

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A REFLECTION PAPER SUBMITTED TO

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PTH 901 RENEWING THE SPIRITUAL LEADER

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEPARTMENT

BY

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## INTRODUCTION

Renewing the Spiritual Leader is more than just a class. I found the reading, the class time, and the personal spiritual retreat beneficial to my walk with Christ. From the opening pages of the first text read until the writing of this paper I was challenged to develop a deeper commitment to Christ and have developed a greater realization of His constant presence with me.

This is not a formal research report. It is a compilation of life experience, integration of information gleaned from time in class and required reading and survey materials, and personal growth experienced since beginning this journey. It is broken into two parts: Leadership and spirituality self-evaluation, and Leadership self-development plan.

In college, I had a professor [who](#) said, “The one who blows his horn the loudest is usually in the thickest fog.”<sup>1</sup> My greatest fear in writing this is that I would be that horn blower. Any self-analysis of this type can lean toward bragging or self-bashing. Neither arc of the pendulum has been my intent. I will attempt to state observations, ministerial impact, and recognition of self in as objective a manner as possible.

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<sup>1</sup>Don Meyer in Pentateuch class during the fall of 1976 at North Central University.

## PART 1

### LEADERSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY SELF-EVALUATION

#### **Major Leadership Strengths and Skills**

I have served, as both a volunteer and paid leader, in children's ministry since the spring of 1975. This ministry to children and their leaders has tested, expanded, and strengthened my basic skill set. I am a middle child from a large Midwestern Catholic family. The dynamics of growing up in that home cultivated organizational skills, creative problem solving techniques, and a practical approach to childcare. I also developed people skills and teamwork.

I have always considered myself creative, not administrative. This is not true. I show a high aptitude for organization and administration. I have organized events, large and small, for as many as 1200 children. I have developed systems used to care for children and their workers that benefit churches beyond my personal reach. I can sit in a staff or committee meeting and chart an organizational path for success of the item or program being discussed. It is not surprising that "administrator" shows up as my third highest spiritual gift in the Elmer Towns survey<sup>2</sup> taken online for this class. Towns' description of the administrator lines up with my self-assessment. I enjoy leading and administrating people and programs in the church.

This ability works hand in hand with creative problem solving. I am able to hear three sides of an argument and come up with primary and secondary solutions almost immediately. This skill is essential in running children's ministries in the larger churches in which I have

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<sup>2</sup>Elmer Towns, Spiritual Gifts Test, [http://elmertowns.com/spiritual\\_gifts\\_test](http://elmertowns.com/spiritual_gifts_test) (accessed September 6, 2011).

served. I approach challenges in children's ministry with the problem solving approach of a triage surgeon. This skill is oftentimes coupled with a gift of wisdom. I have felt God's leading and insight, in the midst of discovering solutions to immediate problems, on many occasions.

I am a practical person. Much of the day-to-day operations of a quality children's ministry require little more than common sense on the part of the leader. In everything from cleaning toys in the baby nursery to preaching to a hundred boys and girls in the children's church, ministry and method must be practical. [Sensible](#) simplicity leads to sustainable children's ministry.

People skills and teamwork go hand in hand. God did not call me, or any other children's leader, to serve alone. Children's ministry is a long-term community investment. Growing up with six brothers and two sisters instilled in me a teamwork ethic. Together, the Gruber kids harvested potatoes, cared for chickens, and picked cherry trees clean. I cannot run a service or design and implement a program alone. This skill did not surface immediately in my early days as a children's pastor. My senior pastor fanned the spark that ignited this flame. A leader alone cannot last long in the [arena](#) of ministry.

Ministry to, and with, parents has always been vital for the health of children's ministry. Recent years have witnessed a growing emphasis on family ministry. My people skills extend beyond the children of the church to the adults, and specifically to the parents of those children. Much of my success can be tied to this ability to connect with people of all ages. A huge part of that connection is my gift in exhortation. This ability to inspire confidence and sense of purpose in my people has made it easy to gather others to the cause of children's ministry. I am first and foremost an encourager of the saints. Towns labels this as a gift of exhortation. His survey

reveals this to be my most dominant spiritual gift. The ability to connect and build relationships with children, parents, and volunteers has benefitted my ministry in every setting.

### **Dominant Leadership Style**

Over the years, I have taken many gifts surveys. Later in this paper I will summarize those taken for this class. I have been designated as an **O**tter, an **A**ditor, an **E**xhorter, and as highly relationship-oriented. I am a relational leader. I exhort and encourage those around me. I do what I can to step into people's lives and allow them to learn from the way I live mine. I have designed my ministry around 1 Thessalonians 2:8, **which states**: "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of Christ but our lives as well because you had become so dear to us."<sup>3</sup> I invest in those around me. I seek to build relationship that allows **all** to serve together as a team. In this way, I serve those in leadership above me while inviting those around and below me to serve alongside me.

It was recently pointed out that my ministry is that of an apostle. This makes sense in light of my gifting and placement in God's grand scheme. I began working with children in 1975 and have served on the frontline of children's ministry since the early 1980s. I have helped to open areas of ministry to children, challenged traditional norms, and assisted others in launching into this ministry.

I have launched children's ministry in two church plants, broken ground as the first children's pastor in two other works, and rebuilt a neglected children's ministry in another setting. In each of these churches, I have left behind stronger ministry to children, and quality workers to serve in my absence. I have supported these workers/leaders as a father supports his children.

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<sup>3</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

My relational style as an exhorter pairs well with my gifting as an apostle to the children and those who lead them.

### **Influence and Effectiveness**

God has allowed me to minister to His children and to those who lead them for thirty-six years. I was challenged in my first children's pastorate to prepare the saints for works of ministry. This scriptural imperative was so emphasized by my senior pastor that it became a primary directive in my life and ministry.

I stepped into paid children's ministry in 1979. There were fewer than thirty paid children's pastors in the Assemblies of God, USA, at the time. I was young, and a quick study. It was not long before I became the "go to" guy in my field. God allowed me to build relationships with leaders across denominational lines. This networking opened doors for the continued influence in children's ministry [I still enjoy, which](#) has extended from the local Assemblies of God church to national and international levels. This has expanded exponentially and cross-denominationally as a result of open sourcing, books and articles, speaking engagements, and a podcast.

I currently teach at Valley Forge Christian College maintaining a [Web site](#), an ongoing podcast, and an online university for children's leaders. I write occasional articles, have a book on children's church ready for publishing, and continue to speak as invitations come. Each summer, since the early 1980s, I have spoken at boys and girls camps with my wife, Darlene. The positive influence on workers and children in these camp settings cannot be understated nor measured. Many have been saved, healed, filled with the Spirit and called into ministry through our camp ministry.

Since serving as the National Children's Ministry Consultant for the Assemblies of God National Sunday school Department in Springfield (1985-1993), I have enjoyed access to [AG](#) denominational leaders. Our leaders turn to me occasionally for encouragement, direction, and advice regarding the disposition of ongoing ministries to children in [the](#) movement.

What I have described fills me with humble awe and at many times fear. I must depend daily on the Lord for guidance and wisdom. I do not take lightly the trust placed in me. It is because of this trust that I continue to stretch myself academically. God has given me great responsibility. I am continually amazed that through the operation of spiritual gifts, divine provision, and inspiration from His Word, He allows me to help those investing in this great ministry.

### **Lessons From My Personal Retreat**

My personal retreat began on a Friday afternoon at 5:17 [p.m.](#) and ended Saturday evening around 6:00 [p.m.](#) I kept my Bible and journal handy as I embarked upon this [retreat](#). It has been a long time since I have set aside time like this for personal spiritual [growth](#). Prior to the retreat, I established several must-do elements to incorporate in [the schedule](#). I wanted to have specific quiet times for listening; prayer walk times; and times dedicated to Bible reading, meditation, prayer for missionaries, and listening to God. I used the A.C.T.S. (Adorations, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) prayer model twice.

I learned first of all that without even this loose structure, I would have wasted time in deciding what came next. As it was, I just went to my must do list when finishing one segment of the retreat time. I learned that silence is very difficult for me. As the fifth child in a family of nine, I grew up with constant noise and activity around me. (I am listening to classical music as I

write this.) It is unusual and challenging for me to just sit in quiet for longer than a few minutes.

The two designated quiet times were a big stretch for me.

It has been quite a while since I felt God speak directly to me. I have been used in the gifts of the Spirit fairly regularly. On Saturday morning at 10:14, God spoke to me. I use a journal with no lines on the pages. I prefer the blank white sheet that can be turned any direction and on which my leanings towards drawing pictures and expanding letter sizes can be explored.

The following is what I wrote that morning:

Each time I turn to an empty page, I feel God is saying, "The next page of your life is clean. It is blank. Allow me to fill it with my words, my pictures. I want to lay down the manuscript of your life so that it can be a witness to generations. Lay down the pen of your desires, your plans, your dreams, and let me pick it up. Watch with wonder how the empty space will be filled. Watch how I will color your life in shades of blessing. I am with you to guide, to walk along side, to share in the unfolding ministry that I have placed before you. Trust me and hold my hand. I will hold yours." God spoke to me. I know it. I felt it. It has been a long time coming. I know I need to do retreats like this more often.

I learned that God is with me. He will speak to me. He will guide me. I learned that quiet is not scary. I learned that my mind wanders way to easily. I learned that I do not have to pace back and forth shouting in order to have a fulfilling prayer encounter. I did that quite a bit in my younger years. Now I can just relax in His presence. I need to pray more, love my wife and family more, and continue to serve with integrity.

The big lesson I have taken away from this retreat time and from the class is to enjoy the journey. I am one of those leaders who can get so wrapped up in the ministry of the moment that I move from point A to point B and miss the people in between. It is like rushing through Disney World to get to a specific ride while a parade is passing you by. I do not want to miss the parade. I lived in Minnesota for about thirteen years of my life and ministry. Minnesotans take their time saying goodbye. I once offended a family because, after having dinner at their home, I thanked

them and said goodbye. They thought they had done something wrong. I left far too quickly. I need a bit more Minnesota in my goodbyes.

I also served in Oregon. Because of the constant rain in the winter months, Oregonians never allow a little rain to stop them from playing outside. I have forgotten how to play in the rain. My prayer retreat has brought some of that back to me. I thank God for this assignment. I needed it and will pursue a regular discipline of silence and solitude in my future.

### Surveys and Assessment Summary

This [section provides](#) a summary of the online surveys and assessment tests, [as well as](#) my views on their findings. It will be followed by a brief summary of applicable material gleaned from the book, *Soul Types*. On September 6, 2011, I visited the assigned [Web sites](#) and completed each survey or assessment tool for this class.

I first visited the Assess Yourself [Web site](#). On this page, it is written, “Indeed, self-examination is a Biblical mandate because it's a pathway to growth.”<sup>4</sup> In the interest of following this biblical directive, I took each of the assessment surveys provided by this site. These included: Love for God, Character, Obstacles, and Worldview Index.

The Love for God survey scored me highest in humility before God with an 8.3, followed by relationship with God, 7.5, and finally fearless faith at 6.7. There was a fourth category, [love](#) for others, which showed no score. I guess I am low in that area. That it did not show up on the summary page surprised me, as I have always been practical in my approach to loving others. I often put the needs of others ahead of myself. According to the scoring descriptions, my interest in helping others may be self-motivated. I tend to judge others’ need for assistance too harshly. I am aware of this and confident that God can help me.

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<sup>4</sup>Assess Yourself, <http://assess-yourself.org/> (accessed September 6, 2011).

Humility before God is described as total surrender to Christ. It is acknowledging Him as Lord and Savior of every part of my life. Humility is “surrender or obedience to God’s will.”<sup>5</sup> I do place high importance on God’s Lordship in my life. I pray daily that I can live out what John the Baptist said in John 3:30, “He must increase and I must decrease.”

Relationship with, or pursuit of God, came in second highest in my assessment. I agree wholeheartedly with this. I pursue a deeper relationship with Christ every day. I long to be in His presence. I wish to feel His guiding hand on my life throughout each day. I pray each morning that I will enjoy a realization of His presence with me all day long. A score of 7.5 in this section leaves room for improvement. This is an area in which I can, and will, continue to grow.

I scored 6.7 in fearless faith. This is accurate. Although I often experience times of fearlessness, I am often quiet about my faith. I pray for boldness and often shy away from opportunities that could prove my boldness. I am concerned with what others think of me and pray that God will help me overcome fear. Over the years, God has used me to effect change in people’s lives as I have boldly proclaimed His Name. Each day is a new beginning in this area. I cannot rely on the fearless approach of yesterday. I must renew my commitment to be used of God each morning. There are some days that require this renewal continuously.

At first glance, the Christian Character index was no surprise to me. I scored 72-84 percent in every category except kindness and gratitude. These were respectively 64 percent and 60 percent. Kindness being a low scoring item matches up with my love for others in the previous section. I need to work on this area. Gratitude scoring low didn’t make sense to me. I am a guy who praises and thanks God all day, every day. My default is worship and gratitude.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

This test encourages me to work on every area. I must allow the fruit of the Spirit to grow in my life.

As revealed in the obstacle survey, the one area in which I need to concentrate is busyness. Again, I am not shocked by this revelation. I am addressing this tendency. I do not allow enough time for Sabbath rest in my schedule. I tend to fill as many weekends as possible with speaking engagements. Saying no to those in need does not come easy to me.

The worldview test indicates that I have a well-developed [biblical](#) worldview. I scored 10 on this survey. My worldview is wholly biblical and provides me with a foundation for decision-making in my approach to my family, neighbors, and the world.

The United Methodist Spiritual Gifts assessment pages contain some great material in an easy-to-understand format. Shepherding is my primary gifting with Apostleship coming in a close second. The descriptions, of the two combined, paint an accurate picture of my gifting. I encourage and mentor others. I have a great interest in nurturing those God has entrusted to my care. I look for new ways to reach children and new places in which to reach them. The survey states, “Shepherds are good at asking provocative questions and recommending resources and experiences, and helping people find their own way to the next level of their development.”<sup>6</sup> This is something I have been doing throughout my years in ministry.

Elmer Towns’ gift assessment tool found at [http://elmertowns.com/spiritual\\_gifts\\_test](http://elmertowns.com/spiritual_gifts_test), provided [a similar gauge](#) of my gifting. The Towns survey placed [Exhorter](#) and [Helper](#) as my highest gifts. I like that Towns incorporates the idea of a gift mix into his survey. Too often I have talked with believers who, after taking these kinds of surveys, lock themselves strictly into

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<sup>6</sup>United Methodists, Spiritual Gifts, [http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.1355371/k.9501/Spiritual\\_Gifts.htm](http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.1355371/k.9501/Spiritual_Gifts.htm) (accessed September 6, 2011).

one gift over all others. I believe that although each of us has a dominant gift or two, God will use us in other gifts as they are needed. Towns broadens my previous understanding of the exhorter saying, “The exhorter has that special ability to find and communicate to others practical ways of serving God. The exhorter is a positive motivator, knowing practical Christianity will change the lives of others.”<sup>7</sup> I have been able to motivate many children’s workers to serve in practical ways that bless children and their families. My podcast is full of examples of this practical approach to all aspects of ministry to children.

I read the book, *Soul Types* by Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jane A. G. Kise. Hirsh and Kise base their assessments on the work of Carl Jung, [who](#) theorizes that we have natural preferences for how we:

- Gain energy (through Extraversion or Introversion);
- Take in information (through Sensing or Intuition);
- Make decisions (through Thinking or Feeling); [and](#)
- Approach life (through Judging or Perceiving).<sup>8</sup>

[Hirsh and Kise](#) have taken Jung’s work further in their identification of the soul in these categories and the atmosphere in which each of these best grows on the soul journey. The survey in this book is simple, but accurate. My results show that my preferences are for ENFP (Extrovert, Intuition, Feeling, Perceiving).

Extrovert – I gain energy from being with people. Although I have learned to enjoy time alone, spending time in the midst of a crowd is empowering for me. I learn well in discussion groups. Our authors describe, “If the extrovert could design their own atmosphere for soul work,

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<sup>7</sup>Elmer Towns, “Spiritual Gifts Test,” [ElmerTowns.com](http://ElmerTowns.com), [http://elmertowns.com/spiritual\\_gifts\\_test](http://elmertowns.com/spiritual_gifts_test) (accessed September 6, 2011).

<sup>8</sup>Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jane A.G. Kise, *Soul Types* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Books, 2006), 24.

they would include people, action, and variety.”<sup>9</sup> I like to work the hallways at conferences. Some of my best friendships in ministry were made in hallways or exhibit areas.

Hirsh and Kise accurately describe my style. They instruct, “Extroverted intuitive types move outward to lead or encourage others, especially through speaking, teaching, performing, or taking charge of new endeavors.”<sup>10</sup> I adhere to all of the above. I often find myself in charge of new projects or programs. Throughout my ministry I have found, or invented, opportunities to teach or speak to others about ministry to children.

As an intuitive type, I am hyper-creative. I receive calls and emails each week asking for nothing more than ideas on how to better a program or to minister to a specific sub-culture of children. My ability to innovate allows me to capitalize on the best of the old melding it with the new, when reaching and nurturing boys and girls. My intuitive leanings enable me to project future successes or failures of programs and projects.

Hirsh and Kise describe the contribution of the ENFP in Christian community as “Inspiring others to reach their fullest potential; Building generous and open communities to help in the advancement of worthwhile causes and shepherding of human aspirations.”<sup>11</sup> My gift as an apostle fits well alongside this teaching. Words like “building,” “inspiring,” and “teaching” can all be apostolic in practice. My ability to see new approaches to children’s ministry and then resource those for success is the very essence of the ENFP.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 114.

The Feeling person can easily harmonize with and acknowledge common ground with others.<sup>12</sup> This singular aspect of my make-up has facilitated relationships with leaders in other denominations and countries while opening avenues of ministry with them and their organizations. I have participated in training leaders and workers in Australia and New Zealand because of the Feeling decision-making style. The Feeling aspect of the ENFP can assist me in stepping back from the busyness of life to consider my activities. The intuitive feeling part of me can help direct me into more quiet times with God. These can be times of reflection and recognition. Reflection on what has been done and recognition of what is yet to be done. “Cutting back on activities, amusements, or other external pulls is a way to slow the pace and create space for soul work. Learning to say no to the requests of others—particularly hard for ENFPs because they may seek to be all things to all people—can also supply some time, even if it is only for rest.”<sup>13</sup> I sometimes think that just having time for rest would be a wonderful thing. This is why I enjoy cruising with my wife so much. We can just sit in the shade on the deck of a ship in the Bahamas reading a book, while others seek to experience everything on land and sea.

The Perceiving part of me merges work and play; enjoys gathering information; works on, and actually completes, several tasks at once and at random; and seeks to experience variety in life.<sup>14</sup> I often wonder if I have attention deficit disorder. I can jump from project to project and actually enjoy the process. I continue to learn crazy skills that have nothing to do with ministry. To date I can create cartoon booklets, record music and stories, manipulate puppets, practice ventriloquism, sing, make stained glass windows, engage in blacksmithing, weld, repair and install plumbing, build sets and homes out of wood, and shoot a muzzle loader. I don’t have a

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 33.

bucket list because all of life is one big bucket list. I want to see Alaska, Maine, and Prague. I am happiest when taking classes or building something in my garage, writing a new book or constructing puppets in my living room.

The book suggests that the ENFP can “easily sink into depression, losing their normally positive outlook. They can obsess over health concerns.”<sup>15</sup> The constant suggestion for me is to slow down.

### **Conclusion**

The dictate ringing throughout the reading, class time, and in my personal spiritual retreat is “Enjoy the Journey.” Recognizing the strengths, needs, and possible downside of my soul style serves to amplify that directive. My mind can get so cluttered at times that I short circuit. I hide this well, but the hounds of depression and hypochondria bite at my heels. I, like my father, have fought these all of my life. I’ve come to realize through the process of this class just how much like him I am. That thought used to scare me. It scared me mostly because of dad’s mental illness. But now I can see the strengths of his personality style and soul type. If I am to survive and excel in ministry, I must make more time for myself to regroup.

I am living in ministerial burnout. There is no other reason for an extrovert like me to feel the need to constantly shy away from people. I am not where I need to be spiritually. The personal retreat was so abnormally refreshing that I must do this on a regular schedule. I have only enjoyed brief glimpses of creative genius in the past year. Normally, these would come on an almost daily basis. I don’t know how burned out I am, but will be talking with my wife and my pastor about this. Addressing the burnout and renewal process will be a major emphasis of the next portion of this paper.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 118.

I must trust God for the future of my ministry. I will continue to do my part while attempting to allow God to do His. Jesus said, “On this rock I will build my church”

([Matt.16:18](#)). He didn't say Dick Gruber would build it. The good news is that He did promise to be with me always and to guide me into all truth. I can move forward with confidence in ministry knowing that He is with me. I can practice the presence all day every day as I advance in this adventure called life.

## PART 2

### LEADERSHIP SELF-DEVELOPMENT PLAN

#### **Personal Vision Statement**

The last major work I did on my personal vision statement was in 2002. I have visited this work at least twice a year since then. Keeping class materials in mind, I have edited, updated, and added much to my previous work.

I see a field of children ready for harvest. I see volunteer and professional children's leaders in need of encouragement, support, and training. I hear God whispering sweet invitation to me. This invitation is to step out of my busyness and into His presence. I hear God calling me to do what I can to impact both the children and their leaders. I sense His approval as I continue to sharpen my tools for life and ministry.

My life will be one of Enrichment, Evangelism, Education, and Expansion.

Enrichment – I will faithfully serve God, my family, and the Church by becoming more like Jesus through daily prayer, Bible study, solitude, and regular times of Sabbath. My personal relationship with God must grow deeper if I am to reach higher in ministry.

Evangelism – I will evangelize and disciple children both personally and through preparation of programs and training material. I will continue to inspire others to reach children.

Education – I will train and inspire those who work with children through personal and technological means. I will continue my podcast and writing ministries while seeking God's direction for better ways to support and train those serving in ministry to children.

Expansion - By expanding my knowledge base for this effort through continued life-long learning, I will increase my effectiveness and impact on children's ministries. I believe God wants me to do more to influence children's ministers. Continuing on a path of study will better prepare me for the future of this endeavor.

As a Christian leader I must be a pray-er not a player. I must be a servant before I can be a shepherd. I must walk the walk before attempting the work.

### **Personal Values Statement**

As a leader, I value divine authority, God-given wisdom, faithful service, and ministerial reproduction.

I believe that every leader is set in authority by divine appointment. God, in His wisdom, places leaders in positions where their talents can best serve the kingdom. Paul declares, "There is no authority except that which God has established" (Rom. 13:1). Respect for God's authority has been a core value of my ministry and has kept me from trouble along the way.

I seek to honor God through my leadership by calling on Him daily for wisdom to lead. [As](#) James writes, "If any of you lack wisdom, he should ask of God, who gives generously to all without finding fault" (1:5) God has granted me wisdom so many times in my ministry. Without His wisdom, my eight years of ministry at the Assemblies of God headquarters may have ended in the first month.

Pastors often seek my advice when hiring a new children's pastor. One of the top qualities they look for is faithfulness. Scripture exhorts us to "commit these things to reliable [faithful] men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2). Hard work and loyalty are components of faithful service. I am certain that my faithfulness in ministry in smaller works led to God's blessing in the larger ministries to follow.

Reproduction of my ministry has been a core value of mine from my earliest days in Farmington, Minnesota. It was there that my senior pastor instilled this value in me. He constantly asked me who would serve if I should have an accident. I learned that reproduction is good for ministerial and church growth. This reproduction of my ministry in others encompasses the children of my church, those who serve the children, and others within my sphere of influence. As a children's leader, I "prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Eph 4:12)

### **Plan For Growth**

My plan for growth will focus on renewal through reading, Sabbath with solitude, and advancing with activity. I stated earlier in this paper [that](#) there is a level of burnout in me that must be addressed. My plan will be addressing that while preparing me for the next step in my leadership journey.

My renewal through reading plan is probably the easiest part of the plan. I am a reader. I like to read all kinds of literature. I have already placed the C. S. Lewis [science](#) fiction trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*, on my Amazon wish list for Christmas. I only read eleven books in preparation for this class. I have highlighted and will read five more titles from the reading list. These are: *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*; *Mad Church Disease: Overcoming the Burnout Epidemic*; *The Five Temptations of a Leader*; *Leadership On The Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*; and *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*. I am also including one season of the TV show *24* to this portion of the plan. I think it will be good for me to vicariously enjoy somebody else's stress.

Sabbath with solitude is perhaps the most important need I have at this time. I am tired of people, tired of shuffling papers, and tired of being “on.” I need rest with my Savior. This portion of the plan includes daily solitude, weekly Sabbath, monthly retreat, and quarterly get-a-way times. I currently practice the first of the four, and that is weak. I will spend time each morning with God rather than watching the news. Whatever my class schedule, I will take [a](#) half day each week and reserve it for my weekly Sabbath. I will escape the confines of my office and spend time alone with the Lord. When weather permits, I will do this at Valley Forge Park. When it doesn't, I will spend the time in my basement.

A monthly retreat will be a bit more challenging. I will spend at least a day in personal retreat each month. I will follow a similar pattern used in my spiritual retreat for this class. This will include [S](#)cripture reading, worship, prayer, silence, and dreaming. I can use the Penn/Del district camp for this retreat unless a venue closer to home presents itself.

Finally, I need quarterly get-a-way time. I don't foresee this being as overtly spiritual as it is just refreshing. This may or may not include my wife, Darlene. I will spend three days with Darlene somewhere in America the week after Christmas. The next natural time for getting away will be [S](#)pring [B](#)reak in early March 2012. I told Darlene this morning that we will plan on a cruise in the Bahamas at that time. Further plans will unfold as time moves on. I need these regular times to get away.

I will present my plan to my wife, and my accountability partner, Paul Mathias. In doing so, I will make myself accountable to them to live this out.

This plan will keep me from total meltdown. In this way, my vision and values will continue to serve as priorities. It is tough to maintain right attitudes toward God's authorities, living faithfully, and ministry reproduction, when I am spiritually and emotionally drained. It is

nearly impossible to be enthusiastic about ministry when I long just to be away from people. I need this plan in order to espouse my values and vision for life and ministry.

### Accountability Relationship

I began an accountability relationship in early September this year as a response to the directives of this class syllabus. I contacted the director of our library, Paul Mathias, about becoming a partner in this endeavor. Paul graciously agreed, and we began meeting on Wednesday mornings. Our meetings run about forty-five minutes in a secure room in our library.

Paul is a missionary kid who is about ten years younger than I. He is intelligent, spiritual, has a family, and is a straight shooter. I had hoped to work with precisely this kind of guy. We discovered in the first week that we needed to use some system to follow in our meetings. After Google searching “accountability questions,” we settled on some questions found on the *A Ruach Journey* blog. The questions are credited to Randy Alcorn, from his book *The Purity Principle*:

- How are you doing with God?
- How are you doing with your wife and kids?
- What temptations are you facing, and how are you dealing with them?
- How has your thought life been this week?
- Have you been spending regular time in the Word and prayer?
- Have you spent time in regular exercise?
- Who have you been sharing the gospel with?
- Have you lied in any of your answers?
- How can I pray for you and help you?<sup>16</sup>

Paul and I have had heartfelt meetings. We have challenged each other and are a good match for this kind of encounter. Paul is not afraid to hit me when I need it. We are committed to this relationship for the entire school year and will evaluate continuation of it in May 2012.

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<sup>16</sup>A Ruach Journey, <http://ruach.wordpress.com/other-pages/personal-accountability-questions/> (accessed September 7, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has exposed the results of my spiritual self-evaluation and my self-development plan. It has been a struggle to write much of this as it reveals my need. Wayne Cordeiro informs, “Rest is not an afterthought; it has to be a primary responsibility. It brings a rhythm back to life and a cadence that makes life sustainable. If you are tired, your soul gets weary. And if your soul gets weary, you’ve depleted more than you can afford.”<sup>17</sup> My soul has been weary. This class has made me aware of the need I have for rest and renewal in my life and in my ministry.

I envision God using me in the field of children’s ministries for another twenty or thirty years. In order to run that marathon, I will need to apply what has been learned. I have a plan. I have good people to hold me accountable to that plan. With God’s help, and theirs, I will grow as a spiritual leader until my journey is over.

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<sup>17</sup>Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009), 125.

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