styled leadership culture originates.

Dr. Best continues to suggest this by saying, “Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and [Malcolm X] are intriguing because leaders are, by definition, decision-makers, successful, wielders of authority, and achievers distinguished in their fields.”³² We are drawn to the leaders, the outspoken, driven, ambitious, visionary leaders. Those who speak with authority, who move a room, who know how to speak in the tongues of both men and angels. There is an incredible risk, a dangerous one in which any leader who receives this much attention, particularly in only a spiritual setting, is putting themselves and those they lead in danger.

³¹ Felton O. Best, *Black Religious Leadership from the Slave Community to the Million-Man March: Flames of Fire* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 18.

³² *Ibid.*, 17.

There is a difference, however, between leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and those who have risen to leadership solely in churches and adopted the single-styled leadership model we've defined. Martin Luther King Jr. was both a leader in the church and the street, one who, though his voice was the loudest, shared comradery and delegation among his peers. His leadership empowered others to emerge as leaders, ensuring that the movement would outlive him—as it did.³³ Barbara D. Savage, University of Pennsylvania Africana Studies professor, pundits within “The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song,” “Many critics from the early twentieth century had been calling for an educated clergy. One who brings the power of intellect, of having studied and learned and critiqued the scriptures. Someone who is humble and politically committed to the community, rather than toward them—self. King is exactly the embodiment of that.”³⁴ What we see in some Black urban churches can prove to be a vastly different situation.

Best submits again, “Since religion can be defined concomitantly as ‘the search for God’ and ‘the opiate of the masses,’ religious leadership, therefore, may carry distinctions that are at once divine and dubious.”³⁵ If not careful, the leader and the people can both fall into “looking for God” in one another. The preacher can look for God in the people, audience, congregation, and the people can look for God in the

³³ Michael McQuillan, “School Leaders Can Learn from Martin Luther King Jr's Shared-Power Leadership Style,” K-12 Dive, January 17, 2020, <https://www.k12dive.com/news/school-leaders-can-learn-from-martin-luther-king-jrs-shared-power-leadersh/570049/>.

³⁴ Henry Louis Gates Jr., “The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This is Our Song,” interview with Barbara D. Savage, PBS, February 16-17, 2021, documentary, 42:45.

³⁵ Best, *Black Religious Leadership from the Slave Community to the Million-Man March: Flames of Fire*, 17.

preacher. Both of these people make the other an image of the divine and an idol, which is why the cycle of charismatic leadership is hard to break. Although leaders lead with selfishness and ultimate power, congregants look to them as the earthly voice of God, and they are therefore loved and venerated, which sustains their status and allows for the withholding of accountability and shared responsibility.

Black preachers throughout history have been mediators between Black people and white power. They've gone between social, political, and religious spheres, exuding influence. They've often garnered power and rarely delegated it, leading to the perception that power and prestige only came from the pulpit. The rise of titled ministers perpetuates this idea, the people called "Reverend," "Pastor," "Elder," "Bishop," etc. are "called" and all else are not.

Bishop Eddie Long, for example, was the pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, where he raised its membership from 300 to 25,000 people. In 2011, four young men accused him of using his power and wealth to influence them into sexual relationships with him while they were teenagers, while for years he had preached in opposition to gay marriage.³⁶ Johnathan Walton, assistant professor at Harvard Divinity School, whose experience was written about for CNN, recounts a Sunday visit to New Birth. This experience included a 30-foot banner of Long's face behind the pulpit and his name and image everywhere inside the church building. While others wrote about the allegations, Blake, of CNN and writer of the aforementioned article, focused on Long's long-standing culture of single authority and power at New

³⁶ "Bishop Eddie Long, Controversial and Influential Megachurch Leader Outside Atlanta, Dies Age 63," CBS News, January 15, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bishop-eddie-long-controversial-influential-megachurch-leader-dies-age-63/>.

Birth. Walton says, “People come to believe that to turn on [the pastor] is to not be committed to God.”³⁷ This is not exclusive to the culture at New Birth or under the leadership of Bishop Eddie Long, whether known nationally or not, this culture appears in churches of any size or level of fame without a checked and balanced system of power.

Next, we will unpack the pieces of a church culture such as this one, one where the power lies in the hands of one person, decision-making is not managed by various people in authority, internally and externally, and where the missional habits and formation are driven by one person. We will then walk through the shifts that it takes from leaders and congregations to reconcile this culture.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTI-COVOCATIONAL CULTURE

A leadership structure in opposition to a co-vocational ministry framework is one where the power structures, decision-making, and missional ownership of the church are focused on one person. Scot McKnight, American New Testament scholar, historian, and theologian, and his co-author Laura Barringer assert, in their book, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, that every church has a culture that reinforces beliefs and behaviors, and the leader guides a church “towards a particular culture.” This guidance happens through the leader's narratives, teachings, actions, and even policies.³⁸ Thus, a church becomes a place that either promotes the truth that all followers of Christ are equally chosen and called or

³⁷ John Blake, “Bishop Long’s ‘anointed’ path to power at New Birth,” CNN, September 28, 2010., <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/09/28/long.new.birth/index.html>.

³⁸ Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020), 14.

perpetuates narcissism and power through fear due to the idea that only one person is the “highest representative” of God.

“Tov,” as McKnight and Barringer use it, is the common Hebrew word regularly translated as “good” in the Old Testament. They note that in the Old Testament, goodness is seen as the “executive virtue.” Executive virtue meaning goodness is God’s decree and desire for how a good God wants people to live, play, work, eat, and dwell with themselves, each other, and the places they inhabit.³⁹ They argue that if tov cultures promote goodness, healing, empathy, and justice, then the antithesis of this reality must be, not tov (goodness), but toxicity (evildoing). Until we, as faith communities, accept the reality that church cultures can be toxic, learn to identify toxic behaviors and cultures, and own the power to dismantle these systems, we will continue to settle for being, retaining, and perpetuating victims, wounded resisters, false narratives, dysfunction, irresponsible leadership, and abuse.

First, we’ll begin to understand the power structures that lead to and hold these leadership models and what makes this anti-co-vocational.

Power: A Celebrity Culture

McKnight and Barringer make a striking claim,

In a toxic culture, the celebrity pastor finds a way to make it all about garnering praise for himself—his vision, his ministry, his success, and his glory. He may not always state it in such bald-faced terms, but if you scratch beneath the surface, you’ll find that people don’t matter, the institution matters; power and fear dominate the culture, the only narratives told are those that prop up the pastor’s vision and success, and loyalty, is the supreme virtue.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid, 87.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 4.

When toxicity is maintained by a celebrity culture that focuses solely on the pastor, then individuals become objects. By objectifying congregants, they are not seen as image bearers that carry God's image and glory, but as a means to an end. When the power, reputation, stardom, and renown of an institution bear the weight of just one person, the faith community has ceased to be a place that expresses the goodness that God designed for each of us. When loyalty to "God's spokesperson" is championed more than loyalty to justice, truth-telling, service, empathy, and echoism, the faith community has ceased to be a place of goodness.

The tone and culture of a church are set by the leadership. This type of leadership thrives in abuses of power, which can take many forms, including spiritual manipulation, sexual abuse, financial abuse, bullying or intimidation, and nepotism. Spiritual manipulation could look like church leaders using their authority to manipulate or control members, often through fear of guilt. They may pressure members to conform to their beliefs, demand unquestioning loyalty, or use spiritual language to justify their actions. Sexual abuse has been seen where leaders or other members in power have sexually exploited vulnerable individuals. Financial abuse is characterized by leaders using their authority to manipulate finances, such as misusing church funds or pressuring members to give money. Bullying includes church leaders who use their power to intimidate members, often to maintain control or suppress dissent. Nepotism is where church leaders favor family members or friends over others when making decisions or distributing resources, even if those individuals are not qualified.

Scot and Barringer are careful and clear to point out that the size of a church doesn't matter in the equation of single-power systems, abuses of power, and celebrity

culture. What matters is the ego of the pastor.⁴¹ In a church that promotes goodness, the leader will maximize their gifts only to empower the giftedness of others, as expressed in Ephesians 4. However, a leader who nurtures their power, leading to a celebrity culture, will use the congregation to feature their own giftedness and charisma, and the congregation will be blind to or ignore the abuses. This leadership is against Christ's mission and His purpose for the church.

These power and authority issues ultimately lead to poor stewardship. While a pastor is promoting their own "brand" to satisfy their craving for fame, power, money, and sex, they are using the backs of their congregation and their misunderstandings of God, weaknesses, and money. Unfortunately, this celebrityism does not form and is not sustained by its own accord. Behind every pastor that considers themselves someone worthy of praise and adulation is an adoring congregation that both perpetuates and supports that atmosphere, usually based on a lack of knowledge to resist.

Rather than a pastor that serves a congregation, giving them God's truth to feed on, understand, know for themselves, and have various resources to pull from, they make weekly services about themselves.⁴² Rather than sending congregants out to do God's work, the focus is on bringing more people in so that the pastor can garner more power, respect, money, or fame so that they can be heard, felt, and known. Every Sunday service is the next experience or event that gives them the "high" that they've needed all week. The welcome, the liturgy, the giving, and the worship are all pointing to the Red Sea moment, the Mount Sinai moment, the event—the sermonic moment. This moment gives

⁴¹ Ibid., 176.

⁴² Ibid., 184.

the pastor their chance to shine, and typically the congregation has been taught to soak it up.

Thus, the celebrity pastor has created a celebrity church. This focus on the power of the pastor means that the faith community will no longer keep “people first, empathy will no longer shape the culture, grace will be subverted, and truth will no longer be instinctive.”⁴³ McKnight and Barringer assert that the terms “celebrity pastor” and “celebrity church” contradict the way of Jesus (and break his heart). They mention, the desire to be “the most important” is playing the Hollywood game and not the cross-bearing life of Jesus.⁴⁴ Pastors who use their pulpits and positions to please their ego, insecurities, and pride will resist sharing the preaching space, surrounding and appointing other leaders who will *rarely* question or contend with their choices, positions, or attitudes, and will likely—slowly—start to bear fruit that leaves seeds of hostility, suspicion, division, abuse, and confusion, leaving the pastor in an unquestioned position of power for a long time.

This type of church is anti-co-vocational because it leaves no room for everyone’s gifts to be seen and shared. It lacks the holistic view of everyone as important and valuable and their skills as useful to the ministry in a way that gives them power and opportunities to share in the work of the ministry. The pastor holds the power because they are fearful of being outshined, pushed out, overlooked, or seen as unnecessary. However, it is the vision that God has for His church, and that is good.

⁴³ Ibid., 189.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 189-190.

This power that we've been in one person's hands inevitably leads to the truth that only one person is also the ultimate decision-maker. Decisions, therefore, have a one-track solution. They rarely, if ever, consider the thoughts and experiences of those younger with a wider worldview or diverse perspectives. Next, we'll understand more about how a lack of accountability and governance affects the decision-making process and how this part of the model rides against an anti-covocational framework.

Decision-Making: Lack of Accountability/Governance

As much as the congregation longs for God in their leader, and as much as the leader is longing for God in their congregation, they find themselves bound in a cycle of veneration and idolatry, but what both parties want and desire is a type of freedom that only God gives. This freedom rejects human approval and looks to Jesus for their source of truth and acceptance. In his book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch defines narcissism as the “longing to be freed from longing.”⁴⁵ Essentially, people who are paralyzed by the spell of ego and narcissism refuse to be constrained by the God-ordained limitations of humanity, they seek to be divine in some way. Celebrity pastors will undoubtedly feel as though they are above scrutiny, correction, rebuke, and accountability. Henri Nouwen, a beloved priest-psychologist, described this disease that cripples shepherds as follows:

The long painful history of the Church is the history of people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led. Those who resisted this temptation to the end and thereby gave us hope are the true saints... Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not

⁴⁵ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), 241.

know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead.⁴⁶

DeGroat states, “Historically, Christendom’s conflation of church and empire undermined the “kenotic configuration” of the church, replacing cruciform humility with hierarchy, patriarchy, and power. The grandiosity, entitlement, and absence of empathy characteristic of narcissistic personality disorder were translated into the profile of a good leader.⁴⁷ A study published in *Pastoral Psychology* found that “36% of [previously] surveyed pastors did not participate in any form of ministerial support group.”⁴⁸ In terms of pastoral abuse, a study published in the *Journal of Religion and Abuse* surveyed 1400 individuals who had experienced spiritual abuse and found that pastors were the most common perpetrators of abuse (30.6%). The study also found that spiritual abuse was significantly associated with narcissistic traits, which was determined using the Raskin and Hall Narcissistic Personality Inventory.⁴⁹

Churches that perpetuate these leadership qualities—narcissism, isolation, and abuse—are unlikely to have good measures in place for accountability and governing the leadership. Sue Nilson Kibbey, inaugural director of the Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, wrote an article titled, *Creating*

⁴⁶ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 34.

⁴⁷ DeGroat, *When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community from Emotional and Spiritual Abuse*, 22.

⁴⁸ Diane J. Chandler, “Pastoral Burnout and the Impact of Personal Spiritual Renewal, Rest-Taking, and Support System Practices,” *Pastoral Psychology* 58(3):273-287 (June 2008): 276, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225618701_Pastoral_Burnout_and_the_Impact_of_Personal_Spiritual_Renewal_Rest-taking_and_Support_System_Practices.

⁴⁹ Andrew S. Denney, “Child Sex Abusers in Protestant Christian Churches: An Offender Typology,” *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology* 12(1):42-79 (January 2, 2023): 46, <https://www.qualitativecriminology.com/pub/osa148h6/release/2>.

Leadership Accountability Systems that states, “The best leaders bring the team along with them, share the load, and pull together according to who does what best.”⁵⁰ This is what a co-vocational ministry framework would look like. She claims there are two very important questions that a pastor/leader in a congregational setting should ask:

- (1) To whom am I accountable?
- (2) Who are my intentional partners?

Within these questions, Kibbey suggests that it is incredibly dangerous for any leader to not have anyone to whom they answer. It all has to do with accountability and the need to be at the top. History is our witness, power in any person’s hands needs to be shifted and balanced appropriately for the sake of the person wielding it and the people on the other end of it. This wisdom even led to the founding of America, where we have three branches of government, all with varying but equal responsibility, and no one can move forward with one single decision without the others. Pastors who want to retain toxicity will not report to a committee, other clergy, a superintendent, or an overseer/bishop, because to do so will stifle the power and control they desperately love and in which they find their identity.⁵¹

This is anti-co-vocational because it does not trust congregants to help lead and guide. It leaves the mark that only one person has wisdom and access to God or knowledge to make an informed, reasonable decision. Co-vocational frameworks invite everyone to the table, accepting their diversity and using their confirmed gifts to share the

⁵⁰ Sue Nilson Kibbey, “Creating Leadership Accountability Systems,” *Lewis Center for Church Leadership*, June 20, 2007, <https://www.churchleadership.com/featured-right/creating-leadership-accountability-systems/>.

⁵¹ Kibbey, “Creating Leadership Accountability Systems.”

burden of moving the church forward. To this point, next we will walk through missional ownership and how single-styled leaders often hold skills and access to themselves, refusing to disciple and develop others so that they can be sent out.

Missional Ownership: A Refusal to Disciple and Develop

Thom S. Rainer, author, researcher, and former president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, argues in his article, *Fourteen Symptoms of Toxic Church Leaders*, that leaders who reserve power for themselves and seek to uplift their agenda will “dismiss or marginalize people before they attempt to develop them.”⁵² For these shepherds and leaders, people are objects, used for the upbuilding, not of the kingdom of God, but their name, renown, and glory. Rainer states that when we see people in this way, we fail to see them “as God’s people, people who need mentoring and development.”⁵³

One of the areas that pastors refuse to train, develop, and disciple people in is the pulpit space. There is an element of reserving preaching spaces for a single person that lends towards narcissism. The preaching in a congregation is what drives the spirit, heart, and culture of the church. Preaching is what carries and drives the “vision” of the senior pastor. An argument can be made that the sermon, a centered performance by an individual, could in and of itself contribute to a narcissistic culture. However, sermons are a Biblical and historical mode through which people communicate God’s truth. The problem is not the sermons but a single voice continuously speaking as the voice of God.

⁵² Thom S. Rainer, “Fourteen Symptoms of Toxic Church Leaders,” *Church Answers Featuring Thom Rainer*, October 1, 2014, <https://churchanswers.com/blog/fourteen-symptoms-toxic-church-leaders/>.

⁵³ Ibid.

In her book, *Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits Are Hurting The Church*, Katelyn Beaty, individuals such as Billy Graham, D.L. Moody, and Bill Hybels, knew how to “arrest the audience with clear, powerful teaching that drove home a message...they’re mesmerizing.”⁵⁴ Mesmerizing is an important word here because it characteristically speaks to the way one uses the weight of words and how they are interpreted by those who hear them. It speaks to the power that an individual has with their rhetoric and persuasion. Beaty argues, “To sit under the authority of a dynamic speaker is, in a sense, to fall under a spell, to be persuaded and changed, sometimes in dramatic ways.”⁵⁵

Additionally, in his book, *Preaching the Other Way: How to Develop a Teaching Team in Your Church*, J.D. Pearring states, “Preaching less has actually been one of the best gifts I have given to myself – and my church.”⁵⁶ In sharing the preaching space, leaders empower others to help equip others which inevitably leads to the sharing of power and the spotlight being removed from the leader. Pearring justifies this model by referring to the early church: “Now in the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.”⁵⁷ This scripture not only shows us that the community of faith at Antioch had diverse gifts of prophets and teachers, but diverse

⁵⁴ Katelyn Beaty, *Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits Are Hurting the Church* (Ada: Brazos Press, 2022), 52.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ J. D. Pearring, *Preaching the Other Way: How to Develop a Teaching Team in Your Church* (Elk Grove: Excel Leadership Network, 2019), xv.

⁵⁷ Acts 13:1, NIV.

experiences, ethnicities, and backgrounds. The Holy Spirit was able to bring a great movement to this region due to this strong celebration of diversity and unity. Pearring also quotes Paul's writing when he says, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will also be qualified to teach others."⁵⁸

Dr. Charlie Dates, pastor of Progressive Baptist Church and Salem Baptist Church, says of teaching preachers and church development,

The church needs to create, within its local context, systems that get the right people to the pulpit and the right time. So, there has to be an identification...how do [we get] people who feel called to preach to self-identity. [At Progressive], Once they do, there's a small cohort that develops with the pastor, where the pastor sits down with these persons and walks through areas of life, spiritual maturity, the inter-development of the preacher's life, then introduces them to the mechanics of preaching.⁵⁹

This demonstrates the level of nurturing and care required to take skills, growth, and succession into the church's hands, as well as efforts to decentralize a single person or voice. First there's a system in place, then a pathway to recognize the gift, and finally ways to exercise within community and with accountability.

Beyond preaching, there's been evidence of a lack of training and development within churches that has left congregations with a lack of leadership upon the death or sickness of the pastor. I can reference two churches that were left devastated by the long-standing sickness of a pastor who refused to enact a succession plan and a church that lost its pastor and a jurisdiction that lost its Bishop to COVID. Emmanuel Pentecostal Faith

⁵⁸ 2 Tim 2:2, NIV.

⁵⁹ Jessica Lea, "Charlie Dates: Why Your Church Needs to Identify and Raise up Young Preachers," interview by Ed Stetzer, *ChurchLeaders*, September 21, 2022, audio, 18:21, <https://churchleaders.com/podcast/434535-charlie-dates-church-identify-young-preachers.html>.

Temple Church in Mount Vernon, New York, founded in 1997 by Bishop Leon Dixon. Once a thriving church that packed out its 200-seated sanctuary from Sunday to Sunday, it held services that gathered churches from around the community, welcomed people off the street, and served the needs of the city. However, attendance declined, with members moving on to other ministries, finding no opportunities for growth within their home church. Although Bishop Dixon faced years of declining health, no one could convince him to raise other leaders to shepherd the congregation. When Bishop Dixon passed away in 2018, the church was left leaderless and scrambling for a pastor.

Similarly, the historic Kelly Temple Church of God in Christ in Harlem, New York, was the church home to the Bishop of the First Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Eastern New York, Bishop James H. Gaylord. He pastored Kelly Temple for 38 years before he died in 2020. While he was a kind, gentle and faithful man, as evidenced by his church's lack of a continuity plan, he did not develop fruitful discipleship and leadership programs that would result in a natural course of sustaining longevity for the ministry. Kelly Temple and the Church of God in Christ spent months looking for a new pastor before deciding upon and installing Dr. Jacob Kelly, who was once a former member of Kelly Temple but had left years before.

These examples are not isolated. They are historical and continue into today, demonstrating the systems and structures that result when we give way to a single leader at the top with no room for others to flourish alongside and around. Moving from a narcissistic single-person-focused culture to a co-vocational framework takes radical teamwork at every level and in every section of the ministry. It requires an undoing that

breaks down clergy and laity divides, interrupts generational long-held beliefs, and builds up the idea of Christians as those who are the called and chosen in Christ.

THE UNDOING

This undoing begins when a leader is willing to admit that they are a single-styled charismatic leader without power balance, decision-making, and missional ownership systems within their ministry. Once acknowledged, the journey to emotional and spiritual health within themselves first can start—which is first needed before we can dig into the problems of the church at large. Henri Nouwen recounts the journey it could take toward this acknowledgment by reflecting on the temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness, which ministry leaders also face today: (1) the temptation to be relevant; (2) the temptation to be spectacular; and (3) the temptation to be powerful.⁶⁰

With each temptation, Nouwen proposes a question, challenge, or task and a recommended spiritual practice to detach the leader away from self and move towards an anchoring in God’s love. I propose that Nouwen’s thought regarding the acknowledgment of these temptations within oneself is a starting place for turning the tide of unhealthy ministry leadership.

The first temptation that Nouwen covers is the temptation to be relevant: “Turn these stones into bread.” This is the seduction of proving, showing, and doing things as a reflection of your worth and value in the world. Nouwen states,

Aren’t we priests and ministers called to help people, to feed the hungry, and to save those who are starving? Are we not called to do something that makes people realize that we do make a difference in their lives? Aren’t we called to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and alleviate the suffering of the poor? Jesus was faced with these same questions, but when he was asked to prove his power as the Son of God by the relevant behavior of changing stones into bread, he said, “One does

⁶⁰ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, 31.

not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. (Mt. 4:4)⁶¹

Within these questions rings a kind of savior complex. I must be the one to heal the sick, feed the hungry, solve all the world's greatest issues, and I can do this by proving, showing, and doing. The clearest issue with this line of thinking when it comes to leading is that we then take the focus off serving the other and the service is directed toward the self. Nouwen also states, "The Christian leader... is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self."⁶² The question that moves leaders toward the heart of Jesus and those they serve is by wrestling with the same question Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" When the celebrity culture demands that its leader performs amazing, view-worthy acts, Jesus asks those leaders, "But, do you love me?" To find this answer with a spiritual practice, we look to contemplative prayer. As Nouwen states, "Contemplative prayer keeps one home, rooted, and safe even when they are surrounded by violence and the world."⁶³

The second temptation in leadership, Nouwen points out, is the temptation to be spectacular. This is an attraction to extravaganza, popularity, and applause. Nouwen asserts, "Jesus refused to be a stuntman. He did not come to walk on hot coals, swallow fire, or put his hand in the lion's mouth to demonstrate that he had something worthwhile."⁶⁴ Jesus was close to us. God put on flesh and embodied our experience, our pain, our joys, our condition—he wasn't just with us, but he became like us—lowly. The

⁶¹ Ibid., 31.

⁶² Ibid., 30.

⁶³ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 54.

task for the individual wrestling with this temptation is “Feed my sheep.” A shepherd—one who feeds God’s people—knows God’s people and is with God’s people. They are self-giving and sacrificial. Nouwen suggests that these shepherds should not seek to entertain those they serve, but they should see themselves as equal to all others, seeking to relate to them and be in community with them. These leaders want nothing in return; this is the way of Jesus. The practice that Nouwen suggests for someone tempted by being spectacular before those they serve is both confession and forgiveness. One of the most effective ways that one can abandon heroism is to show our brokenness and our wounds. It is to show that we can both love and be loved.⁶⁵

The final temptation that Nouwen presents is the temptation to be powerful. Nouwen eloquently remarks: “Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the challenging task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.”⁶⁶ He further says, “The long painful history of the church is the history of people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led.” This quote by Nouwen encapsulates all the aforementioned issues that spring from the Black urban single-styled charismatic leader posture within churches.

The statement that Nouwen leaves with a leader who is being tempted to worship the idol of power over the Lord is, “Jesus has a different vision of maturity: It is the ability and willingness to be led where you would rather not go.”⁶⁷ It is the Christian

⁶⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 83.

leader abdicating their power to the risen Christ so that Christ can first strip them of their illusion of power, but then use the power they have to leverage it for the sake of others. The final practice that Nouwen gives the leader who struggles with retaining power and going where they would rather not go, is the practice of theological reflection. That type of reflection is about being able to discern, dwell, ponder, and consider the movement, promptings, and activity of God, whether it is time to move or to relish the stillness of leadership. We cannot lead people if we are not attuned to where God is truly taking us—and He is not taking us anywhere where we continue to believe we are higher than Him or His people.

This undoing and activation of spiritual practices will begin to move us from a focus on self to a culture that breeds sustainability long after we are gone. This enables us to share the load of the church with others and see ourselves as collaborators in God's work, not the sole person responsible. Next, we will detail what it means to move toward this sustainability and how to begin to adopt a co-vocational ministry framework.

Moving Away from Self Toward Sustainable

The foundation of my work is a sustainable model in which pastors believe that all work is valuable and that skills outside of the ministry can contribute to it. This approach allows others to share in the work of the ministry. For a leader to truly adopt a co-vocational framework, the outlook and perspective of vocational work outside of the church must be seen as a call and missional presence. Furthermore, it includes the understanding that a single person cannot and should not bear the weight or responsibility of running a ministry alone.

In a 2021 Barna study, it was found that nearly two in five pastors have considered quitting full-time ministry due to burnout. Further, the study found that it is younger pastors who are taking this into consideration, putting at risk the longevity of the church if it continues a single-styled leadership model. Only one in three pastors who rated their well-being in this study considered themselves healthy. As David Kinnaman, President of Barna Group, states, “This is a growing crisis for church leaders in America. Pastors, too, need to proactively guard their health and well-being, taking a holistic assessment of how they are doing...Navigating these existential questions of calling and ministry-career fit are significant and will shape the future of congregational leadership.”⁶⁸

Licensed clinical psychologist, Jessica Young Brown asserts that “with collaboration and clear communication, [work outside of the church] can be an opportunity to innovate and thrive.”⁶⁹ Inviting others in and using their (and a leader’s) transferable skills can provide valuable gifts to the church and evangelize to others outside of the church. Upon the understanding that a leader’s skills are practiced in and outside the doors of the church, as well as the work others can contribute, doors are opened for practicing health and implementing longevity into the workings of the church. With this in mind, the time is now to consider how a co-vocational framework could benefit the health of a leader and congregation.

⁶⁸ “38% Of U.S. Pastors Have Thought about Quitting Full-Time Ministry in the Past Year,” *Barna Group*. November 16, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being>.

⁶⁹ Jessica Young Brown, “Don't be afraid of a future with more bivocational ministers,” *Thriving in Ministry*, November 12, 2019, https://thrivinginministry.org/fandl_feed_article/dont-be-afraid-of-a-future-with-more-bivocational-ministers/.

Adopting a Co-vocational Ministry Framework

Eric Hoke was a co-vocational church planter. He is the Associate Director of Learning and Development for YearUp, former pastor of All Saints Church NY, and founder of I Help Pastors Get Jobs, helping pastors rebrand their valuable skills so they can break into corporate America. Hoke advises starting the discernment process of what a leader needs to be doing by looking at their body and experience in the world. He asserts that adopting a co-vocational framework is all about their mindset.

Pastors love these verses, but they don't love them enough to embrace them: Ephesians 4:12 says we are called to "equip the saints for the work of ministry."⁷⁰ We as pastors have to be willing to give up control, to put things in the hands of the saints, the people that we help lead so that we all grow up into the maturity that God has for us. This change begins with a willingness to relinquish control, to not feel as though power has to belong to the leader and to want to have the time for other commitments, such as family, friends, and even fun. Hoke specifically works with pastors who are looking for second jobs, and through his site and in his training, mentions that with pastors that he is guiding, he encounters several excuses. The excuses he is met with include: "My life is way too busy already! I could never take on another job," "I have aging parents/young children/too many commitments," and "I won't have time to write my sermons, counsel people, or schedule volunteers."⁷¹ Each of these excuses is answered with a co-vocational ministry framework. Within this framework, tov habits are breaking the leader out of the

⁷⁰ Ephesians 4:12, NLT.

⁷¹ Eric Hoke. *I Help Pastors Get Jobs .com*. March 21, 2022. <https://mcusercontent.com/e58aca0dbfeed8e5524f85bf7/files/96238835-354f-8d84-ca11-72c51f94879d/9802bf0856874d0cad709a00efdfa6ca26fae42.pdf>

routine to see the world around them, EHS is inviting the leader to slow down and set boundaries, and shared leadership is creating space for the leader to take many tasks off of their plate and disperse it among the congregation, freeing them to take on another role outside of the church *and/or* do more work within to show others where they are doing their best work outside of the church.

Next, we will move through a new way of understanding church culture that emphasizes goodness, emotional health, and inclusion of all and incites missional behavior for every Christian. Each of these pieces is a result of a co-vocational leadership framework and scaffolds into the next building on one another and resulting in a people who are powerful, decision-makers and take ownership of the Great Commission: “Jesus came and told his *disciples*, “**I have been given all authority** in heaven and on earth. Therefore, *go* and make disciples of *all* the nations.”⁷²

⁷² Matthew 28:18-19a, NLT.

CHAPTER THREE

I WILL SHOW YOU A BETTER WAY

FROM GIFTED LEADER TO A GIFTED CHURCH

If what we've gone through so far details the problems in our churches and outlines how leaders can move from single-styled leadership to a mindset shift in adopting a co-vocational ministry framework, what then is the solution to how the church as a whole can move with the leader? We shift the focus and the spotlight from a gifted leader and place the focus and spotlight on the gifted people in a gifted church. Essentially, the idea is to believe what Jesus said and did in Mark 3 and reiterated it in The Great Commission in Matthew 28, "and he *chose* twelve, whom he named apostles. "I have chosen you to *be with me*," he told them. "I will *send you out*..., and you will have *authority*..."⁷³ These are the tenets of a co-vocational ministry framework: to be chosen and therefore gifted (co-vocational), live a life with Jesus (tov habits/emotional health), be sent (missional), and have authority (shared leadership).

Thus, the research presented throughout this work will outline how to envision and implement a co-vocational ministry framework within Black urban churches by answering the following questions:

1. What are tov habits, why do they matter to Jesus, and how does co-vocational ministry create them?
2. How does a co-vocational ministry framework reduce burnout and lead to emotional health in leaders and thus congregations at large?

⁷³ Mark 3:14-15, GNT.

3. In what ways can shared leadership models create or collaborate with church polity and develop a system for succession?
4. How can the view of the laity as owners of God's work mobilize faith communities?

The answers to these questions will encourage co-vocational ministry which will inspire co-mission and continue to place the Black urban church in many settings that demonstrate Jesus within and throughout the world.

TOV HABITS & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is our ultimate guide and he was the epitome of goodness and emotional health. Although he was fully God and fully human, he desired to not do this mission alone. He chose 12 men (plus women who are not counted) and Mark 3:13 says that he chose them first to be with him and present with each other.⁷⁴ Out of that togetherness and focus on him as their leader, guide, and friend, they would develop a Spirit-led strategy to change and impact the world. We cannot know where he is leading and where he is guiding if we do not know him and are not in tune with him.

If it is also within our mission to follow him and how he has led, it will be evident in his life and followers that he is committed to being spiritually grounded in and outside of "spiritual contexts." To mean, Jesus could be with his followers whether they were in a temple, on a mountain, fishing, or eating. Further, he invited them to be closer to him outside of the temple and where others, or "outsiders" could find them.⁷⁵ It is within

⁷⁴ Mark 3:13.

⁷⁵ Luke 5:32-39.

these invitations that Jesus shows how he is intricately connected to where we are, no matter where we are, physically, mentally, and emotionally. He is showing us the grace and goodness that appear when we are welcoming, together, and serving all. A Cadence Called Tov

Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer illustrated what toxic church leadership, when a leader harbors wickedness, looks like. He rounds out his book by showing what a goodness church looks like and how it similarly must stem from the top down. The Circle of Tov, as McKnight and Barringer put it, is a church that creates goodness by nurturing empathy, grace, a people-first culture, truth, justice, service, and finally Christlikeness.⁷⁶ Now more than ever, people are craving spiritual communities where transparency and authenticity are valued, prized, and celebrated, much more than one person. They are particularly focused on treatment, being sure that we center our focus on those who have been historically marginalized in society and creating space for them to thrive. This idea is reinforced by James H. Cone, theologian best known for his radical advocacy and commentary on black theology and black liberation theology. He writes,

The Christian gospel is more than a transcendent reality, more than ‘going to heaven when I die, to shout salvation as I fly.’ It is also an immanent reality—a powerful liberating presence among the poor right now in their midst, ‘building them up where they are torn down and propping them up on every side.’ The gospel is found wherever poor people struggle for justice, fighting for their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.⁷⁷

A church that is committed to the Circle of Tov will undoubtedly have an effect—firstly among each other, and secondly outside the four walls of the church.

⁷⁶ McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, 97.

⁷⁷ James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 155.

The co-vocational ministry framework removes the potential for narcissism and toxic leadership by placing leaders throughout the congregation of diverse backgrounds and ages. We have been made to understand the pitfalls of single-styled leadership much more as of late with the rise of case studies from scandals surrounding names like Ravi Zacarias, Carl Lentz, Bill Hybels, and many more. While these names do not reflect the urban Black church that I am speaking to, we are aware of this dynamic that occurs within some of these churches as well.

This is the kind of power that Jesus warned against in Matthew 20:25, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.”⁷⁸ The functioning word here is “over.” Jesus describes a particular kind of power that seeks to rule *over* others rather than *for* others. This leads to distraction from the mission of Jesus. When a leader becomes too focused on building their power, instead of focusing on serving their community and sharing the gospel, they may become more concerned with their image and increasing their follower count. Tov habits can combat this power structure.

Tov habits of empathy, grace, people-first, truth-telling, justice, and service all help a church resist the abuse of power and promote healing. Where a co-vocational framework is set up in a church, congregants feel empowered to speak against leaders who are abusing their power, they have the power and authority to remove a leader who is being un-Christlike, and they are equipped to continue to promote these values throughout their church, leading all to more speaking for these habits and the church continuing to thrive even if a leader is removed.

⁷⁸ Matthew 20:25, NLT.

Next, we will review each of the tov habits, how and why they matter to Jesus, and how a co-vocational ministry framework creates them within the culture of a church.

1. Empathy: McKnight and Barringer define empathy as “the ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective, to feel what they feel, and to respond to their needs with compassion and understanding.”⁷⁹ This empathy habit is crucial to live out the life of a follower of Jesus. Empathy reflects His character. In Matthew, Jesus teaches his disciples the value of empathy when he says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”⁸⁰

In a co-vocational ministry framework, empathy is essential for creating a culture of mutual respect and understanding. By acknowledging and valuing each person’s contribution to both the church and the marketplace, this habit recognizes the diversity of experiences and perspectives that each person brings to the table. In turn, empathy is part of this culture where people are encouraged to listen to each other and work together to meet the needs of all.

2. Grace: Grace involves extending compassion, forgiveness, and kindness to others, even when they have made mistakes or caused harm. Jesus’ whole

⁷⁹ McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, 102.

⁸⁰ Matthew 25:40, NIV.

message was grace-centric, and, therefore, we should also be. John writes of Jesus, “For from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace.”⁸¹

A co-vocational ministry framework creates grace by extending generosity and love to all no matter where they are on their walk or work with Christ because their contributions to the world at large are worthy of respect. Additionally, within a co-vocational framework with everyone having the power to speak up, it becomes easier for voices to be heard and extend grace because you’re in a deeper community with one another.

3. Putting-People First: The putting-people-first habit values people over structures, systems, or material possessions by “bringing others into the community, recognizing all people as made in the image of God.”⁸² Jesus was a model for putting people first as he would often stop what he was doing to heal others, he would go against rules to redeem the broken, lost, or sick, he saw all people as worthy of wholeness, and he would constantly speak against power structures in order for others to see a new way.

Within a co-vocational ministry framework, putting people first comes naturally as you’re welcoming others into the decision-making processes of the church. This leaves room for more space and perspectives, to see others, to have varying views, and to serve a greater number of people. By

⁸¹ John 1:16, ESV.

⁸² McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, 122.

dismantling the structure that focuses on one person or structure, the priorities of all are shared and there's a greater sense of care and compassion.

4. Truth Telling: Truth-telling involves being transparent, honest, and accountable in all areas of life, this is lived out individually and as a community. Truth-telling is essential to Jesus as we know he said, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."⁸³ Jesus prized truth-telling and made a priority of it even when it was unpopular or uncomfortable.

In a co-vocational ministry framework, truth-telling is created through a culture of transparency and accountability. With everyone's contribution being essential, it's mandatory to build and maintain relationships based on trust and honesty. Furthermore, a co-vocational ministry framework encourages individuals to seek truth through dialogue and discussion, creating a space where people can ask questions, challenge assumptions, and explore difficult issues.

5. Justice: According to McKnight and Barringer, justice is not only about making things right but also about creating a society where all people have an equal opportunity to flourish.⁸⁴ While Jesus and the Bible speak at length about justice for the poor and oppressed, speaking to Jesus as caring about everyone's opportunity to flourish, he says, "I have come that they might have life and have it

⁸³ John 8:32, NIV.

⁸⁴ McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, 168.

more abundantly.”⁸⁵ Through him, we are all given our just share of the opportunity to thrive.

The co-vocational ministry framework creates a justice habit by empowering all members of the church to be agents of change in their respective communities. This model encourages each individual to use their unique gifts to pursue justice and fight against systems of oppression. By working together, individuals can create a powerful force for change that extends beyond the walls of the church and into society.

6. **Service:** This final habit, service, ties directly to implementing a co-vocational framework that leads to missional habits that involve actively seeking opportunities to serve others and to use one's gifts and abilities to benefit the community.⁸⁶ This habit is rooted in Jesus' own teachings and actions, as he demonstrated the ultimate act of service through his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus says, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be [the last]—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”⁸⁷

In a co-vocational ministry framework, the habit of service is integral. By acknowledging the unique gifts and contributions of each member of the community, and by empowering everyone to serve in their own unique way, the

⁸⁵ John 10:10, NIV.

⁸⁶ McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, 177.

⁸⁷ Matthew 20:26-28, NIV.

framework promotes a culture of service. Through shared decision-making and ownership of the work of Jesus, each member of the community is given the opportunity to use their gifts to serve others, whether within the church or in the wider marketplace. This creates a sense of unity and purpose, as everyone works together to fulfill the mission of Jesus to love and serve others.

By integrating a co-vocational ministry framework, churches can create a culture of healing and growth, while also working to prevent abuse of power from occurring in the first place. It will help the church, the body of Christ, to retain its rightful witness as a place of safety, hope, and freedom.

Overcoming abuses of power and putting power in the hands of all requires a collective and communal effort and a willingness to work toward healing and restoration. These kinds of ordeals may also involve seeking outside help, such as counseling or legal support, and developing a clear plan of action for addressing the abuse. It also requires a commitment to holding leaders accountable and creating a safe and healthy environment for all members of the congregation. We will detail a more specific plan of action in the next chapter. Next, we will move on to emotionally healthy spirituality and its deep-rooted connection to the health of a church through a co-vocational ministry framework.

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (EHS)

Pete Scazzero asserts in his book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, that it is impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. He states, “Christian spirituality, without an integration of emotional health, can be deadly--to

yourself, your relationship with God, and the people around you.”⁸⁸ In the book, Scazzero lists the top ten symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality: (1) Using God to run from God; (2) Ignoring anger, sadness, and fear; (3) Dying to the wrong things; (4) Denying the impact of the past on the present; (5) Dividing life into “secular” and “sacred” compartments; (6) Doing for God instead of being with God; (7) Spiritualizing away conflict; (8) Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure; (9) Living without limits; (10) Judging other people’s spiritual journey.⁸⁹

There is absolutely no way that any individual can thrive or sustain a lifestyle of emotional unhealth. Leaders who show these signs should pause, reassess, and gather an understanding of themselves outside of what they do in ministry so that they can pass healthy habits onto their congregation and in turn the teams they create to lead alongside them. When leaders continue to lead out of emotional unhealth, they are less inclined to understand what’s happening within them. Some manifestations of emotional unhealth, also known as burnout, are fatigue, headaches, mild/severe depression, weight gain, and more.

Since the COVID-19 crisis, more churches have begun to understand the impact and importance of bridging the gap between spiritual and emotional health, as many Black people (and parishioners) saw a decline in mental and emotional health during quarantine.⁹⁰ However, there is still more work to be done.

⁸⁸ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 9.

⁸⁹ Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 22.

⁹⁰ Natasha R. Brown, Candice L. Alick, Alexis G. Heaston, Shanada Monestime, and Nicolette Powe, “The Black Church and Public Health: A Key Partnership for Theory Driven COVID-19 Recovery

According to a study done by the National Institutes of Health, cities are associated with higher rates of most mental health problems compared to rural areas: an almost 40% higher risk of depression, over 20% more anxiety, and double risk of schizophrenia, in addition to more loneliness, isolation, and stress.⁹¹ There are also pre-existing risk factors in the city such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, physical and mental problems, previous trauma, addiction, immigration and so many other factors that only compound the issues that come with the city. There are social factors such as hopelessness, cycles of injustice, prejudice, and discrimination. Lastly, you also have environmental factors such as the way in which cities are designed and built that contribute to either their flourishing or languishing such as noise, smells, crowd control, pollution control, and more.⁹²

On top of that, racism and stigma make it harder for people of color to get the services they need. “Mental health issues affect everyone, but people of color {Black, Latinx, Asian and Native American people} have higher rates of some mental health disorders and face greater disparities in getting help than White people do.”⁹³ These issues are due to a lack of access to services which are the consequence of institutional discrimination, interpersonal racism, and stereotypes which all harm the psyche of

Efforts,” *Journal of Primary Care & Community Health* 13: 21501319221097672 (May 26, 2022): 2, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9150224>.

⁹¹ Juli Fraga, “Here’s How Living in a City Can Mess with Your Mental Health,” *Healthline*, February 29, 2019, <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/living-in-a-city>.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Kristen Rogers, “People of color face significant barriers to mental health services,” CNN, October 10, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/10/health/mental-health-people-of-color-wellness/>.

BIPOC. These are issues that have been deeply situated within urban communities and have existed for decades. Minorities already disproportionately experience misfortune and mistreatment, but they also have to deal with intergenerational trauma. This is the type of trauma that impacts one generation and tends to be carried over into later generations.

Albeit, African Americans have historically underutilized mental and emotional health services. Per a 2021 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African Americans utilize mental health services at about half the rate of their white counterparts. However, if a service is provided within a church, Black Christians are more likely to attend. While some churches have begun integrating practices such as mindfulness and meditation into their worship services and emphasizing the importance of self-care and rest, they have also continued to offer support to groups for those dealing with mental health issues, and. Others are exploring the intersection of faith and psychology and seeking to integrate insights from the field of psychology into their understanding of spirituality. Many churches have also recognized the importance of addressing emotional health and promoting practices that foster overall well-being, such as self-care, stress management, and healthy relationships. Some churches are even integrating mental health support and resources into their ministries, such as offering counseling services or support groups for those struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues.

However, it is important to note that African American churchgoers sometimes see spiritual health and emotional health as intertwined, to mean, some believe that spiritual “health” can be used as a fix-all for emotional trouble. Furthermore, the church

is a diverse and complex institution, and not all churches or religious organizations are equally focused on emotional health and well-being. Some may still have a more traditional or rigid approach to spirituality that may not prioritize emotional health, while others may have a more progressive and holistic approach.⁹⁴ Pete Scazzero, in his book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, asserts,

Sincere followers of Jesus Christ, but they struggled as much as anyone else with their marriages, divorces, friendships, parenting, singleness, sexuality, addictions, insecurities, drive for approval, and feelings of failure and depression at work, church, and home. They saw the same patterns of emotional conflict inside the church as outside.⁹⁵

Jesus taught that Christians would be recognizable by their distinctive behavior: by the way they displayed love toward others and how their lives reflect their spiritual values and beliefs. The early church was characterized as those that “turned the world upside down” by their changed lives.⁹⁶ The larger challenge that faces the broader church today is the lack of transformed lives that comes from the integration of emotional health and spirituality. EHS addresses areas of discipleship that people encounter each day as they seek to live out their faith in everyday life. These discipleship areas include but are not limited to navigating difficult emotions such as grief, moving through moral crises and situations, and putting yourself in a position to truly experience God’s love, joy, and peace.

⁹⁴ Brad R. Fulton, “Americans are in a mental health crisis – especially African Americans. Can churches help?,” *The Conversation*, October 1, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/americans-are-in-a-mental-health-crisis-especially-african-americans-can-churches-help-167871>.

⁹⁵ Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 7.

⁹⁶ Acts 17:6.

Incorporating Pete Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* into the life of an urban church can provide many benefits, including (1) greater emotional health and well-being among church members, (2) improved relationships and communication with friends, family, co-workers, etc., (3) increased resilience and ability to cope with difficult situations and challenges, (4) more authentic and meaningful relationship with Christ; (5) a deeper understanding of the connection between emotional health and spiritual growth; and (6) greater effectiveness in serving the community and the world, as emotionally healthy individuals are better equipped to make a positive impact on those around them.

Emotionally healthy spirituality leads a person to know that they are reaching their breaking point and need to establish a better path forward in order to remain healthy. This guide helps to reduce burnout by creating a rhythm of life that includes rest, community, and an abiding in Jesus that demonstrates self-awareness. This pushes a leader to find others who are emotionally healthy and encourage those who are not to become emotionally healthy, in order to have more people to share responsibility among.

Not going beneath the surface to integrate emotional issues into discipleship contributes to dysfunctional followers of Jesus devoid of the joy that scripture promises. Failure to integrate the power of Christ into deeper emotional areas can lead believers to live duplicitous lives. This is most obvious to the people around them, their spouses, and family members. This is debilitating to the life of an individual who is committed to following Jesus, the health of the church, and its witness in the community. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality is a suitable place to start for strengthening the mission of the believers and the church.

Furthermore, with a co-vocational ministry framework as leaders and congregants are growing in their knowledge of self and others, they are becoming more equipped to be Christlike in the world together. Here there is a shared understanding that every person in the body of believers has a valuable role to play in the mission of the church, both within and outside of the church building. This model distributes power and decision-making, allowing for more collaboration and shared ownership of the work of Jesus, including making ourselves and each other healthy and whole. As a result, no one person is responsible for carrying the weight of the entire ministry, which can reduce the risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion in leaders. As they grow and deepen their understanding of boundaries, the sabbath, and relationships, they are more able to find the capacity to see and facilitate ministry wherever they go.

By prioritizing emotional health and sharing the workload of the ministry, a co-vocational ministry framework can create a culture of support and care within the congregation. When leaders model healthy practices and prioritize their own emotional health, it sets a positive example for others to follow. This can lead to a more emotionally healthy congregation, where individuals feel supported and empowered to contribute their unique gifts and talents to the mission of the church.

Next, we will address what a shared leadership model looks like practically and what it means for a church to carry responsibility together. In sharing this load, they can create this culture of *tov* and emotional health, which is deeply important to Jesus' vision for his people, and begin to develop and enact the mission throughout the world.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Marlon Robinson, in his piece titled: *Shared Leadership: A Rediscovery of an Old Paradigm and its Historical Context*, defined shared leadership as, “shared or distributed leadership is a process of influence characterized by collaborative decision-making and shared responsibility among team members, whereby team members lead each other toward the achievement of goals.”⁹⁷ We see this model of leadership expressed explicitly in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, we see Moses practice a kind of shared leadership model in taking advice from his father-in-law, Jethro, in Exodus.⁹⁸

Moses set out, ambitiously, to judge all of Israel by handling all their issues and it was creating a significant amount of wear-and-tear on Moses, to the point that Jethro noticed. When Jethro saw what he was doing he said, “The thing you do is not good [healthy]...for this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.”⁹⁹ Jethro, in his wisdom and maturity, looked at the single-styled model that Moses was operating in and thought it both unwise and unfruitful. Instead of bearing the burden alone, he divided it with leaders, who also shared his leadership and spiritual characteristics. Moses, being a humble man, heeded his wise counsel by selecting leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.¹⁰⁰ Due to this wisdom shared and received, seventy elders were chosen to share the leadership responsibilities with Moses. On the

⁹⁷Marlon Robinson, “Shared Leadership: A Rediscovery of an Old Paradigm and Its Historical Context,” *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, September 1, 2018, <https://jacl.andrews.edu/shared-leadership-a-rediscovery-of-an-old-paradigm-and-its-historical-context>.

⁹⁸ Exod. 18:13-27; 24:1.

⁹⁹ Exod. 18:17-18.

¹⁰⁰ Exod. 18:24-25.

strength of this decision, Moses' work-related anxiety and stress significantly decreased and his effectiveness as a leader increased.¹⁰¹ This illustrated how a shared leadership model is a remedy for the stress of burnout and a tool for building accountability for single-styled charismatic leaders.

Ruth Haley Barton, in her book, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, argues that shared leadership, in moving from isolation to community, is beyond the idea of teamwork. Sharing the same spirit and the burden for the community is different because while teamwork moves people in an organization around tasks and ideas, a spiritual community centers and gathers around one person, Christ.¹⁰² Ruth Haley Barton, in the same book, has a chapter titled "Finding God's Will Together," which is inspired by Numbers 9:17-18: "Whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, then the Israelites would set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the Israelites would camp. At the command of the Lord, the Israelites would set out, and at the command of the Lord they would camp." She makes the argument in this chapter that leadership decisions, *major* and seemingly *minor* leadership decisions, should happen within a leadership community, not just a single leader. She remarks,

Another aspect of involving the right people is to think outside the box about who else needs to be involved in the process. We can become so stuck in organizational silos that we overlook those who might have important contributions to make the discernment process. In addition to those who are already a part of the board, the staff, or the management team, we might consider: Who else has gifts of wisdom and discernment that we value? Who has information and experience that might help us? Who are the influencers that

¹⁰¹ Exod. 18:18; Numbers 11:11-17.

¹⁰² Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 173-174.

might be able to help communicate the outcomes of our process in an inviting way to the larger community?¹⁰³

This is a wonderful but challenging solution for a church community that often has directions given to them from the top to the bottom. Leaders who often make decisions in isolation will usually do so out of concern for a loss of power. Single-styled charismatic leaders will also use the claim of divine revelation as an excuse to not discern together with a spiritual leadership community. However, this model of shared leadership practice disarms that opportunity. There is safety in discerning God's will together in a community because the Holy Spirit has given everyone gifts, talents, and abilities to use for advancing his mission, and discernment and guidance cannot just come through one person because the primary metaphor used to characterize the called-out ones is the word: body.

A spiritual leadership community that carefully discerns what God is doing in and among them will have to first, together, be committed to not having things go their way. When the New Testament believers were faced with the question of whether Gentiles should follow the law for them to be saved, they took themselves into a time of silence, stillness, and discerning what Christ wanted to do among, in, and through them.¹⁰⁴ As Barton puts it, "they entered a time of deep listening to the conversion of the Gentiles, to the perspectives of those present, to Peter's experience with the Gentiles, and to the signs and wonders of Paul and Barnabas, and James' exposition of scripture, they determined that it was good to move in the direction of not putting an unnecessary weight on the

¹⁰³ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 174.

¹⁰⁴ Acts 15.

gentiles.”¹⁰⁵ I’m sure that this was hard, painful, and challenging for some of the Jews present, but they had to put their differences aside to see what God was saying and doing. He was doing a new thing, and in order for that to happen, they had to let their egos, perceptions, thoughts, and proclivities aside to see the burning bush moments. This practice of inclusion is made more practical and possible by putting into effect the priesthood of all believers and an APEST model, both of which are the heart of a co-vocational ministry framework.

The Priesthood of All Believers & Five-Fold Ministries (APEST)

Shared leadership is biblically defended by the idea of the priesthood of all believers. The priesthood of all believers is implicitly shown in the Old Testament but explicitly revealed in the New Testament. The priesthood of all believers asserts that every believer has direct access to God and a responsibility to serve as a priest in God's kingdom. This concept holds that there is no distinction between clergy and laity, and every believer has the privilege and responsibility to serve God in ministry.

In the Old Testament, God establishes a priesthood of the tribe of Levi to serve in the Tabernacle and, later, the temple. However, Isaiah prophesies about a day when God's people will all be priests, "But you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God."¹⁰⁶ This prophecy foreshadows the priesthood of all believers. In the New Testament, the apostle Peter writes that all believers are "a holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood."¹⁰⁷ He goes on to say that believers have been chosen by God to

¹⁰⁵ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 203.

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah 61:6 NIV.

¹⁰⁷ 1 Peter 2:5-9 NIV.

proclaim his excellencies, echoing the language of Isaiah's prophecy. Similarly, in the book of Revelation, John writes that Jesus has made his followers "a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father."¹⁰⁸

This demonstrates to us that God never intended to consolidate power into one individual or just a few but rather to diffuse power throughout the body, His church. The answer to creating a co-vocational ministry framework and activating the missional church is to re-engage the gifts of the five-fold ministry. This lets everyone who is a part of the believing community know and understand that they have a gift and a place, not just in the community of faith, but that this expression of talent and love should pour out into the world.

The Black urban church, more closely, has emphasized the call of a person and has designated it to exclusively mean those who are ordained. In *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, Raphael Warnock states, "The clergy/laity divide has contributed to the church's divided mind, creating a culture in which the laity is often viewed as passive recipients of the pastor's ministry, rather than as active participants in the life and ministry of the church...The laity is often excluded from decision-making processes and relegated to passive roles in the life of the church."¹⁰⁹ He encourages a more participatory and democratic model of church leadership that empowers the laity and encourages their active engagement in the life of the church.

¹⁰⁸ Revelation 1:6 NIV.

¹⁰⁹ Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 27-29.

The five-fold ministry is part of Apostle Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4, which verifies a co-vocational ministry framework, where he states, "He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we are all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ."¹¹⁰

Author and missiologist Alan Hirsch argues in his book *Forgotten Ways* that if a church wants to see missional movement—activating people of God and empowering every believer to bring the kingdom of God into their sphere of influence—we need to revive the ministry of APEST (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds/Pastors, and Teachers).¹¹¹ Hirsch attempts to characterize APEST in a social systems framework for the purpose of seeing how it could be expressed and realized in the social sector. He claims that this was Paul's radical plan all along, which is why it is among the best practices in leadership and management theory.¹¹²

Hirsch also asserts that if a leader wants to see the mission of God advanced and make an indelible impact on society, their church leadership should have teams dedicated to each sphere of APEST. The apostolic team should deal with networking, church planting, and strategy. On the prophetic team, there should be advocacy, social justice, prayer, and intercession. On the evangelism team, there should be evangelistic services,

¹¹⁰ Eph 4:11-13 MSG.

¹¹¹ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Ada: Brazos Press, 2008), 210-211.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 211.

street outreach, and training on spiritual gifts and deepening disciplines. On the shepherding team, there should be community groups, pastoral care, and worship-centered movements. Finally, on the teaching team, there should be the development of material, teaching courses, Biblical literacy classes, and sermon development workshops.¹¹³

Next, we will walk through each of the APEST gifts, what they mean, and how they can be seen in individuals throughout a congregation. To be clear, there is a difference between an APEST gift and an APEST title. Although people use the APEST descriptors as titles within church contexts, they are better described and will be used here, as the talents and gifts that God gave us to share his mission with the world.

Apostles

Apostles take the gospel across cultural and geographical boundaries.¹¹⁴ As J.R. Woodward, who considers Apostles to be “dream awakers,” writes, “The apostolic gifting carries with it an ability to create culture; therefore, apostles develop a keen awareness of the creation and maintenance of the cultural web of a congregation. Apostles help us to remember that the mission of the church is grounded in the mission of God and is to be proclaimed visually and verbally.”¹¹⁵ Apostles have the burden and grace to create a discipleship ethos in the congregation so that believers can boldly live out Christ's mission. They help call out spiritual gifts and create developmental

¹¹³ Ibid., 214.

¹¹⁴ Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Church* (Hoboken: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 99.

¹¹⁵ J. R. Woodward and Alan Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 126.

opportunities. The archetypal names for apostles are words like founder, general, visionary, pioneer, and adventurer. We see the apostolic genius in society in business, politics, architecture, law, governance, innovation, and even entrepreneurship.¹¹⁶ Helping to show people in the congregation that not only do they have a gift for maturing those into faith, but that their gift applies outside the walls of a building will aid in helping them to see that God is also at work in their work, their vocation, their jobs, and their careers, as they're using this gift there as well.

Prophets

Prophets are essential in that they reveal the heart of God and the hearts of those in the congregation. Prophets call the church to God's vision for social order, and they help the congregation to advocate and use their voices on behalf of the poor and oppressed. J.R. Woodward says it like this, "Old Testament prophets were God-intoxicated advocates of social justice...their authority and their social passion came from the immediacy of their experience of God and not from institutional authorization."¹¹⁷

In other words, prophets were the embodiment of God's heart on the earth, whether by sharing a word on justice or by bearing the hope of the future into present-day trouble and oppression. Prophets are usually those who are deeply disturbed in their spirits by injustice and oppressive regimes that can be both religious and civil. Additionally, they speak truth to power and find creative ways to liberate those who are

¹¹⁶ Alan Hirsch and Jessie Cruickshank, *Activating 5Q: A User's Guide* (Los Angeles: 100 Movements Publishing, 2018), 50.

¹¹⁷ Woodward and Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 133.

captives and those who live on the margins. They work heartily toward seeing justice and mercy ministries. The focal concern of the prophet is to see God's shalom, God's wholeness, and God's preferred vision for the world to become a reality. Due to them having an incredible sensitivity to God's heart and a heart for others, prophets also have a passion to see people walk with God, they are sensitive to the Holy Spirit in unusual ways, and they may even receive spontaneous words from the Lord for the sake of the community.¹¹⁸

The archetypal words that would describe prophets are seers, warriors, poets, and reformers. These are usually the people who rouse, cause disturbances, resist the status quo, and shake the waters.

Evangelists

J. R. Woodward gives evangelists the nickname of "storytellers" because they help the congregation share God's story in such a way that those who are not followers of Jesus, can hear the word, accept it readily, and believe. The evangelists' role is to equip the church to proclaim the good news by being witnesses and agents, helping them to see "secular" spaces as sacred spaces.¹¹⁹ Evangelists remind everyone who is part of the local church that God has blessed them, chosen them, and is passionate about them sharing the good news. They remind everyone not to get too comfortable in being insular but to open up for the sake of enlarging the family. They remind us that until Jesus returns, we have nations to bless, souls to reach, and people to share with.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 140.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 143.

Archetypal words for Evangelist are messenger, champion, and storyteller. In the culture, they'd be known as recruiters, negotiators, media workers, communicators, journalists, and even motivational speakers. If someone has a heart for those far from God, feeling as though their church is too insular, and or has a huge burden for the community to taste God's goodness, then perhaps they are an evangelist.

Shepherds/Pastors

In *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church*, Harris imagines decentralizing the pulpit and the clergy and laity divide, one where the ordained and the laity both have power and gifting of the same authority. She believes our gifts should complement one another for the benefit of the community.¹²⁰ However, this is only mostly imagined today, especially when it comes to the role of a pastor.

The role of the pastor has been hijacked and abused and within APEST it is seen as the most identifiable and illustrated gift within the community. This line of reasoning might have been developed due to our narrow view of the work of Christ as well. Because of church history and mainline Christian literature through time, we've only seen Jesus as a shepherd, not realizing that Jesus is the chief apostle, prophet, evangelist, and teacher. Christ is the one who embodied all gifts within his life and ministry. Our communities have elevated the gift of the pastor at the expense of the other gifts given to the body of Christ.

I am not proposing that we discard this role as it pertains to legal compliance and organizational structure, but what I am saying is that we need to make room for the other gifts to surround the pastor and make clear that "the" pastor is not the only person with a

¹²⁰ Harris, *Fashion Me a People*, 33.

pastoral gift. One question I would have for any Black church is, "Are we making space within the life, rhythm, and matrix of our church for all of the ascension gifts to fill the community?" J.R. Woodward gives those who are gifted with the ministry of pastor as "soul healers." These people in the community help others work through past hurts and pursue wholeness, not just individually but in the context of the community. "Soul healers help the community to cultivate a life-giving spirituality and embody reconciliation."¹²¹ If a congregant has a heart for those hurting, if they're seeking ways for their community to be more of a family, if they have a gift to make peace between people, if they're equipping others to do the same, then they probably are a pastor.

Archetypal names for those who are shepherds/pastors are caregiver, defender, peacemakers, helper, servant, and healer. Shepherds are empathetic, relational, communal, personal, and protective. Those in the field of medicine, community development, psychology, education, and family could be seen operating in this gift within society.

Teachers

N. T. Wright says, "The Bible is there to enable God's people to be equipped to do God's work in the world, not to give them an excuse to sit back smugly, knowing they possess all God's truth."¹²² Those in the community gifted as teachers are coined by J.R. Woodward as "light givers." They help shed light on the biblical text and help people to

¹²¹ Woodward and Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 151.

¹²² N.T Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010), 184.

understand the Bible in a life-giving and liberating way.¹²³ They help those in the congregation not just see the story of God but to show others how they themselves are active participants and players in this same story. George R. Hunsberger states, “The framework for biblical interpretation is the story it tells of the mission of God and the formation of a community sent to participate in it.”¹²⁴ The idea is that the scriptures were not just given to us as a historical document or a set of guidelines for us to follow, God is giving us missional insight into the past that at the same time calls us to action in the present for the sake of his preferred vision for the future. God’s story has always been one working toward redemption and repair, the story of the Scriptures shows us nothing but a God that desires this, and teachers illuminate this truth.

If someone has a hunger to devour and understand the Scriptures, if they feel a sense of frustration when someone doesn’t share the same passion, if they often are seen as the “go-to person” when someone finds it hard to understand the Bible, then they are probably teachers. Archetypal names for teachers are sages, thinkers, guides, and philosophers. People who are teachers will most likely be found in culture as mentors, theologians, researchers, debaters, and educators.

Even when it comes to order in the church, Paul says, “When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Everything should be done so that the church may be built. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or three – should speak, one at a time, and someone must

¹²³ Woodward and Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 67.

¹²⁴ George R. Hunsberger, “Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping the Conversation,” *The Gospel and Our Culture Network*, January 28, 2009, www.gocn.org/resources/articles/proposals-missional-hermeneutic-mapping-conversation.

interpret.”¹²⁵ There is a mutuality happening in this type of community, a giving, and a receiving. This can only happen if there are environments and atmospheres that facilitate this type of activity and encourage people to use gifts within them. There are those who sit in the pews Sunday after Sunday, receiving and spectating, and their gifts are being stifled and atrophied, which weakens not just the believing community but the unbelieving society that so desperately is looking for the kingdom of God to be realized.

With these gifts discovered, understood, and unleashed across a congregation, it can be a powerful way to implement a co-vocational ministry framework and create succession planning within a church. When the church is able to identify and develop potential successors, it can help ensure the longevity and sustainability of the church, which is especially important because many churches face challenges related to aging congregations and declining membership. By utilizing APEST and implementing a co-vocational ministry framework, churches can create a culture of shared ownership and collaboration that allows for multiple individuals to contribute to the leadership and ministry of the church. This can lead to a healthier and more sustainable church community that is able to adapt to changing circumstances and continue to thrive for years to come.

This work may not always feel natural or realistic within every type of church. Next, we will walk through possible workarounds for denominational polity restrictions and leadership models that may not seem to allow this type of co-vocational ministry framework and leadership model.

¹²⁵ 1 Cor 12:26-27

Denominational Polity Restrictions

Perhaps the senior pastor is in a church context where there is a certain polity model where they feel as though they cannot share the leadership. No matter what denomination a church is in (even if it's non-denominational), there should be a board of directors (external/internal) for the organization composed of people with different skills, gifts, expertise, and wisdom in a variety of areas. Every church, in addition to a board of elders, will probably have ministers and deacons that help the senior pastor to carry the vision out, who should also be empowered through understanding their APEST gift and given the responsibility to own missional work. They should also be there to provide checks and balances to senior leaders. There are other forms of protection and accountability within churches, including management teams. If a denomination has polity in place, there is accountability and safety there, and the leader should seek to press into those streams of accountability and protection. Lastly, there should be a "Rule of Life" for the senior leader with limits provided. Some examples may include transparency, teaching teams, delegation, and empowerment, sabbath, vacations, etc. to provide a sense of limitation to the leader.

Hirsch argues that "organizations experience situations where prevailing organizational systems and designs originally used to host and transmit the found ideals no longer get the job done."¹²⁶ Hirsch suggests that we very much believe in Jesus and in his life-giving message of salvation and the kingdom of God that's here and is coming. The problem lies in the fact that our models, organizations, liturgies, and presentations are not as effective as they once were. Hirsch makes another daring claim: "In the

¹²⁶ Hirsch and Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution*, xxxi.

end...this involves a failure to be the people God intended us to be: a radical, hard-core, fully engaged, living movement of people loved and redeemed by Jesus, committed to his causes on earth.”¹²⁷ Hirsch believes that the reason our churches aren’t making the impact that they should be making is that we have relied on “traditional paradigms” and we have relied on past methods and ways of doing church which has resulted in the mission and impact of the church to falter and weaken. But this work will continue to be offered another way.

Lastly, within this chapter, we will more deeply understand what a missional church is and how the view of the laity as owners of God’s work (a co-vocational ministry framework) can mobilize faith communities.

WHAT IS A MISSIONAL CHURCH?

J.R. Woodward defines a missional culture in a church in his book, *Creating a Missional Culture* as, “A community of believers that live out their calling to be a sign of the kingdom, pointing to the reality beyond what we can see, a foretaste of the kingdom where they grow to love one another as Christ loves them, and they are committed to being instruments in the hands of God to bring more of heaven to earth in concrete ways.”¹²⁸ The posture of a missional church is one that realizes that the church is a community of “sent ones.” A missional church is a community of believers that sees itself as being sent into the world to participate in God’s mission of reconciling everything to Himself. This view of the church emphasizes the importance of being

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

outwardly focused, engaging with the needs and concerns of the surrounding community, and demonstrating the love and grace of Jesus in practical ways.

Karl Barth is credited for the reintroduction of the classical term, “mission Dei.” The idea is that God the Father sends the Son and the Spirit into the world and the Father, Son, and Spirit sends the church into the world for the life of the world and for God’s intended purpose.¹²⁹ Theologian Christopher J. H. Wright has said, “It is not the church that has a church mission, but God’s mission has a church.”¹³⁰ The Church, Black urban churches, must embrace this and become churches that celebrate all the gifts and leverage the power that lives within each of us through Jesus so that we can move into the world and impact all we encounter.

Faith and Work: The Marketplace and the Mission of God

Lesslie Newbigin said, “Believers participate in Christ’s priesthood not within the walls of the church, but in the daily business of the world” (@lesslienewbigin, Twitter, March 27, 2020).¹³¹ We have not only stifled the APEST movement within our contemporary churches, but we’ve also created a culture of comfort and consumption. In the standard contemporary church growth model, 90% of the church is passive and 10% of the church is active.¹³² Alan Hirsch, asks a striking question in his book *Forgotten Ways*, “Is this the type of ecclesia Jesus imagined?” I believe Newbigin and Hirsch are

¹²⁹ Woodward and Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 27.

¹³⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

¹³¹ Lesslie Newbigin (@lesslienewbigin), “Believers participate in Christ’s priesthood not within the walls of the church, but in the daily business of the world,” Twitter, March 27, 2020, <https://twitter.com/lesslienewbigin/status/1243671596201660416>.

¹³² Woodward and Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 27.

onto something, and it has to do with both the marketplace and the mission of God.

Hirsch also suggests that nothing has snapped the apostolic genius of the missional imprint of the church other than the creation of the clergy/laity divide.¹³³ This has caused Christians to think that ministry is on the pulpit and not in my designated place of work. We need a model that shows us what we do outside the four walls of the church and the service we bring to others inside the church are both a part of God's mission.

In Tim Keller's book, *Every Good Endeavor*, he seeks to remind us that work is not just an important part of our wiring as human beings, but also an integral part of worship. Although work has been fractured, and seen as fruitless, and can seem pointless, Keller reminds us of the power of the gospel to impact the reason for our work and how God plans to use it for us and others. In order to mobilize this missional church towards seeing the marketplace as a mission, we need to see that God is moving behind everything we do in our work. Keller states, "If the God of the Bible exists, and there is a True Reality beneath and behind this one, and this life is not the only life, then every good endeavor, even the simplest ones, can matter forever."¹³⁴ Keller gives a series of examples by using a city planner and a lawyer to illustrate how both of these occupations are pointing to a "tree."

You go into city planning? Why? You are excited about cities, and you have a vision about how a real city ought to be... You are likely discouraged because throughout your life you probably will not get more than a leaf or a branch done. But there really is a New Jerusalem, a heavenly city coming... Or let's say you are a lawyer, and you go into law because you have a vision for a flourishing society ruled by equity and peace. In ten years, you will likely be disillusioned because you will find that as much as you are trying to work on important things,

¹³³ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 62.

¹³⁴ Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 15.

so much of what you do is minutiae. Once or twice in your life, you may feel like you have finally “gotten a leaf out...whatever your work, you need to know this, there really is a tree. Whatever you are seeking in your work— the city of justice and peace, the world of brilliance and beauty, the order, the healing—it is all there.¹³⁵

Keller shows that the best and brightest way to redeem work is to reveal the God who is behind it and has given everyone a part to play: the desires, the dreams, the talents, experiences, and gifts. God wants to use all of it to push his kingdom further.

BELLS: Missional Movements

Michael Frost, in his book *Surprise the World*, gives an answer to how a church can become “outward facing” and missional in its attempts to bring the kingdom of God to one's neighborhood, city, or region. Frost calls them missional habits or missional rhythms. These are a set of habits that are nurtured within a church to give shape to one's missional outlook and also the courage to move from spectator to participant in The Great Commission. The habits are remembered and coined through a mnemonic device that Frost calls, BELLS. A church, when committed to these missional rhythms of blessing, eating with others, listening for the Holy Spirit, learning of Christ, and putting it all into action, then our lives won't be questionable.¹³⁶ Frost suggests that the reason our churches aren't seeing missional movement and impact is that we focus so much on preaching and “discipleship” programs and not necessarily on demonstrating the gospel.¹³⁷ Jesus came proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom of God in a variety of

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Michael Frost, *Surprise the World: The Five Habits of Highly Missional People* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2016), 21.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

ways and the church has stuck to just one vein of how he brought the kingdom. Frost says, “If our only habits as Christians are going to church and attending meetings, they’re not going to connect us with unbelievers nor invite their curiosity about our faith.”¹³⁸

Frost outlines the habits as such:

B: Bless - I will bless three people this week, at least one of whom is not a member of our church.

E: Eat - I will eat with three people this week, at least one of whom is not a member of our church.

L: Listen - I will spend at least one period of the week listening for the Spirit’s voice

L: Learn - I will spend at least one period of the week learning Christ

S: Sent - I will journal throughout the week about all the ways I alerted others to the reign of God through Christ.¹³⁹

Each of these habits shapes those in the faith community around a certain kind of missional value needed to move the mission forward. Those who are missionally focused will be generous, hospitable, Spirit-led, Christlike, and missional. The argument that Frost makes is that these missional habits do more than just make the world a better place. It is that these habits will make everyone look more like Christ, thereby organically and freely impacting the world. Our formation and discipleship are oriented around “we have to bring the kingdom, so we need to look more like Christ.” The way of Jesus says, “Be formed into the image of Christ, and you will have no choice but to bring his light and presence into the world.” It is like Dr. Mulholland argues, “Often, we expend amazing amounts of energy and resources to be in the world for God, but you see, we are called to be in God for the world.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Mulholland, *The Deeper Journey*, 47-48.

By being a missional church, everyone is extending their life to others and serving the needs of those around them, because they are empowered through shared leadership, have more health and energy to give out to the world, and embrace the goodness of themselves, each other and the world at large. This very co-vocational ministry framework prioritizes the view of the laity as equal owners of God's work and inspires and equips every member of the congregation to be actively engaged in the mission of the church. When every person is able to use their gifts and talents in service to God and others, the church is better able to meet the needs of the community, build relationships, and demonstrate the work of Jesus, thus contributing to the long-term health and sustainability of the church. Finally, we will walk through the methodology for implementing a co-vocational ministry framework within a Black urban church context.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY: A CO-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE

This kind of leadership approach and culture shift won't be easy. What I'm bringing forward goes against traditional and ingrained communal habits. I present a different, more sustainable way for both pastors and churches to embrace the way of Jesus and to equip the saints for the work of ministry, in and out of the church walls. This equipping creates a community where the leader is aware of themselves and their skills enough to train and delegate to all so that everyone is seen as a "minister," both through ordination, most importantly in their day-to-day lives. This is a community where the priesthood of believers is not just a theology but a reality, where the kingdom of God extends outside the community of Christ-believers through our Christlikeness, in our grace toward others, our emotional capacities, and our collaborative approaches.

The method of incorporating this framework within a ministry context begins with the leader. The leader must first recognize that they are a single-styled leader and have the willingness to want to change that style and the culture that results from it. Secondly, the leader must have the desire to see ministry as holistically including every aspect of life. Therefore, whether a pastor is a full-time pastor or has a job outside of the church, they both have the opportunity to embrace a co-vocational ministry framework, presenting themselves and their skills and their congregant's selves and skills as useful and essential, wherever they are. As a reminder, within this framework, co-vocation simply means to be chosen and therefore gifted, no matter where a Christian is or what they do, to live a deep life with Jesus that naturally extends to all people (to have habits/emotional health), to have authority (shared leadership) and to be sent (missional).

Once this leader has affirmed their recognition and desire to adopt this framework, I would begin to assess them, other designated leaders, and the church, moving through to, emotionally healthy spirituality, and shared leadership. I'd also assess their mission work at the start of our time together, and again at the end, to note improvements and challenges to community engagement. First, we will walk through the missional assessments that take place at the start.

ASSESSING THE CURRENT MISSIONAL CULTURE OF THE CHURCH

Through quantitative and qualitative audits, I would first assess the missional culture of the church. Quantitatively, I would collect data on how many missional events the church has conducted in the past 5 years, and their impacts. I would also look into the financial data of the church and quantify how much of their donations have gone outward. Qualitatively, I would observe the nature of the congregation, how welcoming they are to those who seem to be outsiders, and how likely they are to contribute with their time, talents, or treasures to the community or outward events. I would observe and note how often the BELLS model is being used, consciously or unconsciously, including how often leaders and congregants are blessing others without being prompted, eating together, listening to those who aren't leaders, learning from one another, and being sent into the world. This would take place by observing sermons, after-church activities and gatherings, and weekly meetings.

I would follow up with this same analysis 6 months, 1 year, and 5 years after the conclusion of implementing the co-vocational framework to see the similarities and differences.

The audit will look similar to the table below, ensuring that various members of the church's voices are heard, and feedback is incorporated to arrive at the final conclusions and insights. In order to not skew the results, churches would not be made aware of the contents or questions within the audit. Following the initial assessment, we begin implementing tov habits.

Table 1. Church Audit

Community Engagement	Does the church have programs or events that serve the community, such as a food bank, a clothing drive, or a soup kitchen?
	Are members of the church actively involved in community outreach?
	Are there partnerships with local organizations, such as schools or non-profits?
Discipleship	Does the church have a discipleship program or small groups that promote spiritual growth and development?
	Are there opportunities for members to serve within the church, such as through teaching or mentoring?
Missions Work	Does the church actively support or participate in missions, either domestically or internationally?
	Are members of the church encouraged to go on mission trips or to support missionaries financially?
Worship and Preaching	Does the church's worship and preaching emphasize the mission of the church, such as evangelism or social justice?
	Is there a focus on empowering members to live out their faith in their daily lives?
Attendance	How many people attend the church on a regular basis?
	How many people are bringing visitors on a weekly basis?
	Is there growth or decline in attendance over time?

Giving	How much money is donated to the church, and how is it allocated?
	Is a significant portion of the budget allocated for community outreach or mission work?
Volunteerism	How many members of the church volunteer their time or talents to the church or community outreach programs?
	Is there an increase or decrease in volunteerism over time?
Baptisms and New Members	How many people have been baptized or become new members of the church in the past year?
	Are there trends in these numbers over time?
Culture	Is the leadership and are the members described as friendly, welcoming, inviting, open to new ideas, and Christlike?
	What words define the culture of the church?

TOV HABITS ASSESSMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

To assess the leadership and church's tov habits, I would begin with a survey by asking questions of pastors, associates, directors, staff, congregants, etc., I would make the survey anonymous to give people the freedom to share. From there, I would meet with the leadership to consider which areas are most important and then consider preaching and teaching. From there, I would do a series of classes and workshops on tov and what a tov culture is. Conversely, I would also include in that what the antithesis of tov looks like in an institution, a set of leaders, and a church, so that members can become aware of the warning signs to look out for. From there, I would invite the congregation to complete the personal assessments that are found at the end of each chapter (Empathy, Grace, Truth-Telling, Justice, etc.). Everyone, including pastors, is

expected to be present for these classes, workshops, and meetings. The outline look similar to the steps listed below:

1. **Assessment**—Assess the current habits and practices within the congregation through anonymous surveys and interviews of the entire congregation. Identify and analyze areas where there is a need for improvement and areas where there are strengths that can be built upon.
2. **Meet with Church Leadership**—Schedule an initial meeting with the church leadership to discuss the level of integrity the church has when lined up against the habits of a tov culture. This will be one where the analysis of the survey will be reported and openly discussed to work toward remedies for low areas and congratulations and ways to continue in high areas. Follow-up meetings will be held with individual leaders, potential leaders, and lay members to provide space for candid and honest sharing that may have been left out or need more detail within the survey. Both positive and negative responses are welcome. The final meeting for this round will be held to set the action plan in motion.
3. **Education**—Educate the congregation about the importance of TOV habits and how they can contribute to the overall health and well-being of the church. Through workshops, courses, book clubs, and sermons, depending on the varying levels and types of learning, we will familiarize the church with the work of TOV. Pastors, staff, and leaders are required to read the book in its entirety and participate in a workshop or book club. Within each group,

there will be external facilitators who will be prepared to discuss the concepts in depth.

4. **Implementation**—By creating new programs or initiatives, or modifying existing programs to align with tov habits, we will begin to implement tov habits across the congregation in all aspects of the church. This plan may include changes to the liturgy, small group gatherings, outreach programs, and other areas of community life.
5. **Monitor Progress and Provide Feedback**—Do regular check-ins with the church leadership to monitor their progress and provide feedback. This is an opportunity to celebrate success, address challenges, and adjust. Establish a system for holding individuals and the congregation as a whole accountable for implementing tov habits. This may involve creating accountability partners or small groups.
6. **Celebrate Successes**—Share stories of how the church’s efforts have impacted individuals and communities and encourage continued growth and development.

Through tov habits, we are renewing the souls of our congregations, giving way for leaders to rise as healthy people who desire to give back to the world the grace that was given to them. As tov habits are being implemented and accepted throughout the congregation, we begin incorporating emotionally healthy spirituality, ensuring there is a balance between congregational and individual health.

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY (EHS) ASSESSMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

In a Black urban church, there would need to be an intentional leadership-wide campaign on emotional health and wellness before the course is to be rolled out to the entire church community. About 3-6 months before the course is rolled out, several things need to happen for a smooth transition. Rolling out the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality course in a church with people of color who may have an aversion toward mental health will require a thoughtful and culturally sensitive approach. Before ever mentioning the phrase or work, “emotionally healthy spirituality,” we would need to understand the state of mental health of Black people and where the church stands with its effort and acceptance. Suggestions for the initial church campaign include:

- (1) Addressing the cultural stigma around mental health: Through sermons and workshops, it is essential to acknowledge and address the cultural stigma surrounding mental health in the community. Urban churches preparing to do this should consider incorporating a message from a respected leader in the field of psychology and mental health who can speak to the importance of mental health and break down any cultural misconceptions around it.
- (2) Engage Trusted Church Members: Identify and engage with trusted church members who can advocate championing mental/emotional health. These individuals can help spread the word, answer questions, and encourage future participation in the course and work once we move into practically discussing and unlocking EHS.
- (3) Leverage Digital Platforms: The Black urban church is likely using digital tools like Tik Tok, Instagram, and Facebook. Go where they are to share facts

and myths about mental/emotional health, share testimonials from individuals who have already been impacted by investing in their mental and emotional health, and finally use social media to engage the larger community and provide updates on when the course will be launched in the church.

- (4) Provide Resources and Support: Provide resources and support before the course is launched. Undoubtedly, some will feel triggered, afraid, and apathetic toward mental and emotional health discussions and services due to trauma, PTSD, and present pain. Create a plan to host regular check-ins with folks who seem perturbed, create a support group, and offer individual counseling sessions.

Once this is complete, the church can move on to discussing EHS as a resource and tool to deepen spiritual and emotional health. Scazzero makes it clear that a church committed to hosting EHS invites people to do three things: (1) Leave a superficial, shallow spirituality; (2) Open up their interior world so Christ can transform it; (3) Develop their own personal relationship with Jesus and not live off of the spirituality of other people.¹⁴¹ In order to move through these invitations, many conversations have to take place to come to this reality. I would invite the pastor and leaders to answer these questions and have these conversations first, inviting transformation within each of them first, in order for them to feel comfortable, secure, and willing to have others walk through the same movements. Questions and conversation starters would look like this:

¹⁴¹ Peter Scazzero, "The EHS Course," *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, July 24, 2014, <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/the-ehs-course-blog/>.

Table 2. Questions and Conversation Starters

On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your current spiritual growth?
On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your current emotional health?
How often do you engage in spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, and Scripture reading?
How often do you engage in mental health practices such as therapy, physical exercise, gratitude exercises, or breathing exercises?
Do you feel equipped to share your faith with others in your workplace or community?
How often do you have deep, meaningful conversations with others about your faith journey?
How would you rate the level of authenticity and vulnerability in your church?
Can you describe a time when you experienced a significant spiritual or emotional transformation?
How does your faith impact your daily life, particularly in the workplace or community?
How do your emotions impact your daily life, particularly in church or around church members?
How do you see your role in advancing the mission of God in your workplace or community?
Can you describe a meaningful interaction or relationship that has helped you grow in your faith?
Can you describe a meaningful interaction or relationship that has helped you grow in your emotional maturity?
What changes would you need to see in the church to deepen your spiritual or emotional growth and relationship with Christ?

These pillar questions that Scazzerro has invited us to answer have also been formed into courses. Courses include themes such as Knowing Yourself that You May Know God, Going Back to Go Forward, Journeying Through the Wall, Enlarging Your Soul Through Grief and Loss, Discovering the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath, Growing into An Emotionally Mature Adult, and Developing a Rule of Life. Through

this course, men and women will develop the skills needed to relate to themselves, connect to God, and love others well, in all areas of life.

It is essential to approach the rollout of the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality courses with sensitivity, an understanding of the community's unique challenges and experiences, and a commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment. For this to be effective, leaders of various skills, backgrounds, and histories should be considered, so that all members of the congregation can feel seen and led by someone who understands them. By doing so, a leader can help to break down barriers to mental health and empower individuals to prioritize their emotional well-being, along with empowering all people to be leaders and facilitators of the changing culture.

While those enrolled will complete the sessions, committing themselves to 2 hours once a week of these topics, the church-at-large, will be doing a sermon series on "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality," each week hosted by a different member of the teaching team who has gone through the course. As new course members go through the series in-depth, there will be supplemental writings or videos from all types of people to reinforce the principle for that week. This will also give the larger church community members who may not be able to attend throughout the week an opportunity to experience a bit of the course and hear about it from various voices and perspectives. During the course, every member of the church community will be invited to take the survey listed above, so that we can get a comprehensive view of where the congregation is with emotional health.

Finally, we will stick close to this work. This practice will ensure that the church is fostering a culture of authenticity and transparency. As all leaders and members are

being more open, barriers are being broken and the hierarchy is being flattened. This creates more space for there to be honest communication, more value added to the table and additional thoughts to be shared. Progress will regularly be evaluated by conducting anonymous, random surveys or focus groups to determine the impact of the EHS implementation. Make the necessary adjustments based on the feedback received to ensure that the implementation is effective and sustainable. Through EHS we are giving hope to our lives and work, making space for more by sharing with others, and breathing new life into each individual in our church communities.

SHARED LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The height of the co-vocational ministry framework is its shared leadership model. To arrive at the point of sharing leadership means that the church is flowing through tov habits, developing a life of integrated emotional and spiritual health and everyone feels open, ready, and willing to share the responsibility in their church community.

Following are practical steps for breaking down the clergy/laity divide and sharing leadership among the entire congregation through APEST:

1. Assessment and identification: Begin by assessing spiritual and natural gifts, talents, and passions through tests. This may involve consulting professional advisors to discern and confirm individual callings. There are many APEST tools widely available but some of the best questions I have seen for each of the gifts are outlined below. These questions model the types of themes and ways the survey questions should be asked.

Table 3. Shared Leadership Categories

Apostles	As a child, did you enjoy organizing or leading games or activities with other kids?
Prophets	Do you have a strong sense of justice and righteousness, and do you speak up for what you believe is right?
Evangelists	Do you enjoy meeting new people and making new friends?
Shepherds	Have you ever been told that you are a good listener and that people find it easy to confide in you?
Teachers	Have you been told you have a natural ability to explain complex ideas in a simple way?

2. Training and development: Once each person has a gift identified and confirmed by another person within the church. Strategically develop and provide opportunities for training and growth that are tailored to the specific gifts and calling of each individual. Include various pathways for learning including mentorship, workshops, or conferences that help individuals develop their skills and the knowledge they need to effectively serve in ministry, within and outside of the church.
3. Placement: Once individuals have been trained, it is important to place them in roles that align with their gifts and callings. This may involve creating new positions or ministries within the church or assigning/replacing individuals to existing roles.
4. Support and oversight: Provide ongoing support and oversight for individuals serving, whether inside or outside of the church, this should include regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and opportunities for continued training and development.

5. Collaboration: Encourage collaboration and teamwork between individuals serving in different ministry roles. This creates a culture of mutual support and accountability and can help ensure that various ministries within the church are working toward a common goal.

By creating a structured and intentional process for identifying and supporting all congregants, churches can cultivate a culture of spiritual and natural growth, community empowerment, and work toward the continued health and life of the church together.

Additionally, the volunteer and leadership structures of the church will be revisited and updated to appropriately match the new systems of the church. This could look like ordained elders and ministers being replaced by the laity in positions like prayer leader, worship leader, and bible study teacher—thus leveraging the power dynamic in leadership and dispersing it among the entire body. Alongside this, we will host workshops and classes regularly throughout the year that integrate faith and work, help people to see their everyday work in the marketplace as holy and sacred, and show them how their gift enhances and aids them in that work.

Lastly, on a leadership level, APEST teams will be introduced as senior leadership. While this is being done, there will be a sermon series on gifts and their use inside and outside the church, workshops on how to discern gifts in the community, and how that spiritual gift should be used to reach someone outside the church. Leaders and laity are all expected to attend.

In conclusion, the methodology of this work presents a comprehensive approach to implementing a co-vocational ministry framework in a congregation, through integrating tov habits, emotional and spiritual health, and a shared leadership model. The

methodology presented in this section includes both qualitative and quantitative methods for assessing the missional habits of a congregation, implementing TOV habits, understanding and producing an emotionally healthy church, and identifying APEST gifts. The use of questionnaires, audits, and practical plans can help to ensure that the implementation of a co-vocational ministry framework is well-planned and intentional and that it effectively promotes the development of spiritually healthy leaders and a missional culture within the church. By adopting this methodology, congregations can create a sustainable model of ministry that empowers all members to live out their calling and make a meaningful impact both within the church and in the broader community.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Black urban church has the potential to continue its call to be a hub of transformation and goodness in urban communities, especially as it embraces a co-vocational ministry framework with a commitment to tov habits, emotional health, and a shared leadership model. Tov habits create a culture of goodness and promote healthy relationships, emotional health enables individuals to be self-aware, identify and resist burnout, be transparent and authentic, and shared leadership fosters collaboration and a sense of ownership in their mission. Together, these elements create a culture of wholeness and unity that is necessary for a co-vocational ministry to thrive and make a meaningful impact in the community. By doing so, the co-vocational church can serve under an infrastructure that will invite everyone in the congregation to participate in God's mission and play a part in his story. There are unique challenges facing the Black urban church; as such, this research provides a roadmap for church leaders and church members who seek to create a space that fosters a missional movement in their local church context.

As Black urban churches begin to consider the effects that a co-vocational ministry framework could have on their present and future, I leave them with the questions penned by J. R. Woodward to remind us of and anchor us in the missional work that Christ has for us. These questions are themed with four words: Narrative, Rituals, Institution, and Ethics. The questions, respectively, are: What is God's calling for our

church?; What are our core practices?; How will we fulfill our calling?"; and What does it mean for us to be faithful?¹⁴²

With a church that is answering these questions together, there is no way we can miss the mission of Jesus. When we all participate and share the experiences of our own individual narratives, rituals, institutions, and ethics, the church can grow wider and deeper. This is what I am seeking to do with my own church community. Acts Church in Yonkers, New York is "continuing the story of Jesus." We live out our co-vocational ministry framework through communion, community, and co-mission. In communion, the whole church invites people into rhythms of life, which shape into loving God, loving each other, and loving our neighbors. In the community, the whole church invites people into rhythms of life in which they develop and move deeper into relationships with one another through conversation, work, eating and drinking, and play. In co-mission, the whole church is invited to discern where God is inviting them to move deeper into prophetic work (i.e., justice and mercy ministries) and join God in bringing renewal to that area.

Ultimately, this work seeks to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the role of the Black Church and the place of the co-vocational ministry framework in advancing the kingdom of God in urban communities. It is my prayer that this work will inspire the Black urban church to take bold steps toward sustaining its life and continuing its legacy of empowerment, hope, and light in the Black community. By creating a church that is truly inclusive and responsive to the needs of its congregants, the Black church can remain a relevant and transformative force for generations to come.

¹⁴² Woodward and Hirsch, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 177.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “38% Of U.S. Pastors Have Thought about Quitting Full-Time Ministry in the Past Year.” *Barna Group*. November 16, 2021. <https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being>.
- Austin, Michael W. “Anti-Intellectualism in the Church.” *Christian Research Institute* (October 2022): JAF2394. <https://www.equip.org/articles/anti-intellectualism-church/>.
- Ayers, Mike. “10 Ways for Every Pastor to Be More Relational.” *Gospel-Centered Resources from Midwestern Seminary*. April 20, 2021. <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/10-ways-for-every-pastor-to-be-more-relational/>.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018.
- Beaty, Katelyn. *Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits Are Hurting the Church*. Ada: Brazos Press, 2022.
- Becker, William H. “The Black Church: Manhood and Mission.” In *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*. Edited by Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1997, 179–95.
- Best, Felton. *Black Religious Leadership from the Slave Community to the Million Man March: Flames of Fire*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998.
- “Bishop Eddie Long, Controversial and Influential Megachurch Leader Outside Atlanta, Dies Age 63.” CBS News. January 15, 2017. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bishop-eddie-long-controversial-influential-megachurch-leader-dies-age-63/>.
- “Bivocational and Covocational: Definitions.” Send Network. February 4, 2019. <https://www.namb.net/send-network/resource/rethinking-bivocational-church-planting-what-is-covocational-2/>.
- Blake, John. “Bishop Long’s ‘anointed’ path to power at New Birth,” CNN. September 28, 2010. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/09/28/long.new.birth/index.html>.
- Brisco, Brad. *Covocational Church Planting: Aligning Your Marketplace Calling & the Mission of God*. Denver: SEND Network of the North American Mission Board, 2018.
- Brisco, Brad. “Co-vocational church planting: Rethinking vocation.” *Send Network*. September 20, 2017. <https://www.namb.net/send-network/resource/covocational-church-planting-rethinking-vocation/>.

- Brown, Natasha R., Candice L. Alick, Alexis G. Heaston, Shanada Monestime, and Nicolette Powe. "The Black Church and Public Health: A Key Partnership for Theory Driven COVID-19 Recovery Efforts." *Journal of Primary Care & Community Health* 13: 21501319221097672 (May 26, 2022): 2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9150224>.
- Burgess, Harold William. *Models of Religious Education: Theory and Practice in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*. Nappanee: Evangelical Publishing House, 2001.
- Chandler, Diane J. "Pastoral Burnout and the Impact of Personal Spiritual Renewal, Rest-Taking, and Support System Practices." *Pastoral Psychology* 58(3):273-287. (June 2008): 276. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225618701_Pastoral_Burnout_and_the_Impact_of_Personal_Spiritual_Renewal_Rest-taking_and_Support_System_Practices.
- Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011.
- Costello, Thomas. "Excited about Bivocational Ministry? First Consider Pros and Cons." *REACHRIGHT*. August 2, 2022. <https://reachrightstudios.com/bivocational-ministry/>.
- DeGroat, Chuck. *When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community from Emotional and Spiritual Abuse*. Downers Grove: InterVarsityPress, 2020.
- Denney, Andrew S. "Child Sex Abusers in Protestant Christian Churches: An Offender Typology." *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology* 12(1):42-79 (January 2, 2023): 46. <https://www.qualitativecriminology.com/pub/osa148h6/release/2>.
- Dictionary.com. "Urban Definition & Meaning." Accessed April 15, 2023. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/urban>.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Fawcett Publications, 1961.
- Fraga, Juli. "Here's How Living in a City Can Mess with Your Mental Health." *Healthline*. February 29, 2019. <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/living-in-a-city>.
- Frost, Michael. *Surprise the World: The Five Habits of Highly Missional People*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2016.
- Fulton, Brad R. "Americans are in a mental health crisis – especially African Americans. Can churches help?" *The Conversation*. October 1, 2021.

<https://theconversation.com/americans-are-in-a-mental-health-crisis-especially-african-americans-can-churches-help-167871>.

- Gates Jr., Henry Louis. "The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This is Our Song." Interview with Barbara D. Savage. PBS. February 16-17, 2021. Documentary, 42:45.
- "God at Work Everywhere." *Reflections-New Voyages: Church Today and Tomorrow*. Yale University. Last modified May 2017. <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/new-voyages-church-today-and-tomorrow/god-work-everywhere>.
- Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.
- Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Manitoba: Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, Alternate Formats Library, 2014.
- Hirsch, Alan, and Jessie Cruickshank. *Activating 5Q: A User's Guide*. Los Angeles: 100 Movements Publishing, 2018.
- Hirsch, Alan and Tim Catchim. *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Church*. Hoboken: Jossey-Bass, 2012.
- Hoke, Eric. *I Help Pastors Get Jobs .com*. March 21, 2022. <https://mcusercontent.com/e58aca0dbfeed8e5524f85bf7/files/96238835-354f-8d84-ca11-72c51f94879d/9802bf0856874d0cad709a00efdfa6ca26fae42.pdf>
- Hunsberger, George R. "Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping the Conversation." *The Gospel and Our Culture Network*. January 28, 2009. www.gocn.org/resources/articles/proposals-missional-hermeneutic-mapping-conversation.
- Keller, Timothy. *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. London: Penguin Books, 2014.
- Kibbey, Sue Nilson. "Creating Leadership Accountability Systems," *Lewis Center for Church Leadership*. June 20, 2007. <https://www.churchleadership.com/featured-right/creating-leadership-accountability-systems/>.
- Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.
- Lea, Jessica. "Charlie Dates: Why Your Church Needs to Identify and Raise up Young Preachers." Interview by Ed Stetzer. *ChurchLeaders*. September 21, 2022. Audio, 18:21. <https://churchleaders.com/podcast/434535-charlie-dates-church-identify-young-preachers.html>.

- McKnight, Scot, and Laura Barringer. *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020.
- McQuillan, Michael. "School Leaders Can Learn from Martin Luther King Jr's Shared-Power Leadership Style." *K-12 Dive*. January 17, 2020. <https://www.k12dive.com/news/school-leaders-can-learn-from-martin-luther-king-jrs-shared-power-leadersh/570049/>.
- Mohamed, Besheer, Kiana Cox, Jeff Diamant, and Claire Gecewicz. "Faith among Black Americans." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*. February 16, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/>.
- Mulholland, Robert. *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. "Believers participate in Christ's priesthood not within the walls of the church, but in the daily business of the world." Twitter, March 27, 2020. <https://twitter.com/lesslienewbigin/status/1243671596201660416>.
- Parker, Brianna. "State of the Black Church: Network Leader Panel." Barna Group. 2020. Video, 4:43. <https://vimeo.com/410925131>.
- Pearring, J. D. *Preaching the Other Way: How to Develop a Teaching Team in Your Church*. Elk Grove: Excel Leadership Network, 2019.
- Pittman, Mike. "Blessings and Benefits of Bivocational & Covocational Ministry." *Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*. May 6, 2020. <https://ncbaptist.org/article/blessings-and-benefits-of-bivocational-covocational-ministry/>.
- "Putting the United Back into the United States: Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas of 'Union Theological Seminary' On The 5 Things That Each Of Us Can To Help Unite Our Polarized Society." *Authority Magazine*. March 19, 2021. <https://medium.com/authority-magazine/putting-the-united-back-into-the-united-states-rev-dr-kelly-brown-douglas-of-union-theological-s-3339b31a6d89>.
- Rainer, Thom S. "Fourteen Symptoms of Toxic Church Leaders." *Church Answers Featuring Thom Rainer*. October 1, 2014. <https://churchanswers.com/blog/fourteen-symptoms-toxic-church-leaders/>.
- Randall, Gary. "Barna: 'Pastor's Losing Credibility.'" *Faith and Freedom Daily*. February 24, 2022. <https://blog.faithandfreedom.us/2022/02/barna-pastors-losing-credibility.html>.

- Robinson, Marlon. "Shared Leadership: A Rediscovery of an Old Paradigm and Its Historical Context." *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*. September 1, 2018. <https://jacl.andrews.edu/shared-leadership-a-rediscovery-of-an-old-paradigm-and-its-historical-context>.
- Rogers, Kristen. "People of color face significant barriers to mental health services." CNN. October 10, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/10/health/mental-health-people-of-color-wellness/>.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature*. Updated and expanded edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course: Session 8: Go to the Next Step to Develop a Rule of Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Session-8-Go-the-Next-Step-to-Develop-a-Rule-of-Life.pdf>.
- Scazzero, Peter. "The EHS Course." *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*. July 24, 2014. <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/the-ehs-course-blog/>.
- Shearer, Darren. "The Marketplace Christianity Movement: A Brief History (1930–Present)." *Theology of Business Institute*. July 13, 2018. <https://www.theologyofbusiness.com/the-marketplace-christianity-movement-a-brief-history-1930-present/>.
- The Black Youth Project. "Millennials Aren't Skipping Church, the Black Church is Skipping Us." December 31, 2019. <http://blackyouthproject.com/millennials-arent-skipping-church-the-black-church-is-skipping-us/>.
- Warnock, Raphael G. *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.
- Western Governors University. "What Is Charismatic Leadership?" March 23, 2021. <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/charismatic-leadership2103.html>.
- Woodward, J. R., and Alan Hirsch. *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2010.
- Wright, Jeff. "State of the Black Church: Network Leader Panel." Barna Group. 2020. Video, 3:22. <https://vimeo.com/410925131>.

Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010.

Wright Edelman, Marian. "The Enduring Mission of Freedom Schools." *Children's Defense Fund*. June 15, 2007. <https://www.childrensdefense.org/child-watch-columns/health/2007/the-enduring-mission-of-freedom-schools/>.

Young Brown, Jessica. "Don't be afraid of a future with more bivocational ministers." *Thriving in Ministry*. November 12, 2019. https://thrivinginministry.org/fandl_feed_article/dont-be-afraid-of-a-future-with-more-bivocational-ministers/.

VITA

Full name: Kevin Ian Middleton

Place and date of birth: New Rochelle, New York. September 4, 1993.

Parents Name: Kevin Middleton Sr. and Michelle Bourne

Educational Institutions:

School	Place	Degree	Date
Secondary:	Nellie A. Thornton High School	High School Diploma	June 2011
Collegiate:	Mercy College	Bachelor of Arts in English	May 2015
Graduate:	Lehman College	Master of Arts in English Education	May 2017
Graduate:	New York Theological Seminary	Master of Arts in Religious Education	May 2020