

# Life Development Planner

Authors: Jeff Jones & Rowland Forman  
Research Assistant: Alf Nelson  
Graphic Design: Judy Buckert  
Editor: Felix Heimberg

© Copyright 1996, 2002, Center for Church Based Training  
All rights reserved.  
v. 2.1

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE,  
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984  
International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

Printed in the United States of America.



[www.ccbt.org](http://www.ccbt.org)  
Centers of Church Based Training  
2801 Orchid Dr.  
McKinney, Texas 75070  
toll-free: 888-422-2896  
email: [customersupport@ccbt.org](mailto:customersupport@ccbt.org)

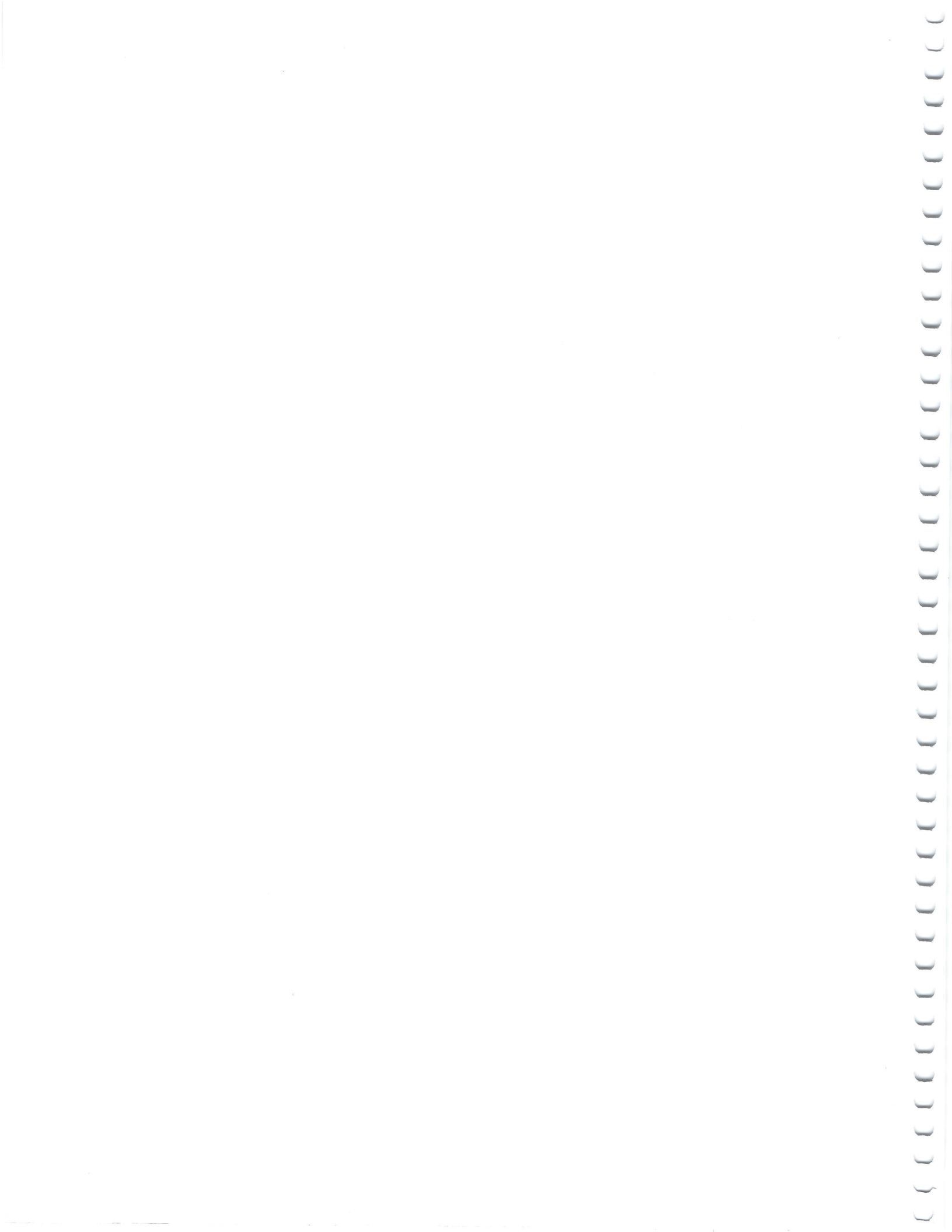
# Table of Contents

## Life Development Planner

### Introduction

<b>Issue 1: Life's Purpose .....</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Issue 2: Life's Divine Design .....</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Divine Design Inventory .....	2.9
Divine Design Reference Form .....	2.13
<b>Issue 3: Life Development Timeline .....</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<b>Issue 4: Life Assessment .....</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Assessing the Whole Person Inventories .....	4.10
<b>Issue 5: Life Development Plan.....</b>	<b>5.1</b>
Life Development Plan (form) .....	5.3
<b>Issue 6: Life Development Strategies .....</b>	<b>6.1</b>

### Bibliography



## Introduction

God has given you a dream—a destiny to fulfill for his kingdom. Long before you were born, God designed you uniquely to serve his purposes (Eph. 2:10). Like Jeremiah, whom God called to be a prophet while he was still in his mother's womb, God has laid out a way for you to serve him.

The *Life Development Planner* is a tool to help you gain a better perspective of God's purposes in the world, and how you can be involved in his plans. You will discover how everything in your background has been purposefully arranged by God to make you the person you are. After assessing your own "Divine Design," you will construct your "Life Development Timeline." This timeline will help you gain a panoramic view of what God has done in your life as well as what he may do through you in the future.

God wants you to be faithful now, and he wants you to keep growing so that you can serve him in even greater ways in the future. As you begin to dream about what God has in store for you, you will assess the kind of person you would need to be and where you are right now in the process. You will isolate developmental gaps in your knowledge, skills and character, so that you can design a plan to close those gaps.

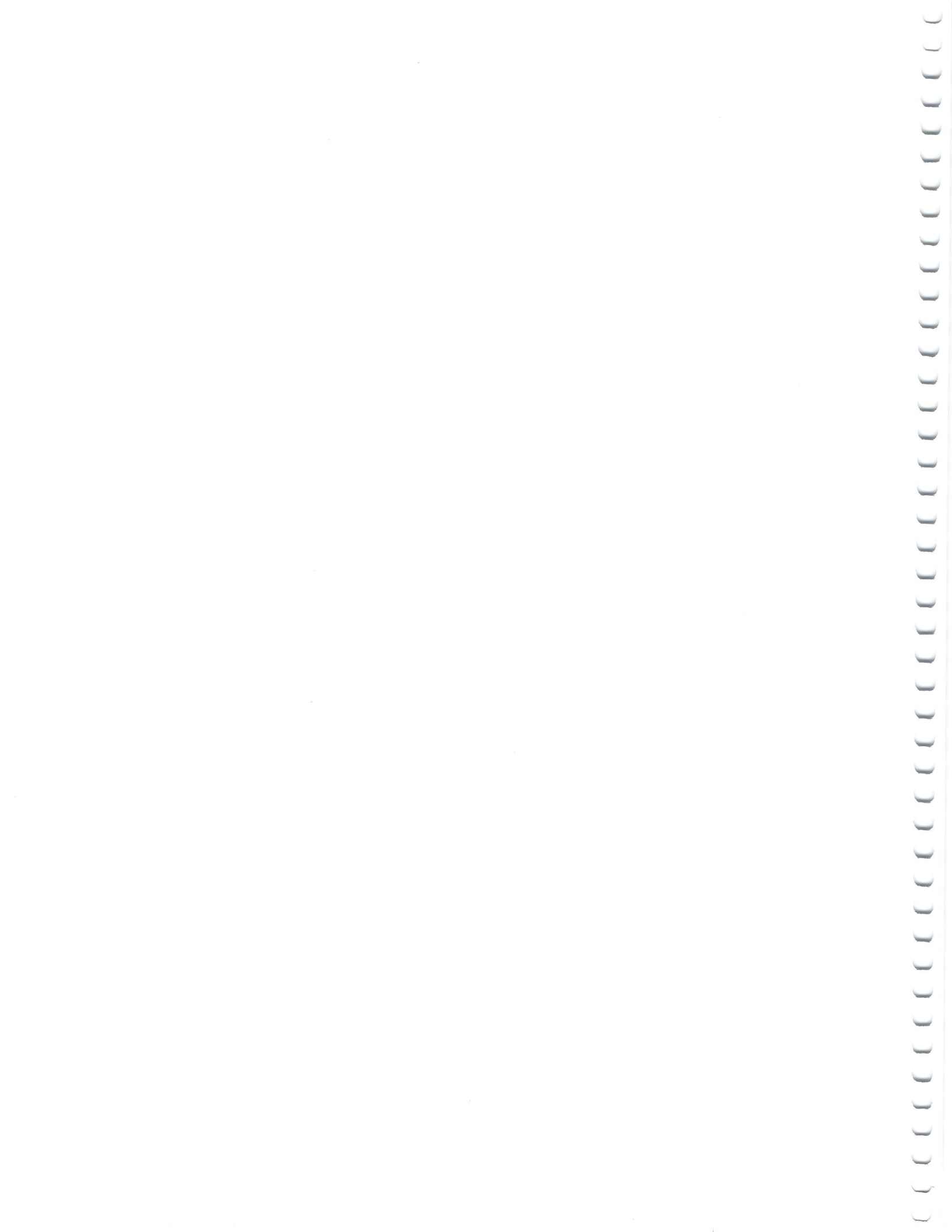
Many of us are very intentional about the development of people that we shepherd, but not as intentional about our own development. How can your ministry become even more effective? You can either work harder than you are right now, or you can improve your capacity to lead. We sometimes get so busy in ministry that we give little attention to self-assessment—we fail to focus on our own growth, ministry fit, and leadership development. The *Life Development Planner* is a tool to help you attend to your own growth in servant-leadership.

In the process, you will construct a "Life Development Plan" to provide direction and perspective for your ministry. Then you will break this plan down into strategies that you can employ, by faith, to work that plan.

We have found that this tool is very beneficial for individuals, but is even more powerful in a small group setting. In fact, our experience has shown that the *Life Development Planner* is an incredibly powerful catalyst to true community. As people share their timelines, aspirations, shortfalls, and plans, their hearts will be knit together in unforgettable ways. A small group setting is also powerful because participants can give each other feedback as they spot gifts and signs of development that the person may not see on their own. Finally the small group provides accountability to ensure that each participant implements their plan.

Our prayer is that God will use this assessment tool to help you become a better servant and leader in his kingdom, and that your church leadership team will move to an even deeper level of authentic community as you share your purpose and plans.

Jeff Jones & Rowland Forman  
Richardson, Texas



## Overview

Effective leaders are characterized by a clear sense of purpose that governs their life priorities and decisions. This issue will help you define your life purpose so that you can lead an effective life as a leader. You will consider your life purpose in light of God's overall purpose and plan to help ensure that your purposes are in harmony with his.

## Suggested Plan

- ◆ Reflect on the Scripture passages.
- ◆ Read "Getting with the Program."
- ◆ Complete the five steps in *Responding* (pp. 1.10-13).
- ◆ Review the discussion questions in *Reflecting* (p. 1.13).

## Reading

Read the following passages and reflect on any indications of God's grand purpose, his purpose for the church, or his purpose for you.

Psalm 138:8

Matthew 16:18

Matthew 28:16-20

Acts 1:8

Ephesians 2:11- 3:13 (note 2:15-16, 3:10)

2 Timothy 2:1-2

Read *Getting with the Program* by Jeff Jones, and make notes on God's purposes.

This article presents God's overarching purpose in all of history as a backdrop to his purposes for the church and for each of us as believers. It examines the centrality of the church in this age, and it's two very significant purposes: reconciliation and rule. As you approach this chapter, ask God to clarify both the overall purpose he has for the world, and the special purpose he has in the church and in your life.

Jeff Jones is the Associate Pastor of Fellowship Bible Church North in Plano, Texas and the Executive Director of the Center for Church Based Training.



## Getting With the Program

by Jeff Jones

*"You'll never be the same once you begin to change the world."*

All of us have dreams. Some of us have big dreams. We want our lives to count, to really make a difference—but change the world?

Most of us will never become the CEO of a multinational corporation. You and I will probably not be the ones to discover the cure for cancer or AIDS. National magazines probably aren't going to place our picture on their covers.

Yet God has opened to you and me an opportunity far more significant than any of these. For centuries God has been fulfilling his world program—his plan for humanity and all creation. God is at work, and his work changes the world. His program alone can claim cosmic significance. He has opened the door of opportunity for you to be involved. Really! He wants your life to count for eternity, to make a lasting impact, even more than you do.

The opportunity to be part of what God is doing in the world is unparalleled. What else could be more significant? God has a purpose guiding his work in the world, and he wants you to be involved.

The only question is, "How can you and I 'get with the program'—God's program?" First, we need to know what his program is—his plan for the ages and for this present age. Then by realigning our own lives around his purposes and plan, his purposes can govern our purposes. And when our lives are shaped around God's purposes, God will change lives through us.

### God's Purpose Through the Ages

Before we can hope to get a clearer picture of God's purpose for us, we have to first grasp his overarching purpose for all of history. The Bible occasionally mentions "God's eternal purpose." What is his purpose through the ages?

As we look to the Bible to answer this question we see that the Bible reveals God's purposes throughout the ages of human history. The Bible, like history, is a story of creation and redemption. He created all things "good" and perfect. Yet, following creation came two catastrophic events: the rebellion of Satan and the fall of humanity. After Adam and Eve sinned, God's plan shifted from creation to redemption, redeeming all of creation by fully restoring his kingdom rule and redeeming humanity from the eternal consequences of sin. Two words, redemption and rule, summarize his plan. We see that throughout the Scriptures he accomplishes this plan by establishing communities of people, his people, who acknowledge his rightful rule and who are redeemed, fully reconciled to him. His people serve both as a model and as messengers of the plan of reconciliation. His people serve as witnesses to a lost world. Stanley Grenz' words are instructive:

*The Bible is the narrative of the activity of the triune God in seeking the salvation of mankind . . . Salvation, however, never occurs in isolation. Rather, we receive divine grace in order to be members of a community. Indeed, God's purpose is to establish "one new*

*humanity” consisting of reconciled people (Eph 2:14-19), and in this manner to overcome the horizontal effects of the estrangement we experience due to sin. Because sin brings alienation between humans, God directs his saving action toward the healing of personal relationships (Grenz, Theology for the Community of God, 461).*

Through all of history, God has worked to prepare “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9). God is not just about “getting

**The local church comprises the people of God and is the focal point of God’s present activity (2 Cor 6:16).**

people saved.” He is doing something far greater. He is calling out a people for his glory and his

purposes. In the Old Testament, the “people of God” were primarily the descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel. One nation served to radiate his glory to the rest of the earth. The Old Testament often used the Hebrew term qahal, “assembly,” to designate Israel as the “assembly of the Lord.” Through Israel, other people groups and nations could come to know God’s redemptive plan. When Jesus returns to establish his visible rule of the world, he will once again establish the nation of Israel as the geographical center of his rule.

What then is God’s purpose in world history? It is to redeem mankind and to establish his rule by creating a community to serve as his witnesses and to model his righteous rule on the earth. He is forming a people to glorify and honor his name.

### **God’s Plan for This Age: The Centrality of the Church**

In the New Testament era God’s plan is still very much the same: calling and preparing a

people as “his people,” to serve both as a model and a deliverer of the message of redemption and God’s rule. In the New Testament era, that “people” is the church, both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) who come to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Grenz states, “According to the New Testament, the focal point of God’s new reconciled society is the church of Jesus Christ” (Grenz, 601). God’s primary work today is the formation of his Church. The local church comprises the people of God and is the focal point of God’s present activity (2 Cor 6:16).

Jesus stated his plan for this present age clearly in Matthew 16:18: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” In the New Testament era he is busily building his Church.

What Jesus predicted in Matthew 16 he began to fulfill shortly after his ascension. Just 40 days after Jesus’ ascension the Spirit gave birth to the new community of faith, the Church, at the feast of Pentecost. Jesus had earlier promised that he would send the Spirit to indwell believers, unifying them as a people and empowering them to fulfill their mission. Acts 2 records the fulfillment of this significant event and the birth of Christ’s Church as believers became dedicated to one another in a community of faith. The early church served as a powerful model of God’s reconciliation as many came to know reconciliation with Christ because of their model. When the Spirit came, he first formed a local church in Jerusalem. From there hundreds of other churches were eventually established throughout the Roman world.

God is still building his Church today in order to model the reality of his reconciliation and rule as well as deliver his message of reconciliation and rule.

### **The Church Models Reconciliation and Rule**

In the Old Testament, God chose a single nation to serve as a model to the rest of the

nations. The Church that the Holy Spirit formed is different from the Old Testament community of faith in several major respects. Now the community is more than just one nation, comprising "every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). In the Church, God's purpose was "to create in himself one new man out of the two [Jew and Gentile], thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility . . . for through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (Eph. 2:15-16, 18).

The union of Jew and Gentile, and all those who call upon Christ's name, is itself miraculous. Paul called it a "mystery." Through this mystery God reveals his wisdom to the universe. The reconciliation of diverse groups and individuals demonstrates the reconciliation God desires with humanity. In this way, the Church serves as a model of God's redemption and reconciliation for the whole universe, including the angelic rulers that have challenged God's authority. As Ephesians 3:10 says, "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." God is presently expressing through the Church his wisdom and glory, to the spiritual forces of wickedness. Kenneth Giles says:

*. . . the idea is that the church as an entity in world history, where the division of Jew and Gentile has been overcome, proclaims to the hostile forces in the heavens that one day cosmic divisions will also be overcome. This is something the church does as a corporate entity. Its very existence on the earth makes known the wisdom of God to the powers in the heavens (Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church?*, 138).*

The Church, then, is the instrument by which God is communicating his wisdom and glory even in cosmic realms. Frankly, this has always amazed me since I serve as a pastor in a church! God is using the Church to display his

glory and wisdom to the cosmos? I know too much about churches. Is that the best choice? Yet irrespective of its warts and flaws, what God is forming in his Church is a masterpiece. That masterpiece will culminate in heaven and be seen even more clearly in the future full-form of the kingdom, when Christ will reign visibly over all people on the earth.

Today the Church is to be a model to the world of how men can be reconciled to one another and to God. The Church is also to be a model of God's rule, as men and women relate to God as

King with respect, fear, holiness, and faithfulness.

When the Church functions

as it should, the world around it will not remain the same. When the Church radiates God's glory, as in the first century, people outside the community of faith will be drawn to the Lord of the Church.

The Church as a model is a beautiful one, but not perfect. Reconciliation and rule will not be complete until a future day, when Christ himself will come to earth and restore his visible rule. The Church serves as a foretaste of that great day when Christ returns. Meanwhile, each local church shares in serving as his representation to earth, his witness, his body, his ambassador, and the demonstration of his wisdom and glory. The Church is God's focal point in this present age.

What a challenge this is for each of our churches and us as individuals. When we fail to love each other as we should and when we fail to live holy lives, we harm not only ourselves but also the reputation of the King. We diminish our effectiveness as his model. When non-believers observe the Church and see disharmony, bigotry, strife, dishonesty and unholy behavior,

**The Church, then, is the instrument by which God is communicating his wisdom and glory ...**

they have every reason to look away from Christ and miss the message of reconciliation. However, when the Church is healthy and serves God faithfully, people will be drawn to it and its message of hope and reconciliation!

In John 17, Jesus prayed for all that would believe in him in the New Testament era:

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world

may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may

**... the great commission mandate is a mandate to establish and multiply local churches.**

be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

*When the Church is really the church, demonstrating complete unity, then the observing world will believe that what Jesus claimed about himself is true. The Church is Jesus' witness!*

### **The Church Proclaims Reconciliation: The Mission of the Church**

The Church by its very existence as a model serves God's purposes. God's purposes also include a specific and exclusive mission for the church. The Church as God's people serves God's mission. What God is doing in the world, he is doing primarily through the Church. This is why the Bible speaks of the Church as the "body of Christ" with Christ as "the head." As his body, the Church, performs his work, like our bodies perform the plans and decisions our brain makes. No other organization can

claim to be the body of Christ. This is the Church's exclusive role.

Christ gave the Church the mission to be his witness, delivering his message of reconciliation and rule. The church has the responsibility to preserve and proclaim the message initiated by Christ, the Gospel of the kingdom. Before his ascension to heaven Christ told his followers the following, often termed the Great Commission:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).

What did he mean and how do we know if we are fulfilling his commission? God has not left us in the dark. He wanted the Church to clearly understand and therefore recorded in the book of Acts how the apostles understood and fulfilled his mission.

Even a very quick study of how the apostles carried out the commission shows that the Church is God's focal point. The apostles did not simply go out preaching the gospel message to "get people saved." They proclaimed the gospel, but always followed up by gathering converts into local churches, established the churches under quality leadership and encouraged the churches to multiply (plant new churches). The apostles formed not just individual Christians; they formed local churches. Christ is using the church to build his church.

Essentially, the great commission mandate is a mandate to establish and multiply local churches. That is the mission of the Church. Forgetting this is easy—to operate as if all that matters is to get individuals to come to know Jesus Christ. Yet, the New Testament knows nothing of this kind of evangelism, and knows nothing of a lone-ranger kind of Christianity. We grow spiritually as a result of being connected to

others in the body of Christ (Eph 4). We should conclude that the mission of the Church is the multiplication not just of individual Christians, but of gathered Christians in local churches.

This is an incredible plan! Rather than attempting to only save individuals, the mission is to establish local churches in which believers can grow spiritually, become equipped for ministry, and start new local churches. New local churches are to follow the same pattern, producing new churches themselves. In this way, we will reach the world with the message of Christ.

### **The Power of the Church**

The Church is not a powerless organization. It is a dynamic, living organism, empowered by the Holy Spirit himself. In Jerusalem, the Apostles were to wait for the coming of the Spirit. When he came, he gave birth to a Church exploding with energy and effectiveness as Christians proclaimed the Gospel and planted new churches. The effectiveness of the Church was the result not only of what the Church did but more so what the Church was (and is). In Jerusalem, the Church was "enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). By its very existence, the Church is a powerful testimony of God's wisdom, love, and glory (See Eph. 3:10,11).

Paul knew that the power of the Church was infinite, since the one who empowers it is God, himself. Therefore, he exclaimed, "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever!" (Eph 3:20-21). There is no more powerful and significant organization anywhere than the church. Though her mission is incredibly challenging, her Lord and her source of strength are more than equal to the task.

### **A Summary: God's New Testament Work**

God is working to build his Church, a community of believers who glorify him and fulfill his mission. God's mission is building his Church, a mission that he gave to the Church: to spread his message of redemption by the planting of new churches. What God is doing in the world, he is primarily doing through the Church. The Church is at the center of his focus and activity in this age.

### **God's Plan for Your Life**

How does all this relate to you? We cannot come to know God's plan for us, if we don't know his plan in history, and for our time. Here is the point: If you want to invest your life strategically for God's glory, then find out where he is primarily working, and then get involved! Biblically, we understand that where God is primarily working in the world is in and through the Church. God's purpose for you will accordingly therefore focus on what he is doing in and through the Church. You can choose to be involved in many other things, good things. But to invest your life strategically focus on the object of his focus: the building of his Church.

**If you want to invest your life strategically for God's glory, then find out where he is primarily working and get involved.**

### **Our Work in God's Plan**

#### **Serve as a Vital Part of a Healthy Local Church Community (God's Model)**

The first way to serve God's purposes in this generation is to be involved in a vital, healthy way in a local church community. A healthy community of believers (the Church) by its very existence serves God's purposes in the world. As Howard Snyder states:

*So the Church's first task is truly to be the redeemed community. The genuine demonstration of Christian community is the first step toward accomplishing God's cosmic plan. This is miracle, and miracle attracts (Snyder, The Community of the King, 69).*

The first century church modeled this principle. God was adding to their number daily those who were being saved—why? Because the church was growing in favor with all the people. As the non-Christian world observed a healthy church community, they

liked what they saw. As a result, many came to know Christ. The presence of a

**The Church is designed as a magnet to strongly affect and draw those in community around it.**

healthy church is the most powerful evangelistic instrument in the world today.

In a culture as relationally fragmented as ours, healthy community will be even more appealing. Imagine a child that has grown up on the streets, unable to experience what a real family is like. The child visits a particular neighborhood every night and peers through a hole in the back fence of a certain home. Through that hole he sees a family playing together in the yard, sometimes eating together outside. He thinks, "If only they knew I was here. If only I could be part of a family like that . . ."

Our culture is full of individuals who have never experienced true community characterized by unconditional love, an unshakable faith and a sure hope. Though having never known it, they inwardly long for it. That's how God created us. Only in the Church can we hope to find it. And whether peering through the back fence or coming through the front door, they yearn to be part of that kind of family. The Church is designed as a magnet to

strongly affect and draw those in the community around it.

This requires the Church to be healthy. And as a member of a church you affect its health. Do you contribute health to your church? Are you displaying love, humility, and holiness in relationships to others in the church? Are you growing spiritually? Are you active in ministry?

### **Serve Faithfully in Advancing the Church's Mission**

We have established that the Church's mission is spreading the gospel by planting local churches. Every local church should have as its goal to help people grow spiritually, equip them for ministry, evangelize their own geographical area and commission those they have equipped to plant new churches. For this to happen, every believer must strive to strengthen his or her church and be involved in the fulfillment of the overall mission.

Each of us can invest our time, talents and treasure in many ways. Time and money are limited resources, but opportunity has few bounds. Effectiveness in fulfilling Christ's mission is not related to the amount of time a person has, but how he or she utilizes that time. Life involves a process of accepting and rejecting limitless time-consuming opportunities. The same is true of money and use of talents. We cannot do it all. Those who are effective for God and are actively being used by him to further his mission are those who focus their energy and resources on the Church's mission. They are strategically utilizing all their resources to strengthen and multiply Christ's Church.

No higher purpose or more compelling task exists than being used by God to further his mission: spreading the Gospel to those not yet reconciled to God. Since God's focus at present is building his Church, it should be your focus as well. You cannot make a greater investment of your time, talents, and treasure.

Bottom line, if you want your life to have maximum impact and want God to use you to change the world, pursue meaningful involvement in what he is doing in the world through the Church.

You will never be the same once you begin to change the world!



**Responding**

**Constructing Your Life Purpose Statement  
(A Worksheet)**

**Step One: Align Yourself with God's Purposes**

◆ From Jeff Jones' article, write down some important features of God's purpose (including his special purpose for the church in this age).

◆ Jot down any Scriptures that seem to summarize God's purposes for you (i.e., John 15:4-6; Matthew 22:37-39). These may be life verses that have especially impacted you.

**Step Two: List Your Main Roles**

Each of us has several main roles in life. For example, your roles may include:

- |            |    |               |    |                  |
|------------|----|---------------|----|------------------|
| 1. Father  | or | 1. Mother     | or | 1. Husband       |
| 2. Husband |    | 2. Wife       |    | 2. Salesman      |
| 3. Writer  |    | 3. Manager    |    | 3. Administrator |
| 4. Mentor  |    | 4. United Way |    | 4. Elder         |
| 5. Teacher |    | Chairperson   |    | 5. Mentor        |
| 6. Learner |    | 5. Friend     |    | 6. Prayer        |

What are the main roles you currently fill?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**Step Three: Identify God's Special Purposes for You**

List some items that should be included in your purpose statement (for example, your passions, special interests or gifts—Issue 2 will develop this further):



## Step Four: Consider Sample Purpose Statements

### Sample 1

*"My life goal is to know and love the Triune God, to serve him in a way that brings him pleasure and contributes to his kingdom. I seek to fulfill this goal by leading a godly life, and through the writing and publishing of biblically centered materials as my vocational calling."*<sup>1</sup>

The first sentence is a big picture statement. The second part identifies the writer and is helpful in considering the scope of his commitments. This purpose statement is characterized by clarity and brevity.

### Sample 2

*"My life purpose is to give myself fully to God's purposes in the roles he has given me as a wife, mother and member of the body of Christ, and in so doing to glorify him.*

Wife and Mother:

- *To be devoted to Chris and our children, giving my best energy to our home so it is a witness the beauty of the Word of God (Titus 2:3-5) and God's redemptive plan*
- *To fulfill the high calling God has uniquely given me as a woman to assist Chris in the roles God has given him (1 Peter 3:1-6; Ephesians 5:22-23)*
- *To partner with Chris in raising children whose affections are found in Christ, equipped with sound doctrine and life skills (Malachi 2:15)*

Member of Christ's Body

- *To live in a manner worthy of my calling and understanding the qualities I should exhibit as a member of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3)*
- *To pursue wisdom and maturity through spiritual disciplines to know God and more effectively minister in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 90:14)*
- *To develop and use the unique gifts God has given me to build up the body of Christ (Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4:11-16)*

Teacher/Mentor

- *To diligently study the Word and accurately handle doctrine to the best of my ability (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:11-16)*
- *To encourage women in their journey with the Lord, their marriages and children through teaching and mentoring as God provides the opportunity (Titus 2:1-4)"<sup>2</sup>*

The first part of this purpose statement corresponds with God's bigger purposes while the role descriptions amplify the initial statement. Note the addition of Scripture references. The advantage of listing the roles is to help personalize the exercise.

### Sample 3

"To transform the latent energy in American Christianity into active energy. Some of the commitments that help me stay focused are:

1. *The primary loyalty of my life is Jesus Christ. I am committed to fully put into play my gifts in service to him*
2. *I am committed to a vital marriage until "death do us part"*
3. *I have committed the majority of my time and money to beginning and developing a series of overlapping ventures which release the latent energy in American Christianity*
4. *I am committed to be an effective steward of the resources entrusted to my care*
5. *I am committed to being a good friend to ten people*
6. *I am committed to have a renaissance in the second half of my life*
7. *I am committed to practice "altruistic egoism." (Altruistic egoism means gaining personal satisfaction by helping others. It recognizes self-interest as central to my human design, and it counts as greatest gain the goodwill of one's neighbors)<sup>3</sup>*

This sample has a succinct statement followed by a series of commitments. It shows the importance of injecting creativity into your purpose statement.

### Sample 4

"My purpose in life is to –  
bring glory to God  
by abiding in Christ  
and allowing him to produce his fruit in me and through me (John 15:1-8)

*My mission for this period of my life is to:*

1. *Write with integrity and make a difference in Christ's Church*
2. *Mentor people that God "gives" me*
3. *Teach the Word of God faithfully and well*

*By God's grace, my purpose and mission will be expressed in the following roles:*

- *Family Man. I commit myself to my wife, children and grandchildren as my primary ministry. No amount of success in God's service is worth failure at home*
- *Writer. I commit myself to write with excellence and make a difference in the lives of God's people*
- *Mentor. I Commit myself to the in-depth mentoring of three people at any given time and the occasional mentoring of another seven*
- *Teacher. I commit myself to the in-depth study of God's Word so that I can impart life-changing truth to God's people*
- *Prayer. I commit myself to pray faithfully for my family, my writing and the people I mentor and teach, so that my life will not be explainable apart from the Holy Spirit.*<sup>4</sup>

This purpose statement uses “purpose” for God’s overall scheme and “mission” as something that is more time bound and specific to the person. Note the blend of roles and commitments.

### Step Five: Write the First Draft of Your Purpose Statement

Note that this is only a first draft. You will have several opportunities throughout the *Life Development Planner* to revise your purpose statement. The final version will be included in your *Life Development Plan* (Issue 5).

#### Reflecting

As you discuss these questions with your leadership team or mentor, reflect on aspects of the first draft of your purpose statement you may wish to change. Go ahead and make any changes.

1. What are God’s purposes through all of history?
2. What is God’s special purpose for this age?
3. What would you say to someone who maintained that they could fulfill God’s purpose without participating in a local church?
4. To what extent do you see churches “modeling reconciliation and rule” in the way Jones describes? Why or why not?
5. What are some of the benefits of having a clear purpose statement for your life?

---

<sup>1</sup>William Thrasher

<sup>2</sup>Lora Vogelsang

<sup>3</sup>Bob Buford, *Half Time*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1994, pp. 122-123

<sup>4</sup>Rowland Forman

## Overview

God has uniquely designed you for ministry. Ephesians 2:10 says that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” This issue will help you identify how God has designed you, and which types of ministry he has designed you for.

## Suggested Plan

- ◆ Reflect on the Scripture passages.
- ◆ Read “Discovering Your Divine Design.”
- ◆ Complete the “Divine Design Inventory” (pp. 2.9-11).
- ◆ Give two friends copies of the “Divine Design Reference Form” (pp. 2.13, 15).
- ◆ Summarize the results of your “Divine Design Inventory” in *Responding* (p. 2.17).
- ◆ Review the discussion questions (p. 2.18) in preparation for your group discussion.

**Reading**

Read the following Scriptures and list the spiritual gifts mentioned in each passage.

Romans 12:1-8

1 Corinthians 12:1-13:3

Ephesians 4:11-16

1 Peter 4:7-11

Read *Discovering Your Divine Design*, by Jeff Jones.

## Discovering Your Divine Design

by Jeff Jones

Verna has served faithfully in the junior high Sunday school class for more than thirty years. At many companies she would have already received a gold watch. But the sad truth is that she really doesn't enjoy junior high ministry very much. Junior highers annoy her, and each Sunday significant dread fills her heart at the thought of being closed in the room with the little monsters for another hour. Yet, if she didn't work with these kids, who would? That was the question Pastor Fredriksen posed to her back in 1966, when he asked her to teach the class. She knew someone had to do it. God loved those kids, and they needed teaching. So, she signed up, though she didn't realize that she was signing up for a lifetime! Once she was the teacher, everyone assumed she would always be the junior high Sunday school teacher. And she has been ever since. The junior high kids know Verna means well, but she is more often the butt of their jokes than an object of their admiration. In all honesty, her students dread the hour almost as much as she does. Verna is faithful, but not fulfilled nor very effective. She often wonders if there is something else she could do that would be more rewarding, but she really doesn't know what that might be. Meanwhile, she has resigned herself to continue teaching the junior high class. Maybe she'll learn to like it in the next thirty years!

John, on the other hand, loves his church involvement. He belongs to a different church that has a different way of approaching ministry involvement than the church that Verna attends. Rather than filling slots with whomever is willing to volunteer, his church helps believers discover

the gifts, talents, desires, and passion God has given them for ministry. They then empower them in specific areas of ministry that truly fit how God has designed them.

John is an artist at heart, and has a great eye for aesthetics. He always yearned to use his gifts and interests in ministry. He is now a proud member of the "First Impressions Team," whose purpose is to create a good first impression for visitors when they arrive at church for services or various church events. John's job is to create a warm, inviting atmosphere in the lobby and meeting rooms. He is part of a team that decorates, sets up the rooms, and creates a pleasant atmosphere. He constantly thinks about possible improvements that would make the atmosphere more interesting and inviting. He is always eager to get to church before an event and get it ready for people to come. Seeing delight in their faces when the people arrive gives John a great sense of fulfillment. He knows that his contribution to the mission of the church is valuable because he knows that as people come through the doors, their first impression of the church will either be negative or positive. That might dictate whether they come back or not, whether they have an opportunity to hear the gospel or not. John loves his ministry, and is incredibly effective.

Verna and John, both faithful, yet only one is truly effective and fulfilled. The reason is obvious. John has found where he can be used in the church based on his God-given gifts.

Ministry is much more than filling slots; it is fitting saints into areas of service that

correspond with their divine design. When that happens, ministry becomes a very fruitful, fulfilling endeavor.

Do you know where you best fit in the body of Christ? The truth is that God has also designed you uniquely for ministry. You are a one-of-a-kind instrument in God's hands. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Before you were even born, God prepared works for you to accomplish, and

designed you accordingly.

When God called Jeremiah to serve Him as a prophet,

**God has also designed you uniquely for ministry. You are a one-of-a-kind instrument in God's hands.**

he said, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5). God prepared a job for Jeremiah to do, and prepared him to be able to perform it. We find a similar pattern in the life of Paul (Galatians 1:1-15) and David (Psalm 139). Furthermore, when God built the tabernacle, he "filled [people] with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge . . ." to do various tasks to complete the project (Exodus 35). Here we see that God prepared tasks even for ordinary people based both on his purpose as well as their abilities and interests.

The truth is, God has a specific plan for you as well, and he has designed you to be able to succeed in carrying out that plan. Paul addresses this in writing about the body of Christ, teaching that God gave each of us certain gifts and abilities that we are to faithfully use to build up the body of Christ and help fulfill the mission of the church (Romans 12: 3-8; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:1-13:4).

When you and I discover our divine design and begin to minister accordingly, we will find that ministry is not drudgery but a delight. We will also experience a greater sense of satisfaction and personal significance than ever before. Those of us who may be tempted to think that we don't have much to offer will find that God desires to and can use us significantly for his glory. Additionally, close friendships often develop with others with a similar heart for ministry.

The question then, is, "How do I discover my divine design?" The answer is that we first need to understand the general components of design and then how to discover God's design for us individually. We should also consider how spiritual maturity relates to divine design.

## Components of Divine Design

### *Interests*

All of us have unique interests that can help us discover how God wants us to be involved in ministry. Believe it or not, our interests may be the things that God chooses to use most significantly for himself. He can use your interests for his glory.

Interests can include things like gardening, scuba diving, reading, sports, and cooking. Each of these can be a door to ministry that is in keeping with God's design, plan and purpose.

An older couple in a course that I recently led about divine design had a special interest in rose gardening, especially antique roses. I hadn't realized that roses are not grown from seeds but from cuttings from existing plants. This means that each rose has a history—a family tree so to speak. The couple owned roses with certified pedigrees extending back to the garden of Henry VIII and other famous figures in world history.

How might God use an interest in roses in ministry? In this instance, the couple decided to

have open houses to attract those with similar interests or curiosity about roses. At the open houses, the couple would inject statements about God's creativity, the beauty of his creation, and his desire to redeem all of creation. In this way they are able to share the gospel with others in a natural and effective manner.

Some churches have special interest clubs that are open to the community for the purpose of evangelism. Some Christians join clubs that already exist in the community. Some find that their interests, in computers for example, can be converted to immediate use in their local congregation. These examples illustrate one element of divine design.

### ***Passion***

"Passion" is a word commonly associated with romance novels but rarely used in the church today. Nevertheless, God has given each of us certain passions or strong feelings about specific ministries or people. Another word sometimes used for passion is "burden." Someone might say, "I have a burden to reach young people for Christ." I think that's terrible! A burden doesn't sound too good to me. When I hear someone talking about his or her "burden," I always think, "Man, I'll be praying for you. I hope you can get rid of it!"

The truth is that ministering in our area of passion is anything but a burden. While it might be difficult, such ministry is almost always a delight! The best youth workers love working with young people. They love being with them and they constantly pray and think about how they can serve them more effectively. Their heart beats faster when they think about the need to reach our youth, knowing that God wants to use them to make a difference. That is passion.

Passion compels us. It is not just something we *can* do. It is something we *must* do. We feel compelled to perform a particular

ministry or champion a particular cause. Passion is not a whim that lasts for a short spurt. It is a long-term, ongoing sense of urgency about a particular area of ministry.

Of the components of divine design, passion is probably the most difficult to grasp. Some find it hard to narrow down their passion. To help, we are providing an inventory at the end of this article. But be aware that passion might not surface until you are already involved in ministry. So don't wait for a feeling of passion to descend upon you. Just get involved in ministry!

To help you identify your passion, think about what you look for first when you evaluate a church or a

ministry. Your first concern might be that they have a significant ministry to the poor. If so, that might be a strong clue about your passion. Areas of your church that you feel very dissatisfied about might be an area of passion for you, too. You can't believe, for instance, that a particular church doesn't do more about missions. "How can people be content with doing so little?" you ask. God may have given you fervency about world missions because he wants you to be meaningfully involved in supporting and strengthening the missionary efforts of the church.

### ***Gifts and Talents***

A gift or talent is a God-given ability that he energizes and uses to minister effectively to others. Paul mentions such gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. An important observation in these passages is that the lists differ. This is especially significant when you consider that the church in Rome probably did not have access to the letter to Corinth, and vice versa. Paul was

**Passion compels us. It is not just something we *can* do. It is something we *must* do.**



not attempting to provide an exhaustive list of talents, but only a sample list. He wanted Christians to serve God according to the talents and gifts God had given them. Nevertheless, it is instructive to review the categories of gifts listed in the Scripture readings in this issue of the *Life Development Planner*. As a note of caution, remember that the Bible doesn't encourage us to spend our time trying to discover our gifts, but rather to use the abilities God has given us. Our focus should be on serving him.

**God will use even very difficult and painful experiences for his ministry and glory.**

A talent or a gift differs from a skill. A skill can be learned, but a gift is something

you either have or don't have. For example, Christian recording studios will never ask me to do a musical recording for public distribution. It would be a waste of time and money. Yet, I am confident that God has given me the ability to communicate publicly. My job now is to refine and utilize that ability for his glory.

Gifts and talents work in concert with our interests and passions. Passions and interests give us direction in ministry. If we have a passion or an interest in serving the elderly, then we can be fairly sure that God is leading us toward that ministry. Talents and gifts are the vehicles by which we fulfill our passion and interests. For example, two individuals may be serving in a similar area of passion such as youth ministry. Yet, one focuses on counseling troubled young people while the other focuses on public communication. Both are passionate about seeing young people develop a strong relationship with Christ, yet the vehicles by which they try to accomplish this are different.

## **Experience**

The word "background" often has a negative connotation in our culture. Recently a lady described a person to me as "having a background." Fact is, all of us do! God has given each of us a unique cluster of experiences that make us who we are. We know that God will use even very difficult and painful experiences for his ministry and glory.

My mother-in-law was an exceptional woman of God. She encouraged everyone around her. I can't even count the number of people I've met, who attribute their salvation to her influence. When my wife, Christy, was fourteen, her mother died unexpectedly from complications of childbirth. Christy's father, a very sick baby, and her two sisters, aged one-and-a-half and eight were left without a wife and mother. As a result, at fourteen years of age, Christy had to fill the role of a mother to her sisters.

All this raised several serious questions about God such as: Why did this have to happen? And why would God allow such a godly woman to die? Why would God put a young teenager into such a demanding role when she should just be enjoying being a kid?

I don't know all the answers, but I do know part of the answer. Christy's faith in Christ grew tremendously during that experience. And God birthed in her a passion for hurting teenagers. When we served in youth ministry together, she was incredibly effective at reaching out to awkward, hurting junior highers, loving them, and pointing them to Christ. I saw many young girls blossom as God used Christy to encourage them.

I once asked one of the godliest people I know, an 84-year-old woman whose whole life revolves around her relationship with God, what she would change about her life as she looked back. Her answer startled me. She said, "Nothing. Nothing, because God has used every experience, even times when I failed God

terribly, to strengthen my relationship with him and used me to minister to others. God worked out every circumstance for good.”

You might think that your background is a hindrance to your ministry. The reality is that, God can use every experience in your life to minister to others.

Paul spoke about this great truth in 2 Corinthians: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (2 Cor. 1:3-4).*

Your life experiences uniquely prepare you for ministry. As a pastor, I often refer people with certain struggles to those who have successfully worked through similar struggles. In this way they can “comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor. 1:4).

God can also use the more pleasant experiences of your life to minister to others. Our background often opens doors of ministry unavailable to others. All of our experiences can be useful for God’s purposes.

### Discovering Your Divine Design

Then, how can you actually discover your divine design? The pages that follow include two inventories to help you discover how God has uniquely created you for ministry. The first inventory is designed for you to complete about yourself. The next you should give to a friend, family member, or co-worker who knows you well. Additionally, the following considerations are significant:

- Prayer: *for opportunity and insight*
- Involvement: *to gain exposure and experience*
- Reflection: *insights from the biblical passages on spiritual gifts and from opportunities you have had to serve God*

- Personal fulfillment: *what do you enjoy?*
- Confirmation from others: *do others agree with your assessment?*
- Need: *is this important?*
- Results: *have I been effective?*

After completing this article, take time to prayerfully complete the personal inventory, and then pass the other along to someone close to you. The inventories combined with the bullet points above, can help you discover how God has uniquely designed you for ministry.

### Growing in Character Maturity

We can never separate character from divine design. God considers more than divine design when He chooses to use people in ministry. He looks first at our character.

**Character pertains to your personal integrity and spiritual maturity.**

Character pertains to your personal integrity and spiritual maturity. Some describe character as who you are when nobody is looking—the “real you.” Others describe a person of character as someone they would not mind their daughter dating.

A person of poor character cannot effectively serve God. God will use a poorly skilled godly person before he uses an extraordinarily skilled ungodly person. When Paul instructed young pastors in how to choose people for leadership positions, the qualifications did not include giftedness, talent, and passion (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1). The qualifications Paul listed were character qualifications such as honesty, integrity, godliness, faithfulness, and relational holiness.

Spiritual maturity should govern the sphere and scope of one’s ministry. Not everyone has to be qualified to be an elder to serve as a nursery

worker. Yet, the nursery worker should certainly be growing in spiritual maturity. As important as discovering your divine design is, it is completely insignificant if you are not growing spiritually. Our service to Christ should flow out of our relationship to Christ. Our service is an expression of our spiritual growth, and in serving faithfully we grow spiritually.

Sadly, some Christian leaders who have fallen into significant sin that destroyed their credibility still assume leadership roles because of their great ability, skill, and past

**Our service to Christ should flow out of our relationship to Christ.**

accomplishments. But God does not need their ability, skill, and accomplishments before they focus on restoring their relationship with Christ. Over time, God can restore their reputation and begin to effectively use them again in ministry. We should never lose sight of the fact that character is the main qualification for ministry.

God wants to use all of us powerfully for his glory. He will, as long as we are faithful to our gifts, abilities, passions and interests for his purposes, and are growing in spiritual maturity.

### **Conclusion**

Verna and John are both faithfully serving; yet only one is fulfilled and effective. The difference? John is serving the way God designed him to serve. He is fulfilling the ministry God prepared for him.

God also has prepared a ministry for you. He desires to use your unique interests, passion, abilities, and background for his glory, by using you to advance his work in the church. He invites you to get involved in ministry, to serve faithfully and discover your unique role in his plan. He invites you to grow spiritually and mature as his servant. He invites you to a fulfilling, effective ministry. He's waiting for your reply!



**Responding****Divine Design Inventory**

Why do you think God designed each of us uniquely? One of the most rewarding experiences is to discover how God has designed each of us to meet specific needs for his glory. Take some time to think through and answer the questions below. These questions are for your own benefit and are designed to help stimulate your thinking, so try to answer them as honestly as possible.

**Interests**

1. If you could do anything and money, family, and time were not factors, what would you want to do for the rest of your life? In your ministry? In your church?

2. Are there any ministries you have always wanted to pursue, yet have not had the courage or the opportunity to do so? If so, what are they?

**Passion**

1. Do you have a "burning desire" that a certain ministry is the most important place God would have you? If yes, what is it?

2. Do you have a desire to reach a particular group of people (elderly, children, unchurched, ethnic group, underprivileged...)? If so, which?

3. Do you have a strong desire to pursue a particular social issue as your ministry (for example, the family, abortion, politics . . .)? If yes, what is it?

4. Do you have an attraction toward a specific area of ministry in your local church (for example, teaching, leading small groups, maintenance, hospitality)?

### Gifts and Talents

1. From the lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible passages you have read above, which ones do you think you may have (keep in mind Jeff Jones' comments about the nature of the lists of the gifts)?

2. What special abilities and talents do you think God may have equipped you with?

3. Consider the comments about you by people who know you best—family, friends, leaders or other people in the church. From their comments, what abilities and talents do you exhibit? What are some that appear to be weak or missing?

4. What untapped and underdeveloped gifts or talents do you feel you might possess?



**Divine Design Reference Form**

Your spouse, friend or family member is seeking to understand more about his/her relationship to God and who God has made him/her to be. Thank you for setting aside the time to complete this questionnaire, since your input can be very helpful in that process.

Person you are observing:

Your name:

Divine Design

1. What area of ministry is this person "passionate" about (very interested in)? Some examples might involve an age group (e.g. youth), an issue (e.g. abortion), or a certain ministry (e.g. counseling).

2. In what area of ministry would you say this person would be most effective?

3. What are some gifts or talents you have observed in this person?

4. Please share any other observations that would help this person assess his/her strengths and abilities.

**Divine Design Reference Form**

Your spouse, friend or family member is seeking to understand more about his/her relationship to God and who God has made him/her to be. Thank you for setting aside the time to complete this questionnaire, since your input can be very helpful in that process.

Person you are observing:

Your name:

Divine Design

1. What area of ministry is this person "passionate" about (very interested in)? Some examples might involve an age group (e.g. youth), an issue (e.g. abortion), or a certain ministry (e.g. counseling).

2. In what area of ministry would you say this person would be most effective?

3. What are some gifts or talents you have observed in this person?

4. Please share any other observations that would help this person assess his/her strengths and abilities.



After reading the biblical passages, Jeff Jones' article, completing the *Divine Design Profile*, and reviewing your friends' answers to the *Divine Design Reference Form*, use the following categories to state how you believe God has gifted you. Note that these three categories—interests, passions and gifts—will be transferred to your *Life Development Plan* in Issue 5.

My Divine Design

My areas of special interest:

My areas of "passion":

My gifts and abilities:

## Reflecting

### Discussion

1. Discuss the following statements, looking for things you agree and disagree with and why (you may wish to attach biblical passages that support or contradict these statements):

◆ “Ministry is serving God and other people, according to the way God has designed me.”

◆ “Fulfillment and fruitfulness in the Christian life result from ministering in the way God designed me.”

◆ “I need to value the contribution of every member of the body of Christ, because each person is essential to the proper functioning of the body.”

2. What are the primary motivations for Christians to serve God well?

3. Which factors have you found to be most helpful in determining your divine design?

4. What is the relationship between discovering your divine design and growing in Christian maturity?

### Conclusions

Take the majority of the discussion time available to share the results of each person's “Divine Design Inventory.” You might wish to write the summary categories on a whiteboard or a pad.

How do the gifts, passions and interests of this group complement each other?

### Celebration

Allow some time to thank God for the uniqueness and diversity in the Divine Design of each person in your group.

# Life Development Timeline

## Overview

A personal timeline is a big-picture overview of ways that God has been working in your life to develop you into the servant-leader he wants you to be. This issue will help you analyze your life and construct a timeline. The timeline will help you see where you have been, what is happening in your life at present, and future possibilities.

## Suggested Plan

- ◆ Reflect on the Scripture passages.
- ◆ Read “A Letter to Dan the Intern” and review the sample timelines (pp. 3.12-14).
- ◆ As you construct the first draft of your timeline, keep the instructions in *Responding* (p. 3.8) in mind.
- ◆ Review the discussion questions (p. 3.10).

## Reading

Read the following passages and reflect on the big picture they provide:

Genesis 45:4-8 (chapters 37-50 if you are unfamiliar with the story of Joseph)

Proverbs 16:9

Romans 8:28-30

Read *A Letter to Dan the Intern*, by Bobby Clinton. This chapter is from his book, *The Making of a Leader*.

Dr. Robert Clinton is Professor of Leadership at the School of World Missions of Fuller Theological Seminary, in Pasadena, California.

Consider the sample timelines as you construct your own.

## A Letter to Dan the Intern

by Bobby Clinton

**D**an was a seminary student, in his late twenties, whom I felt God had called him to be a missionary to the Chinese. During his second year in seminary, he became restless with all the study involved and wanted to get out there where the action was. With this in mind, he dropped out of seminary and went to Hong Kong for a nine-month internship. Things did not turn out to be what he had hoped. He was asked to do academic research into Chinese history and culture, but the job description was fuzzy. His supervisor was rarely available.

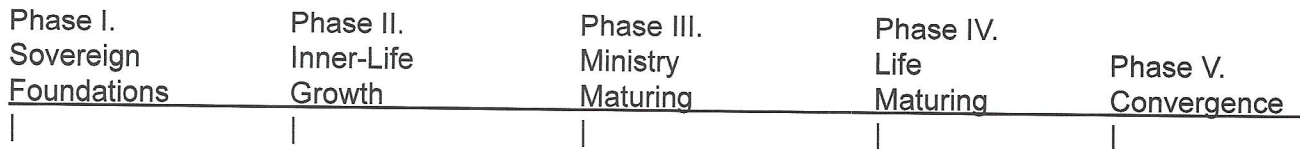
*Dan wanted to be involved in ministry among the Chinese, but he knew very little of the Chinese language. He started an English class with several Chinese. Mainland China was also beckoning. Perhaps he should quit his internship and pursue these efforts. He felt perplexed, even frustrated. It was at this point, about halfway through his internship, when I wrote to him.*

Dear Dan,

Your prayer letter was a welcome treat. Marilyn and I always enjoy hearing from you. I was delighted to hear of your situation. I see great potential for inner growth. It's great when we realize we are in God's training program. He always adapts the curriculum to fit us. Talk about long-range development! God has that in mind as He tailors everybody's curriculum individually to suit His work in their lives. You are going through a required course just now. You probably thought you were signing up for an elective course—but not so.

One of my areas of study, research, and teaching is that of leadership emergence patterns, theoretically known as leadership development theory. It forces you to look at a lifetime with long-range perspectives. When you step back and view a person's life history telescopically, you see things that you may otherwise miss. Let me suggest four things I see happening in your situation. I do not say these things dogmatically, but offer them as insights that may help you see more clearly God's present working in you.

First, some necessary background so you'll understand my language. Leadership development theory begins with the concept of formulating a timeline. A timeline study for each individual is unique. However, when you see enough timelines, you notice some overall general patterns. The following is an idealized pattern synthesized from a study of many individual patterns. Though it is not true specifically for anyone, it does give a functional framework. Notice that there are five development phases.



Sometimes, though rarely, there is a sixth phase called “Afterglow” or “Celebration.” In real life, the development of Phases III, IV, and V often overlap, though I show them here in a sequential pattern.

Sometimes it is formal training (especially if the person intends to go into full-time leadership) in a Bible school or seminary. Sometimes, during the academic program, the person gets ministry experience. Superficially it may appear that ministry training is the focus of this development phase. But closer analysis shows that the major thrust of God’s development is inward. The real training program is in the heart of the person, where God is doing some growth testing. This testing is what I think is happening to you in Hong Kong.

**The real training program is in the heart of the person, where God is doing some growth testing.**

In Phase I, God providentially works

foundational items into the life of the leader-to-be. Personality characteristics, experiences good and bad, and

the time context will be used by God. The building blocks are there, though the structure being built may not be clearly in focus. Character traits are embedded. These same traits in mature form will be adapted and used by God. Many times the personality traits later will be seen to correlate with the spiritual gift-mix that God gives. A retrospective view during the convergence stage makes it easier to clarify just how the foundational issues correlate with mature leadership. Usually the boundary condition between Phase I and Phase II is the conversion experience (or an all-out surrender commitment) in which the would-be-leader aspires to spend a lifetime that counts for God.

In Phase III the emerging leader gets into ministry as a prime focus of life. He or she will get further training, informally through self-study growth projects or non-formally through functionally oriented workshops, etc. The major activities of Phase III are ministry. The training that goes on is rather incidental and often not intentional. It is the ministry that seems so all-important. Most people are anxious to bypass Phase II and get on with the real thing—Phase III, ministry. That appears to be your case. You are anxious to get to ministry with the Chinese.

In Phase II an emerging leader usually receives some kind of training. Often it is informal in connection with ministry. The leader-to-be learns by doing in the context of a local church or Christian organization. The basic models by which he or she learns are imitation modeling and informal apprenticeships, as well as mentoring.

The amazing thing is that during Phases I, II, and III God is primarily working in the leader (not through him or her). Though there may be fruitfulness in ministry, the major work is that which God is doing to and in the leader, not through him or her. Most emerging leaders don’t recognize this. They evaluate productivity, activities, fruitfulness, etc. But God is quietly, often in unusual ways, trying to get the leader to see that one ministers out of what one is. God is concerned with what we are. We want to learn a thousand things because there is so much to learn and do. But He will teach us one thing, perhaps in a thousand ways: “I am forming Christ in you.” It is this that will give power to your ministry. Phase IV will have this “you-minister-from what-you-are” emphasis.

During Phase IV the leader identifies and uses his or her gift-mix with power. There is mature fruitfulness. God is working through the leader using imitation modeling (Hebrews 13:7-8). That is, God uses one's life as well as gifts to influence others. This is a period in which giftedness emerges along with priorities. One recognizes that part of God's guidance for ministry comes through establishing ministry priorities by discerning gifts.

During Phase V convergence occurs. That is, the leader is moved by God into a role that matches gift-mix, experience, temperament, etc. Geographical location is an important part of convergence. The role not only frees the leader from ministry for which there is no gift, but it also enhances and uses the best that the leader has to offer. Not many leaders experience convergence. Often they are promoted to roles that hinder their gift-mix. Further, few leaders minister out of what they are. Their authority usually springs from a role. In convergence, being and spiritual authority form the true power base for mature ministry.

In the long haul, God is preparing you for convergence. He is conforming you to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-29), and He is giving you training and experience so that your gifts may be discovered. His goal is a Spirit-filled leader through whom the living Christ ministers, utilizing the leader's spiritual gifts. The fruit of the Spirit is the mark of the mature Christian. The gifts of the Spirit are a mark of a leader being used of God. God wants that balance. His approach is to work in you, and then through you.

During all the development phases God processes a person by bringing activities, people, problems—you name it—into his or her life. We call these *process items*. God's ultimate purposes for these process items I have explained above. In studying people's lives, we have been able to identify and label some of the process items. One is an integrity check. Usually this occurs in the Inner-Life Growth phase and in the early part of the

ministry phase. I sense that your Hong Kong internship is an integrity check. A successful integrity check results in a stronger leader able to serve God in a wider sphere of influence.

An integrity check tests inner character for consistency. Will you follow through on a commitment? Perhaps God is using your time in Hong Kong to let you see if you will persist in your desire to minister to Chinese. It is one thing to make a decision in the heat of the moment (or quietness as the case may be). It is quite another to serve for a lifetime. Perhaps what God is saying to you through this experience is the message of Jeremiah 12:5: "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?"

**A successful integrity check results in a stronger leader able to serve God in a wider sphere of influence.**

Isolation is another process item. Several times in a leader's life the leader may be set aside. Usually this process item is seen in the ministry phase and life-maturing phase. These times can occur because of crises, illness, persecution or discipline, self-choice, or providential circumstances.

Why? (I know you're asking that!) Isolation process items are used by God to teach important inner leadership lessons that could not be learned in the pressures and activities of normal ministry. God has to get your attention first. Then He teaches.

I see God processing you with a form of isolation. Yours is a cross between self-choice and providential circumstances. In those forms of isolation, God desires to teach one or more of the following lessons:

- ◆ a new perspective on ministry
- ◆ rekindling of a sense of destiny
- ◆ flexibility in openness to new ideas and change
- ◆ broadening through exposure to others
- ◆ inner convictions from the Word guidance

Your part is to respond to this isolation processing and identify the lessons that God has for you in it.

**Submission is an essential leadership lesson.**

A ministry task, which usually occurs in Phase II, is an assignment from God in which

the leader is tested on some basic lessons. Upon successful completion of the ministry task, the leader is usually given a bigger task. You can see this process item in the life of the biblical leader Titus. I also saw it in the life of Watchman Nee, a Chinese leader. I point out these and other examples in my self-study manual on leadership emergence patterns.

Ministry tasks can be formal or informal. They may look as if they are assignments from somebody or due to your own self-choice. But sooner or later, if a person is open and sensitive to God's processing, there is recognition that God really gave the assignment. Hence, ultimate accountability is to Him. Ministry tasks involve getting experience, gaining knowledge, or doing things that will bring out character and giftedness. Often the "little-much" principle stated in Luke 16:10 is operating. Can you be faithful in little things? You may not see the importance of small tasks now, but can you do faithfully what is given you? If you can, then you'll be given greater things. If not, God will have to teach the same lesson again.

Your English class in that Chinese home may well be a ministry task from God. He will teach you lessons about yourself and your love (or lack of it) for the Chinese. It will be experiential learning in the sphere of influence. Can you learn to influence a small group because of who you are (your modeling of your life with Christ) and what you teach? Your research project involving study of Chinese culture and history also may be a ministry task. Be faithful in accomplishing it. God may be giving you information that He intends to use with you later.

Ministry tasks are not always clear-cut and easy to see. But they are stepping-stones to other ministry. Your job is to do them as unto the Lord. When you are in a church or Christian organization and have influence in it, you will see this all the time with younger emerging leaders. As a matter of fact, you will probably deliberately use it in the testing and training of leaders-to-be.

Perhaps the key issue in all of this is submission. Are you willing to submit to God's purposes right now for you? Anyone can submit to something he or she wants. Submission is tested only when the thing is not desired. Learning submission could be the most important reason God has taken you to Hong Kong. It is one thing to know what God's will is; it is another thing altogether to know the timing (both what and when). From what I see, you are not ready yet for a full ministry. God is not in as big a hurry as you and I are. He is more interested in shaping you and me first. Submission is an essential leadership lesson.

#### **Some suggestions:**

*Work on submission.* I just returned from a seminar in New Zealand. As I was talking about my growth projects, one of the participants gave me these words from Andrew Murray, a great South African Christian.

1. He brought me here. It's by His will I am in this straight place. In that fact I will rest.



2. He will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child.

3. Then He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends for me to learn.

4. In His good time, He will bring me out again—how and when He knows. So let me say: I am (a) Here by God's appointment. (b) In His keeping. (c) Under His training. (d) For His time.

At the time I didn't see exactly why he gave them to me. But after reading your letter, it became clear that they weren't for me as much as they were for you. As I was thinking this morning, I was prompted (by the Holy Spirit I believe) to send them along.

Read the chapter on "Time" in *Principles of Spiritual Growth* by Miles Stanford. It has something to say to you right now, where you are. You are in a hurry to get on with ministry. Particularly note the quote concerning the difference between a squash and an oak tree.

*Wait on the Lord.* He will lead in a plain path in His time.

Talk to my friend Steve Torgerson. He is an "evangelical free missionary" in Hong Kong. He is going through isolation because of Chinese language study. God has superbly trained him. His multi-apprenticeship is a form of informal training that has been used by God to equip him for ministry. But he can't do it yet because of the language barrier. He knows what you are going through. Spend some time with him. Cultivate his friendship and seek his advice. He'll be a good sounding board for you.

Read the story of J. O. Fraser who served in China (*Behind The Ranges* by Mrs. Howard Taylor). He was prepared by isolation. I think you are ready for it now. God will meet you as you read.

Well, I was just going to write a little letter and it has turned out to be quite an epistle. If you were here, I wouldn't hesitate to talk and share these things—so why not by letter? The Apostle Paul did such things.

A co-laborer with you,

*Bobby Clinton*



## Responding

Your assignment for this chapter is to construct your own Life Development Timeline. Here are some suggestions as you proceed:

1. Use the timeline with Clinton's categories on it (p. 3.9), and attach approximate periods to each phase (0-19 years, 20-25, and so on).
2. Jot down items from your life under each phase from the "Timeline Criteria," – things like significant events and significant people (positive and negative). In particular, note any boundary events—experiences that brought about major changes in direction for you or your ministry.
3. Glance at the sample timelines provided (pp. 3.12-14).
4. Use the Life Development Timeline provided (p. 3.10), and develop your own categories for the various phases of your life (of course you may prefer to retain some or all of Clinton's phases).
5. Note significant items under each phase, such as people, events, books and so on.
6. At this stage in the process, you may wish to project out to the next phases of your life, making rough notes on some of your goals and people you wish to have as mentors. We will be returning to this version of your timeline once you have completed *Issue 4: Life Assessment*.
7. After you have shared your timeline with your group, note other ideas you gleaned from their comments.

**Life-Development Time Line**

<b>Sovereign Foundation</b>	<b>Inner-Life Growth</b>	<b>Ministry Maturing</b>	<b>Life Maturing</b>	<b>Convergence</b>	<b>Celebration</b>
Early experiences God used to shape the person you are becoming.	Learning by doing Where your inner life was being developed.	Ministry is still the focus. God is working in you, not so much through you.	Confident use of spiritual gifts. God is ministering through you. Mature fruitfulness.	Where all your ministry and character development comes together. You are ministering out of who you are, not just what people want you to do.	Rejoicing in all God has done in you and through you.

**Time Line Criteria:**

- Life changing events
- Significant people
- People you have mentored
- Ministry experience
- Educational experience
- Books or learning experiences
- Spiritual experiences
- Significant Bible passages or doctrines
- Family experiences
- Great memories
- Future goals
- Future ministry desires
- Achievements
- Lessons you have learned

**Life-Development Time Line**

Sovereign Foundation	Inner-Life Growth	Ministry Maturing	Life Maturing	Convergence	Celebration
----------------------	-------------------	-------------------	---------------	-------------	-------------

**Time Line Criteria:**

- Life changing events
- Significant people
- People you have mentored
- Ministry experience
- Educational experience
- Books or learning experiences
- Spiritual experiences
- Significant Bible passages or doctrines
- Family experiences
- Great memories
- Future goals
- Future ministry desires
- Achievements
- Lessons you have learned

## Reflecting

### Discussion

As you discuss these questions with your leadership team or with your mentor, reflect on the way that God has worked out his plan for your life.

1. What were some of the most formative experiences in your spiritual journey so far?
2. As you reflect on people that have influenced you for good, what was it about them that made them so influential?
3. Clinton says that ministry flows out of “being” rather than “doing”—do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
4. What does a life development timeline provide for a Christian leader? What doesn't it provide?

### Sharing Your Timelines

Use the majority of the discussion time to share the timelines of some of your group members.

### Celebration and Worship

Conclude this discussion with a period of thanks and praise to God for his grace displayed in the life of people in your group.

### Life-Development Time Line Terry Butler

Age	0-17	18-21	21-24	24-26	26-28	28-35	36-43	43-50	50-60
Life Changing Events	Struggles in school	3 years in Army	Trouble w/ law- Alabama	Leave for TX; Live in car; Marriage to Monica/Divorce Farm	Cole born; Start work at Haggard Farm	Work for Rodney; Receive Christ; Baptism; Depression	Start at church; Life changing party	Deeper ministry involvement	Son married; Grandkids
Ministry Involvement	None	None	None	None	None	L. C. Volunteer	1st Mission trip; Journey Volunteer; Discovery courses; Men's study in home; FCA, TURBO, Intern	FCA; Servant; Ministry; Working w/ young couples	Mentoring kids & young adults Service through works
Family	Dad dies	Distant relations	Turbulent years	2 brothers come to TX	Monica; Cole	Losing touch due to long hours	Cole in sports Coaching b-ball	Serving w/ Monica; Cole in college	Taking care of mom & dad
Friends	Moved around	No real ones	Losers	Steve Turney	Fred, Snip, Gary	Work related; Brian & Shirley Turbo Journey staff	Kenton, Jack Brent, Brian Turbo Journey	Deepen relationships	Enjoy extended family
Goals	Survive	Get out of Army	Stay alive	Get apartment	Enjoy life	Get out of Chisholm	Spiritual growth	Learn to be intimate in relations	Just enjoy those I have
Dreams	Go to Canada	None	None	Make money	None	Happiness	Serve God	Serving God Harley	Financial Security Deep relations w/ God; Small plot of land in country; Est. in ministry area.

**Life-Development Time Line  
Brent Hagenbuch**

Age Year	0-21 1960-81	22-31 1982-91	32-48 1991-98	39+ 1999+
	<b>Fertilize/Plant/Sprout</b>	<b>Growth/Roots/Branches</b>	<b>Stress &amp; Recovery</b>	<b>Blossom, Yield Fruit</b>
	<b>Pre-Christian/salvation</b>	<b>Growth</b>	<b>Stall, wake up, restart</b>	<b>Consistent character &amp; Ministry-Being</b>
Walk	<p>Godly heritage</p> <p>Parents?</p> <p>Watered down as kid</p> <p>Episcopalian</p> <p>Thought Christian</p>	<p>Godly mentors each step</p> <p>Involved in sound churches</p> <p>Nav. 2:7</p> <p>-Word, fellowship, prayer</p> <p>-Ministry</p> <p>Youth, Sunday School, Elder</p> <p>...but all not given up</p>	<p>Distraction</p> <p>Crises</p> <p>Study; God's dreams, 2-fold purpose of Christ, D. Trotman</p> <p>FBCN</p> <p>-Healing, exploring, helping</p> <p>-Relationships, maturing</p> <p>-ID character issues</p>	<p>With Jean</p> <p>Follow-up family, old friends</p> <p>Turbo Team</p> <p>Mini-church</p> <p>FBCN/CBBT</p>
	<b>Good Son</b>	<b>Rough single, early husband/fatherhood -improvement</b>	<b>Neglectful - back on track</b>	<b>... we will serve the Lord</b>
Family	<p>Close family, favorite son</p> <p>Extended family all in small town; Good parenting</p> <p>Work ethic</p> <p>Treated like prince</p>	<p>Father, hero dies</p> <p>Meet/marry Jean</p> <p>Nicole</p> <p>marriage counseling</p> <p>Jean patient, iron starts to sharpen iron.</p>	<p>Distraction, neglect</p> <p>Jean lives crisis with me</p> <p>Dallas-learning how to make being at home a priority</p> <p>Take on role of spiritual leader</p> <p>Time, know Nicole &amp; Adam</p> <p>Trinity Christian Academy</p>	<p>Continued marriage growth in Christ; -Nicole mature into woman, more ministry, God's will for step into adulthood.</p> <p>-Adam confirm decision, baptism, gratitude, selfless servant heart</p>
	<b>Develop obsession w/success</b>	<b>In God's Will as Navy Civil Engineer Corps Officer</b>	<b>Business Experience</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>
Work	<p>Dyslexia, insecurity</p> <p>Student, Athlete ONLY</p> <p>Focus, set mind, do anything, <i>Navel Academy dream</i></p>	<p>Varied real world experience</p> <p>Apply/adapt line leadership</p> <p>Teacher/travel</p> <p>Education/sophistication</p> <p><i>McKinsey dream</i></p>	<p>McKinsey, Frito Lay</p> <p>Threw self in vision, strategy</p> <p>Change management</p> <p>Analytical skills, Exposure to wealth &amp; power, Humility, influence, Cynicism, less wide-eyed, Struggle, learning to balance.</p>	<p>Bring experience to impact one or two organizations</p> <p>Leverage for financial</p> <p><i>God's dream! Half-time?</i></p>

**Life-Development Time Line**  
**James Roberts**

*Psalms 37:23-24 The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delights in their way . . . though he stumble, he will not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with His hand.*

Individual Markers	Lost Years 0-19 / 1958-1977	God's Sovereign Protection Not arrested or killed	(Sovereign Foundation) New Life/Grounding Years 19-23 / 1977-1981	(Inner-Life Growth) Growth/Service 23-31 / 1981-1989	(Ministry & Life Maturing) Moving Toward Ministry 31-39 / 1989-1997	(Convergence) Full-Time Ministry 39+ / 1997 - Rapture
Accountability	None	Ed McElroy Blaine Gibbs Dirk Williams	Meet Anette (12/77) Choose Christ (1/78) Baptized (10/81)	Eddie Staub (86)	Don Nix (91)	FBCN Bridal Room (4/98)
Mentors	Mom praying	The Hetzel Family Tom Crocker & Doug Powell Jim Rose Cliff Relyea	Grace Community Church Joint Heirs & FLOCKS	Grace Community Church Ed Dudley Russell & Julia Bridges	Don Nix Tony Bartel	Don Nix TURBO Brian Holmes
Ministry Involvement	Young Life (1 mtg)	Grace Community Church Joint Heirs & FLOCKS	Plant a church Lead small groups Establish accountability groups, Church leadership teams	Russell Bridges	Initiate small-group ministry Co-chair building campaign Teach 5th/6th Sunday School Volunteer Journey Staff Mini-church	Volunteer Journey Staff Center for Church-Based Training, Mini-church Care Pastor Discovery Leader
Family Markers	Stopped going to church 4th grade	Marry Anette (12/79) Move to CA (3/81) Surrender/Dumpster (9/81) Anette & I baptized (10/81)	Christy born (8/83) Move to GA (6/84) Joshua born (7/85)	Move to Texas (5/89) Lauren born (12/89) Brother dies (90) Anette/Sylvia (91) Father dies (92) Christy baptized (93)	CCBT (2/99) Baptize Joshua (6/99) Anette (8/99)	
Career	Bricking Houses	Direction One- Reg. Sales Mgr. Lorenzo Verde- Nat. Sales Mgr.	James Roberts & Assoc. Lanier- Top Sales Rep./Dist Mgr. ADP Georgia-VP Sales	ADP Texas - President Health Dental Plus Gen. Mgr.	Transition to Ministry	
Goals	Finish High School Get a job	Devour the Word Apply the Word	Buy first home Character Development Be a godly father	Run a company Cont'd character development Prepare for ministry	Write a book on standards/character	



## Overview

How will you know that you are growing in Christian maturity? When did you last examine your character, ministry skills and level of knowledge? If you see a need to assess those areas, how do you proceed? This issue focuses on the importance of periodically taking stock of your life, and provides knowledge, character and ministry skill inventories.

In the previous issues you have focused on your life-purpose, your divine design and formulated your timeline. Issue 4 will help you set 'be' (character), 'do' (ministry), and 'know' (knowledge) goals that can be incorporated into your *Life Development Plan*.

## Suggested Plan

- ◆ Reflect on the Scripture passages.
- ◆ Read "Not Perfect, But Progressing."
- ◆ Complete the "Assessing the Whole Person" inventories (pp. 4.10-20) and the summary of each category.
- ◆ Review the discussion questions (p. 4.21) in preparation for the group discussion.

## Reading

Consider the following passages as you reflect on the need to be growing in your Christian walk. Make brief notes on ways Christians are expected to grow.

Ephesians 4:11-16

1 Peter 2:1-3

2 Peter 1:3-9

2 Peter 3:17-18

Read *Not Perfect, But Progressing*, by Rowland I.K. Forman.

Rowland Forman is the Director of Curriculum for the Center for Church Based Training. He is an experienced pastor, church planter and previous Principal of a Bible College in New Zealand. He and his wife spend four months of every year in Dallas, Texas and the other eight in Hamilton, New Zealand.

## Not Perfect, But Progressing

by Rowland I. K. Forman

*“The unexamined life is not worth living.” –Socrates*

Anyone who comes within earshot of me these days discovers that I am a passionate granddad. Even unsuspecting shop assistants, flight attendants and passers-by find themselves discussing the virtues of my three great (only in the superlative sense) grandsons! Even though Logan and Luka are only a few weeks old, I’ve noticed how fascinated their parents are in the minute developmental steps that they take. Our other grandson, two-and-a-half year old Harrison loves to be described as a “big boy” and sometimes stands next to the wall chart in his room a couple of times a day to see if there has been any growth.

Parents expect physical and emotional growth in their children and young adults, but somewhere along the developmental continuum, the expectation of growth diminishes. For some, adulthood equates with stagnation. Other adults are content to be like the ‘lost boys’ in the movie, *Hook*. They were the group of boys that Peter Pan lived with and fought against Captain Hook with, in Never-Never Land. The most compelling feature about the boys was that they never grew up—they remained boys forever.

One of the ways that we determine the health of our children is that they are growing as they should. The same is true of God’s children. The Apostle Peter anticipated the growth of the suffering Christians he wrote to when he said, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:3). He was emphasizing the need to feed on God’s Word, but he also indicated that growing up is expected of Christians. Peter also

said, “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). That sounds like a necessity for all, not an option for a few devoted Christ-followers. What did Peter mean by growing in grace and knowledge? Certainly growing in grace (the verb is in the present tense in the sense of keeping on growing) implies growth in Christian character, that is in the graces captured by the list we know as “the fruit of the Spirit” – qualities like love, joy, peace, patience and so on. It may also mean growing in our understanding and application of the doctrine of grace. And it certainly includes growing in our experiential knowledge of Christ.

Are you concerned about your spiritual development? How would you know if you are growing in grace? How would others tell if you had ceased to grow spiritually? How would we go about measuring spiritual growth? What would we measure if it were possible to determine whether we were developing spiritually? Who would be responsible for measuring our growth in Christlikeness?

While spiritual growth is not always obvious, and it is certainly not uniform or automatic, I believe that it is measurable up to a certain point. For example, in his book, *Rediscovering Holiness*, J.I. Packer lists five signs of growth in Christian character and intimacy with God:

**Sign One:** An increasing delight in praising God, and a dislike for being praised oneself.

**Sign Two:** A growing desire to give to others and to care for them and a move away from self-absorption.

**Sign Three:** An increasing passion for personal holiness and an avoidance of behavior that displeases God.

**Sign Four:** A growing commitment to God's kingdom even if that means taking unpopular action to fulfill that commitment.

**Sign Five:** A growing willingness to submit to God's sovereignty and an avoidance of impatient attitudes (Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 188-190).

How did you measure up to those signs? While I agree with Packer that there are signs of

**How would others tell if you had ceased to grow spiritually?**

spiritual growth, the ones he lists could be taken as rather abstract and subjective. It might be preferable

to uncover signs of unhealthy spiritual development before looking at ways of assessing our growth in grace. Consider these three distorted pictures of church leaders:

### Oversized Heads

Imagine a body with an inordinately big head. It would look grotesque. Some Christian leaders are like that. They know so much. They use their theological and biblical knowledge like a club to pummel believers into submission. In Paul's words to the Corinthian church, they are "puffed up" with pride in their ability to assimilate spiritual information. Leaders like this are typically underdeveloped in Christian service. They want to hide behind their books. They may also be low on the experiential side of Christianity. When they teach or counsel, they come across as sterile, lacking passion and soul.

### Oversized Hearts

Other church leaders have large hearts, but skinny legs and a pea-sized head. For these people, Christianity is all about experience. They are typically warm individuals who relate well to others on a compassionate level. They tend to care little about doctrine, and often emphasize emotions and feelings to the exclusion of practical Christian service.

### Oversized Limbs

These individuals have massive legs and arms with pinheads and a matchstick body (Packer, 167-170). They are constantly doing good deeds for others as they serve themselves into the ground, while neglecting doctrine and the devotional disciplines of the Christian life that can enable their heart to grow.

How about you? Have you paid enough attention to your knowledge base? Have you focused on the spiritual development of your 'heart,' while neglecting to develop a sound knowledge of God and his Word and involvement in local church ministry? Are you obsessed with serving Christ, yet thin on Bible knowledge and weak in key aspects of your character?

### Both Life and Doctrine

When Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy he expected his young protégé to be growing, and he called on him to attend to every facet of his life and ministry. He said:

*Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and your doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4:15-16).*

When Paul referred to *these matters* he was talking about every part of Timothy's life and ministry – his character (he was to set an

example to other believers in his speech, life, love, faith and purity), his ministry (he was to devote himself to preaching and teaching) and his gifting. The reason Timothy needed to pay attention to these things was so that his progress would be obvious to those around him. Stop and consider your life and ministry. Is there evidence of progress, or are you stagnating? Do other people recognize that you are developing in your character, knowledge and ministry skills, or do they see obvious deficiencies in all three?

1 Timothy 4:16 that starts out, “*Watch your life and doctrine closely*” has become a life-verse for me. It beckons me to scrutinize my life (my character, my walk with God, my ethical standards and my attitudes to others) and my doctrine (my commitment to understanding and living out biblical truth). I take it as a clarion call from God to evaluate my conduct and my creed. For me, this needs to take place both through periodic checks in courses like the *Life Development Planner* as well as a constant part of my life. I need to personally scrutinize my life and doctrine and to invite mentors to watch over me as well.

Paul’s call to Timothy was to be a lifelong quest to scrutinize his life and doctrine. He said, “*persevere in them*” – because the implications were serious. If he watched over his character and creed he would “*save both himself and his hearers,*” meaning that he and his hearers would be saved from the peril of a pointless life.

While it is appropriate to ask others to tell us how they think we are doing in various aspects of our lives and ministries, Paul’s call to Timothy was for him to watch out for his life and doctrine. We should do likewise.

## Assessing Your Knowledge Base

### Knowing the Bible

How well do you know the Bible? If your life depended on it, would you be able to spell out

the central theme of the book of Habakkuk, for example? If you were to bump into Habakkuk on heaven’s streets of gold and he asks you, “What did you think of my book?” would you react with embarrassment and shame in having to admit to being a Christian for 20 years and not knowing that his book contains one of the great teachings in all of Scripture—that the just will live by faith?

So take a minute to dust off the table of contents of your Bible. Then mark the books of the Bible with which you are familiar and those you know little about. Doing so will help highlight some gaps in your Bible knowledge.

Taking this to a higher level, note what Paul said to his friend Titus. In teaching about the essential qualifications of eldership, he told Titus that an elder must: *...hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it* (Titus 1:9). If you are an elder, or an aspiring elder, that means that you must both know the message and be able to defend it.

In addition to the need to be biblically literate and to know sound doctrine well enough to be able to defend it, there is another reason for my staying highly motivated over the long haul—the desire for God’s approval. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.* Our highest aim should be to please the Lord by knowing the Scriptures and handling them accurately and effectively.

**Our highest aim should be to please the Lord by knowing the Scriptures and handling them accurately and effectively.**

## Knowing Theology

Closely related to mastering the message of the Scriptures is the need to know sound doctrine. Paul's instructions to Titus mentioned above highlight the need to know basic doctrines well.

How well would you be able to explain a doctrine like the Trinity? Would you be able to provide biblical support for this doctrine, show its life changing qualities and identify questions that are still unresolved in your mind?

**Your character is not defined by your occasional slip-ups or moments of heroism but by what you are doing day in and day out.**

As a means of maintaining sound doctrine, I strongly recommend reading a book on theology

each year. I'm very grateful that someone recommended reading J. I. Packer's *Knowing God* and A. W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy* in alternate years. Doing so has helped me to lead a more God-centered life and to maintain intimacy with him.

Later in this chapter of the *Life Development Planner*, you will be asked to identify which doctrines you think you clearly understand and which ones you need to study during the next year. As you respond, let Paul's words to Timothy "*watch...your doctrine*" ring in your ears. Resolve by God's grace to become a lifelong student of theology.

## Knowing the World

According to 1 Chronicles 12:32, the men of Issachar *understood the times and knew what Israel should do*. They understood their culture well and had a clear understanding of what Israel should do. How well do you understand your culture? What are the main social issues

your community, and what does the Bible say about those issues? What should the church be doing in response to those social issues? Also, what are the primary global issues confronting the world today? How well informed are you on each of those issues? Are you reading widely with a view to being well informed and being an interesting person?

Dr. Gene Getz's groundbreaking book, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, encourages church leaders to look through the lens of Scripture, the lens of history and the lens of culture. We need the primary lens of the Word of God—the key to helping us understand the issues of life. More than ever there is a need for church leaders to be students of Scripture, students of history and students of culture. As you complete the inventory at the conclusion of this chapter, aim to identify gaps in your biblical, theological, historical and social knowledge. Then make plans to plug those gaps.

## Assessing Your Character

Measuring your character reminds me of a cartoon where a church had given their pastor a badge for being so humble, and then took it away because he wore it! How do you measure character qualities like humility? It's not like you can go around saying, "I'm glad I'm a lot more humble than I was six months ago." It's not as if you can create a checklist of character qualities, choosing one to work on for three months and then moving on to the next. There's a sense in which Christlike character is the domain of a lifetime. As David Gill says, "Your character is not defined by your occasional slip-ups or moments of heroism but by what you are day in and day out" (David Gill, *Becoming Good*, 29).

Character is difficult to measure, and observable only over the long haul. However, character qualities must be identifiable and up to a point, measurable. For example, Paul's list of qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 indicates that there are ways of knowing whether a person has certain qualities. Measurable qualities include:

*Above reproach* – a person with a good reputation that no one can point a finger at and have the accusation stick. This is a person with an exemplary life.

*Husband of one wife* – a person that is morally pure. The Greek words literally say, “One woman man,” implying that the aspiring elder needs to be faithful to his wife.

*Temperate* – a person who avoids extremes and is balanced.

*Prudent* – a person of wisdom, with sound judgment, discreet and sensible.

*Hospitable* – a person who is generous and open to other people.

*Not addicted to wine* – a person who is not in bondage to any substances.

*Not pugnacious* – a person who is not quick-tempered and not violent.

*Not contentious* – a person who is not constantly argumentative and manipulative in their style of communication.

In this sample from Paul’s list, all of the items are observable (otherwise Paul’s instruction to Timothy would have been an exercise in futility). Nevertheless, they are difficult to quantify because of errors in judgment and human and cultural biases. Gene Getz tells of one of his lay elders at Fellowship Bible Church North, a man called Eddie, who was being considered for eldership. Through a process of evaluation by elders, staff and Eddie’s wife, some perceived him as a person who was ‘contentious’. As his pastor, Gene had the unenviable job of conveying this to Eddie. To Gene’s surprise, Eddie was totally open, non-defensive, and willing to change. Eventually, he became a highly respected member of the elder board (Gene Getz, *Lessons on Leadership*, 100-101).

This example illustrates both the difficulty of assessing a leader’s character and the importance of feedback. In the *Handbook of Leadership Development*, authors Cynthia McCauley, Russ Moxley and Ellen Van Velsor identify three elements of leadership development: Assessment, Challenge and Support. The assessment process allows a developing leader the opportunity to close gaps between who they are and what they would like to be. Challenging experiences allow the leader to come out of their comfort zone with the support of others to help with the struggle and pain of the developmental experience.

In their chapter on 360-Degree Feedback, McCauley, Moxley and Van Velsor

give the example of Terry Anderson, a journalist working in the Middle East in the 1980’s. You might remember that Anderson was taken prisoner by a Shiite group and was put in a ten-by-twelve foot cell with three other captives. They argued constantly. At one point, Anderson asked the group what was going wrong. They replied, “You challenge David all of the time. You seem to want to top him, to prove something to him. It’s like a pair of bulls trying to dominate the same herd.” Terry didn’t like what he heard, but he resolved to change. All three elements of this developmental experience kicked into place. Assessment came in the form of verbal feedback from his fellow captives, his challenge became obvious, and he received enthusiastic support from his cellmates when they saw him trying to change (Cynthia D. McCauley, *Handbook of Leadership Development*, 29).

My observation of many church leadership groups is that they are feedback-starved. People tiptoe around each other, tolerating attitudes and behavior that should be addressed in the interests of spiritual growth. The extreme

**. . . many church leadership groups . . . are feedback-starved.**

of weekly and rigorous evaluation of each other's character should be avoided, but a periodic evaluation of each other's strengths and weaknesses with the aim of helping and supporting each other is valuable. It's not as if we don't evaluate each other anyway. It is natural to develop and have opinions of others as a protective mechanism. Identifying the gaps in our character and experience through the support of fellow leaders can fuel enormous spiritual growth and development. Therefore, I encourage you to complete the character

**Many of us are “doing” ministry, but we are not developing into mature servants of Christ.**

inventories in this chapter of the *Life Development Planner*, and either ask a trusted

mentor to complete the same form with you in mind, or agree as a leadership team to give feedback to each other every six months or so.

### Assessing Your Ministry Skills

Many of us are “doing” ministry, but we are not developing into mature servants of Christ. We are gaining experience, but we are not effectively impacting others' lives. When did you last take an inventory of ministry skills and strengths that need to be developed, or take stock of areas of Christian service unsuited to your personality?

In his *Lectures to My Students*, the famous 19<sup>th</sup> Century English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon humorously remarked, “You know ministers who have mistaken their calling, and evidently have no gifts for it: make sure that none think the same of you...I heard one say the other day that a certain preacher had no more gifts for the ministry than an oyster, and in my own judgment this was a slander on the oyster, for that worthy bivalve shows great discretions in his openings, and knows when to close. If some men were sentenced to hear their

own sermons it would be a righteous judgment upon them, and they would soon cry out with Cain, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear’” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 28).

Some who read this chapter will be preachers. For those who are, when did you last receive constructive criticism on the content and delivery of your messages? Tragically, many of us just put more hours into the pulpit without showing any improvement. The well-known author, John Stott, is reputed to have (at one stage in his preaching career) one or two people in the audience who regularly critiqued his sermons. He would receive the written review on a Wednesday and endeavor to make changes based on their input.

Other readers will be leaders of small groups. They should heed Carl George's words, “Are you leading—or just taking a walk?” (Carl George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*, 17). In reality, too many small group leaders are grinding on week after week in this crucial ministry, but not growing in effectiveness. If you are a small group leader, why not engage in a little 360-Degree Feedback by enlisting people over you, alongside you and people in your care to help you. Ask the pastor in charge of small groups (if you have one), your assistant leader, and a couple of people in your group to give you feedback on select aspects of your small group ministry. You can also demonstrate initiative by studying a book on small group leading such as the one by Carl George.

The development of a ministry skill is a golden opportunity to enlist the help of a coach. I well remember the first funeral I conducted. The thought scared me stiff! I had attended funerals, but all I could remember was the part about dust to dust. Even then I couldn't recall when to use those words. A man who had been a missionary in Chad and a pastor of many years was a God-send for me. He gave me copies of all his funeral ceremonies, and in my first ceremony, I used one verbatim. As I gained experience, I was able to inject my own style into the presentation.



Regardless as to whether you are a preacher, small group leader or reluctant funeral officiant, if you are in church leadership, there will be aspects of your ministry that will need development. Few things are more exhilarating than ministering according to who God has created you to be (your Divine Design), and then assuming the responsibility of honing the skills he has given you by incorporating regular self-assessment and feedback from people who care about you.

### **Where to From Here?**

Four major strategies are recommended:

1. Personal Assessment – At the simplest and most private level, sit down and assess your strengths and developmental needs in the areas of knowledge, character and ministry skills. Identify one strength and one developmental need from each area, and then build an action plan for each.

2. Assessment with a Mentor – Conduct the personal assessment, then discuss your conclusions and action plan with a trusted mentor and confidant.

3. 360-Degree Feedback – Complete the assessment at a personal level, then invite those you report to, who are alongside you and who you minister to, to give you feedback on your character, ministry skills and/or knowledge base.

4. Feedback with Accountability – One of the aims of the *Life Development Planner* is to call you to a greater commitment to your local church. After completing the 360-Degree Feedback process, it would be beneficial to ask the leadership team that you work with to keep you accountable for your conduct and performance. Or, you might prefer to work with your mentor on the matter of follow-through.



## Assessing the Whole Person: An Inventory for Church Leaders

by Rowland I. K. Forman

Use this inventory to identify aspects of your knowledge, character and ministry skills that are strengths as well as recording areas that need to be developed. Check the boxes and identify items that you will work on in the near future. Complete the summary at the end of each section.

### Knowledge – What do you know?

#### Knowing the Word

	Never Read	Read Parts	Read All	Read Multiple Times	Studied	Taught	Mastered
Genesis							
Exodus							
Leviticus							
Numbers							
Deuteronomy							
Joshua							
Judges							
Ruth							
1 & 2 Samuel							
1 & 2 Kings							
1 & 2 Chronicles							
Ezra							
Nehemiah							
Esther							
Job							
Psalms							
Proverbs							
Ecclesiastes							
Song of Solomon							
Isaiah							
Jeremiah							
Lamentations							
Ezekiel							
Daniel							

	Never Read	Read Parts	Read All	Read Multiple Times	Studied	Taught	Mastered
Hosea							
Joel							
Amos							
Obadiah							
Jonah							
Micah							
Nahum							
Habakkuk							
Zephaniah							
Haggai							
Zechariah							
Malachi							
Matthew							
Mark							
Luke							
John							
Acts							
Romans							
1 Corinthians							
2 Corinthians							
Galatians							
Ephesians							
Philippians							
Colossians							
1 Thessalonians							
2 Thessalonians							
1 Timothy							
2 Timothy							
Titus							
Philemon							
Hebrews							
James							
1 Peter							
2 Peter							
1, 2 & 3 John							
Jude							
Revelation							

## Summary

*Books of the Bible I plan to study in the next:*

◆ One Year

◆ Two Years

◆ Three Years

◆ Four Years

◆ Five Years

## Knowing Bible Doctrine

	Inadequate				Adequate		
How would you rate your knowledge of the following Bible doctrines (based on your ability to explain each doctrine adequately to a new Christian):							
God's attributes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The Trinity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
God the Father	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
God the Son	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
God the Holy Spirit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Scripture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Humanity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Salvation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sanctification	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Angels	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Satan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The Future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Summary

*I plan to study the following Bible doctrines in the next:*

- ◆ One Year
  
- ◆ Two Years
  
- ◆ Three Years
  
- ◆ Four Years
  
- ◆ Five Years

**Character – What are you like?**

The following are 20 characteristics of maturity taken from Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus (adapted from *The Measure of a Man* by Gene Getz) and 9 aspects of the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23, followed by a seven-point evaluation scale ranging from inadequate to adequate. Read each question carefully, and then circle the number that best represents where you are on your spiritual journey. Be as honest and objective as possible, but don't be too hard on yourself. Give credit where credit is due.

We have included two copies of this part of the inventory. Fill out the first one, and give the second (pp. 4.17-18) to someone who knows you well. You can then compare your friend's scores with your own and discuss any discrepancies with a mentor or with your church leadership team.

## Qualities of a Church Leader Inventory - Personal Assessment

	Inadequate				Adequate		
1. <b>Overall Spiritual Maturity</b> - How would you rate your overall maturity as a Christian?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2a. <b>Above Reproach</b> - How would you rate your reputation as a Christian among fellow believers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2b. <b>Above Reproach</b> - How would you rate your reputation among non-Christians?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. <b>Marital Faithfulness</b> - How would you rate your relationship with your spouse?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. <b>Temperate</b> - How would you rate the degree to which you are maintaining balance in your Christian experience?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. <b>Prudent</b> - How would you rate your ability to be wise and discerning?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. <b>Respectable</b> - How would you rate the way your life reflects the life of Jesus Christ?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. <b>Hospitable</b> - How would you rate your generosity?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. <b>Able to Teach</b> - How would you rate your ability to communicate God's truth clearly (whether in a group or one-on-one)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. <b>Not Addicted to Wine</b> - How would you rate your ability to control various obsessions and compulsions?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. <b>Not Self-Willed</b> - How would you rate your ability to relate to others without being self-centered and controlling?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. <b>Not Quick-Tempered</b> - How would you rate your ability to control your anger?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. <b>Not Pugnacious</b> - How would you rate your ability to control any form of verbal or physical abuse?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. <b>Gentle</b> - How would you rate your ability to be objective and fair minded in your relationships with others?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. <b>Uncontentious</b> - How would you rate your ability to avoid arguments?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. <b>Free from the Love of Money</b> - How would you rate your ability to be nonmaterialistic?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. <b>One Who Manages His/Her Own Household Well</b> - How would you rate your ability to function in your family role according to God's plan?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. <b>Loving What is Good</b> - How would you rate your ability to "overcome evil with good"?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. <b>Just</b> - How would you rate your ability to be just and fair in your relationships with others?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. <b>Devout</b> - How would you rate the way your life reflects God's holiness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. <b>Disciplined</b> - How would you rate your ability to live a disciplined Christian life?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Fruit of the Spirit Inventory - Personal Assessment

	Inadequate				Adequate		
1. <b>Love</b> - How would you rate your ability to love others unconditionally?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. <b>Joy</b> - How would you rate your ability to be happy and joyful despite your circumstances?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. <b>Peace</b> - How would you ability to be calm under pressure?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. <b>Patience</b> - How would you rate your ability to persist when circumstances or people disappoint you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. <b>Kindness</b> - How would you rate your ability to be generous and kind?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. <b>Goodness</b> - How would you rate your ability to do what is morally and ethically right?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. <b>Faithfulness</b> - How would you rate your ability to be depended on?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. <b>Gentleness</b> - How would you rate your ability to treat people with tenderness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. <b>Self-Control</b> - How would you rate your ability to be self-controlled and not controlled by circumstances?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Summary

*Discrepancies between my assessment and that of my friend:*

◆ From the "Qualities of a Church Leader Inventory"

◆ From the "Fruit of the Spirit Inventory"

*Character qualities I need to work on in this next period:*

◆ From the "Qualities of a Church Leader Inventory"

◆ From the "Fruit of the Spirit Inventory"



## Qualities of a Church Leader Inventory - Friend's Assessment

	Inadequate				Adequate		
1. <b>Overall Spiritual Maturity</b> - How would you rate your overall maturity as a Christian?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2a. <b>Above Reproach</b> - How would you rate your reputation as a Christian among fellow believers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2b. <b>Above Reproach</b> - How would you rate your reputation among non-Christians?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. <b>Marital Faithfulness</b> - How would you rate your relationship with your spouse?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. <b>Temperate</b> - How would you rate the degree to which you are maintaining balance in your Christian experience?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. <b>Prudent</b> - How would you rate your ability to be wise and discerning?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. <b>Respectable</b> - How would you rate the way your life reflects the life of Jesus Christ?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. <b>Hospitable</b> - How would you rate your generosity?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. <b>Able to Teach</b> - How would you rate your ability to communicate God's truth clearly (whether in a group or one-on-one)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. <b>Not Addicted to Wine</b> - How would you rate your ability to control various obsessions and compulsions?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. <b>Not Self-Willed</b> - How would you rate your ability to relate to others without being self-centered and controlling?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. <b>Not Quick-Tempered</b> - How would you rate your ability to control your anger?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. <b>Not Pugnacious</b> - How would you rate your ability to control any form of verbal or physical abuse?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. <b>Gentle</b> - How would you rate your ability to be objective and fair minded in your relationships with others?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. <b>Uncontentious</b> - How would you rate your ability to avoid arguments?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. <b>Free from the Love of Money</b> - How would you rate your ability to be nonmaterialistic?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. <b>One Who Manages His/Her Own Household Well</b> - How would you rate your ability to function in your family role according to God's plan?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. <b>Loving What is Good</b> - How would you rate your ability to "overcome evil with good"?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. <b>Just</b> - How would you rate your ability to be just and fair in your relationships with others?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. <b>Devout</b> - How would you rate the way your life reflects God's holiness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. <b>Disciplined</b> - How would you rate your ability to live a disciplined Christian life?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## Fruit of the Spirit Inventory - Friend's Assessment

	Inadequate			Adequate			
1. <b>Love</b> - How would you rate your ability to love others unconditionally?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. <b>Joy</b> - How would you rate your ability to be happy and joyful despite your circumstances?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. <b>Peace</b> - How would you rate your ability to be calm under pressure?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. <b>Patience</b> - How would you rate your ability to persist when circumstances or people disappoint you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. <b>Kindness</b> - How would you rate your ability to be generous and kind?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. <b>Goodness</b> - How would you rate your ability to do what is morally and ethically right?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. <b>Faithfulness</b> - How would you rate your ability to be depended on?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. <b>Gentleness</b> - How would you rate your ability to treat people with tenderness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. <b>Self-Control</b> - How would you rate your ability to be self-controlled and not controlled by circumstances?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## Ministry Skills – What can you do?

**Ministry Skills Inventory** (Please complete the categories that apply to your ministry situation.)

	Inadequate			Adequate			
<b>Administration</b>							
1. How would you rate your organizational skills?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How would you rate your ability to delegate?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. How would you rate your ability to manage time?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. How would you rate your ability to communicate clearly with the people you lead?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. How would you rate your ability to think and plan strategically?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Leading</b>							
6. How would you rate your ability to cast vision of a preferred future for the group you are leading?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. How would you rate your ability to set goals for a group of people?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. How would you rate your ability to equip other people for ministry rather than doing all by yourself?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. How would you rate your ability to lead a small group?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. How would you rate your ability to lead an entire church?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. How would you rate your ability to lead worship in your church?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Shepherding</b>							
12. How would you rate your ability to counsel needy people?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. How would you rate your ability to correct false doctrine?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. How would you rate your ability to encourage people who are in special need?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. How would you rate your ability mentor emerging leaders?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. How would you rate your ability to resolve conflict in your ministry team?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. How would you rate your ability to teach the word of God in a church setting?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. How would you rate your ability to conduct a wedding?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. How would you rate your ability to conduct a funeral?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Disciple-making</b>							
20. How would you rate your ability to evangelize unbelievers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. How would you rate your ability to make close friendships with unbelievers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. How would you rate your ability to nurture new believers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. How would you rate your ability to conduct a baptism?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. How would you rate your ability to conduct the Lord's Supper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. How would you rate your ability to facilitate a group discussion?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Other Ministry Skills

List any other ministry skills you would like to develop in the future:

### Summary

From the "Ministry Skills Inventory" (and any other skills you have listed), what skills would you like to strengthen or develop in the next:

◆ One Year

◆ Two Years

◆ Three Years

◆ Four Years

◆ Five Years

## Reflecting

### Discussion

1. Why is it so difficult to assess the character development of a Christian leader?
2. Which aspects of Christlike character can (and should) be assessed periodically? Why?
3. Prioritize the following aspects of the knowledge of God and the Bible.
  - ◆ Knowing the contents of each Bible book
  - ◆ Understanding how to interpret the Bible
  - ◆ Knowing the overall flow of the Bible
  - ◆ Knowing foundational Bible doctrines
4. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the four strategies of measuring Christian maturity that Forman identifies:
  - ◆ Personal assessment
  - ◆ Assessment with a mentor
  - ◆ 360-degree feedback
  - ◆ Feedback with accountability

### Reporting Back

Share one or two items of knowledge, character and ministry skills you have chosen to work on from the “Responding” section of this issue.

### Prayer

Pray for the aspects of your knowledge base, character development and ministry skills that you have shared.

## Overview

This chapter is a culmination of the work you have done in the previous issues. The aim is to produce a final draft of your purpose statement, divine design and life development timeline and to review the developmental gaps in your knowledge, character and ministry skills.

## Suggested Plan

There are no new readings in this chapter. We suggest that you review any chapters in the *Life Development Planner* that will assist you in developing your life development plan.

## Responding

The main task in this issue is to construct your life plan. We have provided two copies of the *Life Development Plan*—one that you will fill in on completion of this course, and another that you should plan to revise after six months or a year.

### 1. Life Purpose Statement

Review the work you have done on your statement, and revise it in light of the work you have done in the other issues of this course. For example, the insights you have gained on your divine design and your life development timeline may be worth reviewing to see if there is anything you want to include in your Life Purpose Statement.

### 2. Life's Divine Design

Review your notes on your divine design. In the space provided in your *Life Development Plan* record a summary of the main aspects of your divine design profile.

### 3. Life Development Timeline

As you revise your Life Development Timeline, review the results of the assessment of your knowledge base, character development and ministry skills from Issue 4. Add some of these items as things you would like to achieve in the next phases of your timeline.

### 4. Life Assessment

Review the developmental gaps in your knowledge, character and ministry skills, and record these as personal goals for the next period of your life.

## Life Development Plan

**Life Purpose Statement:**

**Life's Divine Design:**

Interests:

Passions:

Gifts & Abilities:



Life Assessment:	One Year	Two Years	Three Years	Four Years	Five Years
Knowledge Goals					
Character Goals					
Ministry Skill Goals					

**Life Development Plan**

**Life Purpose Statement:**

**Life's Divine Design:**

Interests:

Passions:

Gifts & Abilities:

<b>Life Assessment:</b>	One Year	Two Years	Three Years	Four Years	Five Years
Knowledge Goals					
Character Goals					
Ministry Skill Goals					

**Reflecting**

There are no new discussion questions for this chapter, but we recommend that your group (or mentor) help each other with this final version of the life plan. During the discussion time, present as many of the *Life Development Plans* as possible. Close the evening with prayer for one another.

## Overview

The purpose of this issue is to assist you in keeping your *Life Development Plan* current and fresh. Your plan should not be thought of as a static document because as you change over the years, so will your ministries.

Issue 6 examines two life development strategies to include in your schedule to help you temporarily disengage from service to God and others in order to gain perspective. A periodic retreat and a consistent spiritual journal are not the only strategies you need to help you reflect on where you are presently and where God wants you to be, but they are powerful and effective tools. They will help you to be like Christ in the rhythm of ministry. He engaged in service—healing, teaching and caring for individuals and crowds—yet he also regularly disengaged by getting away and communing with his Father. Consider a regular one-day retreat and the keeping of a spiritual journal as ways to draw close to your Heavenly Father.

## Suggested Plan

- ◆ Read the Scripture passages.
- ◆ Read “Disengage” and “Journaling for Life.”
- ◆ Complete *Responding* (p. 6.15).
- ◆ Reflect on the discussion questions (p. 6.15) in preparation for the group discussion.

## Reading

Read the following passages, looking for indications or examples of how to gain perspective about God's plan and purposes:

Psalm 90

Daniel 6:10-13

Mark 1:35-39

Read these two chapters and think about life strategies you could put in place to ensure that your Life Development Plan is an ongoing document rather than a one-time event.

*Disengage*, by Bob Buford.

This chapter is from Buford's book, *Game Plan*. This book and his earlier one, *Half Time*, call on Christian leaders that have invested a great deal of time and energy to gain 'success' to consider ways in which the second half of their lives could become more significant.

Bob Buford is chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Buford Television, Inc., and founder of Leadership Network.

*Journaling for Life*, by Rowland I. K. Forman.

This article looks at journaling as one way to maintain a life of intimacy with God and a life of reflection on God's dealings with us, while avoiding the pitfall of legalism.

## Disengage

by Bob Buford

**M**y life is hectic! I'm running all day—meetings, phone calls, paperwork, appointments. I push myself to the limit, fall into bed exhausted, and get up early the next morning to do it all again. My output is tremendous; I'm getting a lot done. But I get this feeling inside sometimes, "So what? What are you doing that really counts?" I have to admit, I don't know.

– from an advertisement in *Time* magazine

Many people who read *Halftime* want to jump right into the second half. They resonate with all the downsides of the first half, and the thought of a better second half is immensely appealing, especially given the possibility of at least thirty more active, productive years. Time to start over and get it right

Jumping from the first half into the second would be like a football team staying on the field instead of heading for the locker room at halftime. You really can't have a better second half if you skip halftime. And halftime is more than a time-out; in football, it's usually almost a third of the total time of both the first and second halves. In life, it could be several years.

The first step in your game plan for the second half is to disengage from as many distractions as possible so that you can rest, read, reflect, and recover. The transition from success to significance takes time and requires some distance between you and your first-half hyperactivity. Most people in the first half practically careen around work, family, and community responsibilities, with little time to plan, let alone reflect on what it all means,

where it's all going. Henry Kissinger said, "Once you get to Washington you're running on intellectual capital." Life outside the Beltway is like that for many of us. We're using ourselves up. We're depleting our reserves.

In one of his parables, Jesus teaches us about the value of "good soil" that multiplies and is fruitful. This type of soil is broken open or receptive. The other three soils in this familiar parable are hard-packed and crowded. To me, these other three soils represent someone who is just too busy or preoccupied to entertain any new ideas. Some people's lives are like the rocky soil, where a new idea takes root superficially but has no depth. Any new idea or activity becomes just one of many good things which are never allowed to grow. For others, their lives are like the soil that is choked by thorns, which Jesus describes as the cares and concerns of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.

One of the great American tragedies is that so many good seeds are planted that eventually become stunted and therefore unfruitful. Good soil needs to be left alone for a season. It needs to be open and receptive. Likewise, we need to disengage from the obsessive preoccupation that first-half achievement orientation brings. Most professions reward people who develop a narrower and more focused specialization. That may be good for business, but it's lousy from a human perspective. I find that I need to retreat weekly to become quiet, to listen to the still, small voice within, to be with Linda, so that I can enlarge my vision. In his infinite wisdom, God

provided a Sabbath just for this purpose, but for most of us it has become yet another day to get caught up.

Because I do not know your specific situation, I cannot tell you how to disengage other than to suggest you need to find ways to spend time alone. Completely alone. There will be times in the journey ahead when you need to get away with your spouse to share your thinking and get input, and occasionally you will need to bounce some of your thinking off a trusted friend. But at this point, you need some

time by yourself with few distractions.

I know this will be hard for any self-respecting Baby

Boomer trying to leave the first half, but it's of paramount importance. So I'd like you to list below the three main reasons why you cannot give yourself at least one full day alone and away from your office:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now, you've been a problem solver most of your working life. You have gotten to where you are today because you have been resourceful in overcoming obstacles. So assume that a client came to you with these three reasons for not being able to attend a special workshop you've planned for him—a workshop that will change his life. How would you convince him that these three reasons can be overcome? Write your arguments below:

- 1.

- 2.
- 3.

Are you convinced yet that you can indeed afford at least a full-day personal retreat to begin planning the best half of your life? Then the best place to start is with that indispensable tool of all first halfers: your daily planner.

### Planning Your Halftime Retreat

Try to find a full day within the next six weeks when you can make an appointment with yourself. If possible, make it a regular working day, but if that's impractical, set aside a weekend day. Use whatever symbol or designation necessary to remind yourself (and your secretary) that you cannot break this appointment for anything. This will be the first of several second-half retreats—day-long getaways for the sole purpose of putting distance between you and the present so that you can think about how you want to spend the rest of your life. Try to spend this day away from your office or home. Ideally, try to get out of town the night before and book a room at a hotel in another city to make sure you won't be interrupted or be tempted to use the time to answer your E-mail or go back up to the office.

How you spend this time depends a lot on your own makeup, but for this initial outing, I would recommend all or some of the following:

### Pray and Listen

Prayer really gets the short shrift in the first half. If we pray at all, it is usually on the run or in the midst of a crisis. I suspect it is no mere coincidence that all the twelve-step programs begin with a "higher power." In many ways, the second half is like recovery—you will not make the journey successfully alone, and prayer is God's gift allowing us to communicate with him.



Most of us talk too much when we pray, which is really kind of silly when you think about it. If prayer is a conversation with God, how can we hear what he has to say if we're talking all the time? God often speaks quietly, which suggests we need to be very still in order to hear him. His voice is often a thought, an idea, a possibility that enters our mind and then leaves quickly if we do not capture it.

### Read

Most of the reading we are accustomed to is designed to help us get ahead—books and magazines devoted to our careers. Halftime reading should be more reflective, more contemplative. You are trying to find your center, to shift emphasis from what is useful to what is important. The classics, the early church fathers and saints, great epic novels, biographies, and some of the contemporary literature on transitions are good places to start. At the end of this chapter I will list a few books that have been helpful to me and that I think would help anyone in halftime.

### Reflect

When was the last time you sat still for more than ten minutes and just thought about your life and where it is going? The first half leaves little time to think, and if we have the time, we feel guilty and look for something to do. It may be uncomfortable at first, but find an inviting spot (or take a long walk), put the books and magazines out of your reach, take the phone off the hook, and think for at least one hour on what you have done with what you were given. Think about the quality of your relationships, your family life. Think about your daily work and how you feel about it. Think about where you would like to be in five years. In thirty years. Look up from the rut you are in and see the larger story of your life. Think about your calling, your mission, your legacy.

### Record

In *A Thousand Clowns*, by Herb Gardner, we are exhorted to " ... own your own days and name them, each one of them, every one of them, or else the years go right by and none of them belong to you." If you've never kept a journal, halftime is the time to start. This isn't a diary where you write down everything you did each day, but a record of your journey into significance. I always keep an inexpensive notebook handy in which I "number the days." If I run across a quote that inspires me or have a thought about the direction my life is going, I write it down. I sometimes write out my prayers, along with what I think God's answers to me are. I believe the physical act of writing these things down solidifies them in your soul and carries you along in your journey. Your journal also becomes a helpful resource as you read over it and reflect on your progress.

**Halftime reading should be more reflective, more contemplative.**

### Ask Questions

In *Halftime*, I recommended a series of questions that I call the "Halftime Drill" (*Halftime*, 70-73). Here are a few from that list:

- What do I want to be remembered for?
- What about money? How much is enough? If I have more than enough, what purpose do I serve with the excess? If I have less than enough, what am I willing to do to correct that?
- How am I feeling about my career now? Is this what I want to be doing ten years from now?
- Am I living a balanced life? What are the elements in my life that deserve more time?

- What is the primary loyalty in my life?
- Where do I look for inspiration, mentors, and working models for my second half?
- Peter Drucker says that two important needs are self-realization and community. On a scale of one to ten (ten being the highest), how am I doing?

### Create Action Items

You know the routine: attend a meeting, listen to reports, discuss the issues, then make a list of action items you are expected to take

**. . . we need time alone not only to plan and to think, but to recharge; to be reconnected to our power source.**

care of before the next meeting. A list of action items is a good way to make sure all that

valuable time in the meeting brings about progress in your company. In the same way, an entire day out of your busy life is valuable time, and you need to make sure it produces benefits. Before you end your personal retreat, write down in your journal or daily planner specific things you need to do to continue your journey. Some of those items may emerge as you proceed through the next chapters, but one item should always be included in this list: the date of the next meeting. Identify a time—probably not an entire day, but maybe several hours—when you will devote some time to working on your game plan.

### Regain Passion

One of the striking patterns in Jesus' life was the way he went off by himself, usually before he faced a difficult assignment. I believe he needed that time to regain the passion for his calling, his unique mission. Likewise, we need time alone not only to plan and to think, but to recharge; to be reconnected to our power source.

Another way to disengage is to put yourself in an entirely different zone. I have, for example, been a moderator and participant at the Aspen Institute, in which participants study the most intense and interesting passages from great books. The Trinity Forum uses the same approach, but comes at it from a Christian rather than humanistic perspective. My friend Don Williams went for a two-week study course at Oxford University several years ago and found it quite refreshing. Sometimes we think our best thoughts when we are in a completely different setting. Be creative and adventurous in your efforts to disengage from the cares and concerns of everyday life.

You could probably continue maintaining your first-half lifestyle for several more years and perhaps even climb higher up the corporate ladder. But the reason that is becoming less appealing to you is that you've lost the passion. The "want to" is external; it does not spring forth from the soul.

Remember, your legacy—your "one thing"—was implanted deep within the inner chambers of your very being long ago. As you disengage from the managed chaos that is so much a part of today's business and professional world, you will position yourself to discover this "spiritual DNA" and find ways to restructure your life around it. The key to understanding this true calling is to view your life from a higher platform.

### Follow Through

1. List three open dates for your personal halftime retreat:
2. Where do you plan to spend this time (be specific)?
3. What do you hope to achieve during this one-day time by yourself?

## Books to Take Along

Reading (or listening to books on tape) is a great activity for your halftime retreats. Here are a few that have been especially helpful to me:

*Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen Covey.

*In the Name of Jesus*, by Henri J. M. Nouwen. The subtitle is "Reflections on Christian Leadership." Henri, who died unexpectedly last year, looks back on his transition from the academic setting that shaped his first half (Harvard, Yale, Notre Dame) to working with the mentally challenged at the L'Arche Communities in Toronto.

*Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, by William Bridges. This is the definitive book on transitions. I have given away countless copies and everyone who reads it tells me, "it's like Bridges is reading my mail."

*The Age of Unreason* and *The Age of Paradox*, by Charles Handy. Sigmoid curves, portfolio work, the doughnut principle—lots of great ideas.

*The Paradox of Success*, by John R. O'Neil. Why success doesn't fully satisfy and leaves us wishing for more.

*Time and the Art of Living*, by Robert Grudin. Drawing on philosophy, science, literature, history, personal experience, and his own wide-ranging imagination, Grudin provides a symphony of penetrating insights and observations about time from a variety of angles.



## Journaling for Life

by Rowland I. K. Forman

Which sister do you most identify with in Luke's story about Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42)?

Martha was distracted and anxious about all the preparations for a meal in honor of Jesus and his disciples. Mary sat reflectively at Jesus' feet, listening to his words. Do you have more of the Martha syndrome or the Mary approach in you? This cameo about Lazarus' sisters shows us that the Lord is not impressed with mere labor but with service that flows out of intimacy with him. Ultimately, we will not be asked how much activity we have packed into our short life but how intimately connected we are with God. We will not be quizzed on how much time we have spent at the office but the state of our heart.

Many Christians in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century are more inclined to identify with Martha than Mary. They are more familiar with frantic activities than quiet reflection. If that is you, you might need help to slow down. Consider a spiritual discipline like journaling. Many who are caught up in a stream of activities need to find a way to experience what J. I. Packer calls the inner journey. Packer refers to the outer journey as learning to relate to people and the inward journey of deepening our intimacy with God. Most of us Westerners, Packer says,

"...are now unbalanced activists, conforming most unhappily in this respect to the world around us. Like the Pharisees, who were also great activists (see Matthew 23:15!), we are found to be harsh and legalistic, living busy, complacent lives of conforming to conventions and caring much more, as it

seems, for programs than for people... Perhaps there are no truths about the Spirit that Christian people more urgently need to learn today than those that relate to the inner life of fellowship with God, that life which I call the inward journey (you could also call it the upward journey – that adjective would fit equally well) (J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 80-81).

In 1990 I started journaling as a spiritual discipline—a way of "training myself for the purpose of godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7-8). I had at least eight prior attempts to keep a spiritual journal. Each attempt utilized the "Dear Diary" approach to journaling. My eight abortive attempts were usually triggered by an article I had just read or the influence of an ardent journaler. Upon reflection, my repeated sorties into the world of the spiritual journal floundered on the rocks of insufficient motivation and inadequate skills. I had not yet answered questions like "Why should I continue to journal as part of my commitment to life-change?" and "How can I maintain a spiritual journal that is more of a delight than a chore?" Now, after a decade of journaling, I would like to share some answers to those questions.

Before I address the possible motivations and skills required if journaling is to become a meaningful habit in your life, let me confess that I am a born legalist. I like routines and lists and programs. People say that I am a disciplined person but I know that my disciplines can easily become a fleshly substitute for true godliness.

Rigorous attention to spiritual disciplines like journaling, fasting, praying and memorizing Scripture can give others the impression that we are more spiritual than we really are.

About the time I started keeping a regular prayer journal, Jerry Bridges groundbreaking book, *Transforming Grace*, hit the stands. I have a ritual when I am feeling spiritually dry that goes like this: I ask God to bring a book across my pathway that will be his message to me at the time. Then I go to some Christian bookstores and hunt around. In 1991 I was in a relatively dry spiritual state when Bridges book *Transforming Grace* found me. These words leaped off the page:

“We declared temporary bankruptcy to get into his kingdom, so now we think we can and must pay our own way with God. We were saved by grace, but we are living by performance...

We are all legalistic by nature; that is, we innately think so much performance by us earns so much blessing from God” (Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 17).

As I read these words I confessed freely that my tendency is to be “saved by grace but live by performance.” At the time of reading these words from Jerry Bridges—that were like the words of God to me—I was also developing journaling as a meaningful habit in my life. How could I avoid the discipline of journaling becoming yet another legalistic ploy?

### **Think Relationship, Not Requirement**

I have discovered that one way to overcome my legalistic tendencies as it relates to journaling is to view this activity as a means to develop my relationship with God. I see journaling as a relationship-builder with a gracious God.

Stop and think about your relationship with your closest friend on earth. If the relationship is real, it will have a certain flow and flexibility

about it. You probably don’t take a stopwatch out each time you have a conversation! You are unlikely to get overly nervous about missing a meeting with your friend once in a while. That is the way I have come to view and practice journaling. I see it as a flexible tool for enhancing my relationship with God. If I fail to write out any prayers in a given day, I know that God is not going to pull the plug on our friendship. Since his love is unfailing, I keep focusing on God’s grace while keeping a journal as a way of responding to God’s love in a relaxed and flexible way.

Now that I have got that confession out of the way, let me turn to the all-important matter of long-term motivation. I say long-term because, like a decision to start jogging, it is so easy to start journaling and to give up after twenty or thirty pages.

**That is why I have come to view and practice journaling. I see it as a flexible tool for enhancing my relationship with God.**

### **Rejuvenated Prayer Life**

In my “dear diary” approaches to journaling I felt like I was talking to my journal. The turning point for me was when Fred Littauer, whom I heard at a seminar on Christian writing, spoke about the difference that writing out his prayers meant to him.

I have been liberated in my prayer life by writing out a variety of prayers in my journal. It has been very releasing to have a place to record my expressions of worship and my heart cries to God. I hasten to say, though, that this alone may not keep you consistent in journaling. Simply put, writing out your prayers and praises will not automatically produce consistency.

Spiritual journaling as an opportunity to record prayer is the means; the end you should

have in mind is that of greater intimacy and honesty with God. Recording your worship, confession, thanksgiving and requests are the means. The goal of becoming a more thankful and worshipful person is the end result that you should be striving for at all times.

After a decade of journaling I can attest to the power of written prayers. Later in this chapter I will explain how I record my requests. For now, I will say that my favorite time to record is when I review answers to my prayers. In doing this, I sometimes feel like I am a walking answer to prayer! When I merely talk out loud to the

**Spiritual journaling as an opportunity to record prayer is the means; the end you should have in mind is that of greater intimacy and honesty with God.**

Lord, I find it easy to forget my requests and pleas. But when I write out my

requests and periodically review the answers, my thankfulness increases dramatically. Donald Whitney puts it this way:

“Many people think God has not blessed them with much until they have to move it all to a new address! In the same way, we tend to forget just how many times God has answered specific prayers, made timely provision, and done marvelous things in our lives. But having a place to collect all these memories prevents their being forgotten” (Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 201).

### Greater Vulnerability

Journaling gives me an opportunity to unravel my thoughts. My journals have become safe places where I retreat to say what I really feel about people and circumstances.

Have you ever asked yourself, “To whom can I express all of my inner feelings?” If you are in leadership your answer might be “Not very many.” Since I started serious journaling, I

have been released to express my innermost concerns to God. The effect is cathartic.

Upon reflection, that is what most of the Psalms are—expressions of the psalmist’s deepest feelings. In his book, *Answering Prayer*, Eugene Peterson argues for praying the psalms back to God when says,

“It is easy to be honest before God with our hallelujahs; it is somewhat more difficult to be honest in our hurts; it is nearly impossible to be honest before God in the dark emotions of our hate. So we commonly suppress our negative emotions (unless, neurotically, we advertise them). Or, when we do express them, we do it far from the presence, or what we think is the presence of God, ashamed or embarrassed to be seen in these curse-stained bib overalls... The way of prayer is not to cover our unlovely emotions so that they will appear respectable, but expose them so that they can be enlisted in the work of the kingdom. It is an act of profound faith to entrust one’s most precious hatred to God, knowing they will be taken seriously” (Eugene Peterson, *Answering God*, 100).

I know that complete honesty with God on the pages of a prayer journal poses some challenges. First there is the difficulty of being brutally honest. When you think about it, if God knows our thoughts even before we express them audibly (Psalm 139:3-4), it makes the utmost sense to be totally candid with him when we record our prayers. Second there is the matter of confidentiality. Will my children one day pick up one of my spiritual journals and discover the darker side of their dad? I have dealt with that concern believing that it would be good for my children to discover that their father was honest with God and less than perfect (Something they already know all too well!). Having said that, I would find it counter productive if I had to be writing my journal with an eye on posterity. The way I cope with the matter of transparency on the pages of my journal is to think about King David in his most famous penitential psalm—Psalm 51. My

estimation of him after reading his confession is higher than if he were idealized. Practically, I have taken David's penitential psalms as my template for honesty and vulnerability. I don't write out all the lurid details of my life and thoughts, but I endeavor to bring the emotions of my soul to the surface.

It motivates me to know that in my journal I have somewhere to go, and more importantly, someone to go to, when the tidal waves of life hit my frail craft.

### A Reflective Life

I mostly write in my prayer journal at the start of the day. It's as if my journal is a tool to help me slow down and reflect on the important things that are happening in my life. I have just reviewed some of my journals and noted that there is a mixture of reflections on major things and minor issues in my life. As I write, I am facing surgery to determine whether a growing tumor in my lungs is benign or not. A few days ago I received a letter from Lawrence Sumner, a friend of mine who underwent by-pass heart surgery a year ago. He invited me to read Psalm 116. As I read verse three: *The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow*, I reflected on two times in my life that God saved me from certain death and in the process read on to verse seven: *Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you*. As I wrote out my response to verse seven, it was as if a huge burden was lifted from my shoulders. And I have continued repeating this verse to myself when my mind begins to be troubled with thoughts about all the things that can go wrong in surgery.

### Listening to God

Let me also confess to something else—I have not yet heard God speak to me in an audible way. Some of my friends claim they have, and you do read in the Bible about God speaking to men and women in time past, but

not me. On the matter of listening to God, I prefer to be more reserved.

Recently, I have found my spiritual journal to be a place where I can hear God speak clearly over time. About a year ago, I hit the wall in my role as a Senior Pastor of our church. For the first time in ministry I experienced depression. It was as if, to borrow a line from Bill Hybels, "The way I was doing the work of God was destroying God's work in me." My fellow elders gave my wife Elaine and me a five-week sabbatical during which we read and slept and talked and prayed. One of the significant books I read during

that time was Ken Gire's *The Reflective Life*. In this book and its companion, *Reflections on Your Life*, Gire invites his

readers to reflect on their lives by "Reading the Moment", "Reflecting on the Moment" and "Responding to the Moment". His thesis is that God is much more involved in our lives than we ever realize. What we need to do is to learn to listen to what he is saying in the various "moments" of life.

In the time of reflection and listening on our sabbatical, my journal was a tool that God used to help me in a time of difficulty and transition. I can testify that as I reflected and prayed on the pages of my journal, God spoke to me in a way that has changed my life forever.

The book of Ruth has an interesting phrase related to her work as a gleaner in the fields. It says, "As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz who was from the clan of Elimelech" (Ruth 2:3). The phrase suggests that rather than a chance happening, Ruth had been brought to that field by divine providence. As you read this book you realize that God's providential hand is evident everywhere.

**God is much more involved in our lives than we ever realize.**

A spiritual journal can be a tool to help you go on what David and Karen Mains call, "A God-Hunt." That is a place where you look for and listen to God. The power of a journal as an instrument to listen to God is that it is done over time. I am still reluctant to say, "God told me this or that..." but when one thing after another "happens" and is recorded in my journal, I can say with confidence that this was God speaking to me.

### Life Plans and Daily Plans

Another thing that motivates me to keep a spiritual journal is the opportunity it provides to bring my short and long term

**The end is the assurance that I am learning from the things that I experience rather than taking life for granted.**

plans to God in prayer.

After reading Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, I wrote out my life mission and corresponding roles and goals. Since that time, on a monthly basis, I review them and turn them into written prayers. Doing so helps me to gain perspective—to see if my life is in harmony with God's plan and purposes.

As I sort out my priorities each week, I have my personal mission, roles and goals in front of me, and using my journal, bring the week to God in prayer. Most days, I also look at my schedule and pray through that as well, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and empower me as I live for God. Lorne Sanny, past president of the Navigators, occasionally prays through the previous day backwards. He has found it helpful to work from the last thing that happened in that day to the first. Using my journal, this exercise often turns out to be a time of overwhelming thankfulness—a celebration of God's work in my life.

By now you will have completed your Life Development Plan. You might find it helpful to paste the one-page summary of your Life Plan into your journal, and refer to it at the beginning of each week or each month when you are prayerfully mapping out your schedule.

### Centerpiece of Spirituality

I am constantly drawn back to my spiritual journal. When I have heard an inspiring message I summarize it in my journal and write a brief response to the message in the form of a prayer. If I have had a meal with a close friend, I will often note the significant points of the conversation, making them, and my friend, the focal point of a prayer. If I hear a new song that inspires me, I try to get a photocopy of it and paste it into my journal. I do so in the belief that that the things that happen have significance. Consequently, they are recorded, reflected upon and turned into prayers.

The means in this case is the recording of experiences, including sermons and conversations. The end is the assurance that I am learning from the things that I experience rather than taking life for granted.

### Several Disciplines in One

A final motivating factor that keeps me on the journaling track is that it is an efficient way to practice several of the spiritual disciplines simultaneously. Rather than doing my Bible study in one place and recording my prayers in another, I use my spiritual journal as a homepage for my biblical reflections and prayers. Most books on the spiritual disciplines include things like fasting and solitude. Again, a spiritual journal is designed to enhance times of prayer and fasting and days of solitude. In *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney says, "The Christian life is, by definition, a living thing. If we think of the Discipline of Bible-intake as its food, and prayer as its breath, many Christians have made journaling its heart. For them it pumps life-maintaining blood into every Discipline



connected with it” (Whitney, 2007). It certainly does that for me.

### From Principle to Practice

In conclusion, I want to include some practical suggestions if you intend to embark on the journey of journaling.

◆ Start your daily entry with “Yesterday...” Bill Hybels in *Honest to God* recommends this practice. He reflects on the people he met, decisions he made and high and low points of the previous day.

◆ When writing out prayers of adoration or worship, use your daily Bible reading as a springboard to focus on who God is and what he has done.

◆ If your Bible passage for the day lends itself to a worship paraphrase, go ahead and do that. Take God’s words and make them your words of worship.

◆ Use a hymnbook or song book as a stimulus to your worship. Write out the words and sing them to God

◆ Use an acrostic like “ACTS” – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication, as a reminder of some of the possible categories of prayer. Avoid using this acrostic slavishly. Some days you might choose to record only your thanksgiving.

◆ Make a chart in your journal with a column for requests and an adjacent column for answers. Record answers to prayer, together with their dates. When reviewing your answers in prayer, also note prayers that seem to be going unanswered.

◆ Occasionally develop columns for more extensive requests that you want to bring to God

◆ If you write out prayers of confession, be as specific as possible. Include wrong thoughts

as well as wrong actions. For those who feel reserved about recording actual sins in their journal, you can give the sin its general name, then mention the sin out loud to God.

◆ Review God’s blessings under categories like, “Spiritual, Material, Relational, and Personal.”

◆ Acknowledge God’s sovereignty in every circumstance. Think of areas of your life like finance, family, friends, and feelings.

◆ Pray some of Paul’s prayers for the people on your list (e.g. Ephesians 3:14-21)

◆ Write out your daily program—the people you will meet and various activities. Bring each of the items to God in prayer.

◆ Write out a summary of the previous week’s sermon and take the key concepts to God in prayer

◆ Use your journal as a place to record useful quotes from books you are reading

◆ If someone writes you an impactful letter or note of encouragement, paste that into your journal.

◆ Record notes from key conversations with friends. Turn these into prayers.

◆ If you have a personal mission statement, paste it into your journal. Bathe your mission statement in prayer.

Donald Bloesch says, "That there is a crying need to the recovery of the devotional life cannot be denied. If anything characterizes modern Protestantism, it is the absence of spiritual disciplines or spiritual exercises. Yet such disciplines form the core of the life of devotion. It is not an exaggeration to state that this is the lost dimension in modern Protestantism" (Donald Bloesch, *The Crisis of Piety*, 195). I would recommend the spiritual discipline of journaling to you, not as another legalistic exercise to glorify the flesh, but as a proven means of developing more intimacy with the Living God.



**Responding****A one-day spiritual retreat**

If you have decided to have a one-day spiritual retreat, what are some action steps you will take?

**A spiritual journal**

If you have decided to start a spiritual journal, or prayer journal of the kind Forman advocates, what are some action steps you will take to ensure this will happen?

**Reflecting**

1. Bob Buford talks about the need to retreat weekly to become quiet and find ways to spend time alone. Why do we need (or not need) these times?
2. What are some practical things to consider if we plan to have a one-day retreat for prayer and reflection?
3. Donald Bloesch says that the absence of spiritual disciplines is the lost dimension in modern Protestantism. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of keeping a spiritual journal?
5. How could a prayer journal help you with your daily plans and your life plan?
6. Apart from a one-day spiritual retreat and the keeping of a prayer journal, what are some other practical strategies that might help you maintain the momentum you have gained as you complete the *Life Development Planner*?

# Bibliography

## **Issue 1: Life Purpose Statement**

“Getting With the Program,” by Jeff Jones. Used by permission of the author. All rights reserved.

## **Issue 2: Life’s Diving Design**

“Discovering Your Divine Design,” by Jeff Jones. Used by permission of the author. All rights reserved.

## **Issue 3: Life Development Timeline**

“A Letter to Dan the Intern,” by J. Robert Clinton. Chapter one of *The Making of a Leader*. Copyright © 1988. Used by Permission of NavPress. All rights reserved.

## **Issue 4: Life Assessment**

“Not Perfect, But Progressing,” by Rowland Forman. Used by permission of the author. All rights reserved.

## **Issue 6: Life Development Strategies**

“Disengage,” by Bob Buford. Chapter six of *Game Plan*. Copyright © 1997. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

“Journaling for Life,” by Rowland Forman. Used by permission of the author. All rights reserved.