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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice:
Creating and Sustaining Resilient Leaders**

Submitted to Dr. Gary Moritz

In fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of
the Doctor of Ministry Degree

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, "When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice," discusses the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. The lay leaders of Call to Conquer Ministries do not seem to understand this role, leading to ministry challenges. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in leadership and how to maintain resiliency during difficult times. Potential leaders answer God's call to lead, believing that "obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22a). However, there is a lack of full clarity concerning the sacrifices made because of their obedience. The question to be addressed is "What happens when obedience becomes a sacrifice?" and how to develop and maintain resilience as a leader.

Contents

Abstract	
Abbreviations	
CHAPTER 1	1
Ministry Context	6
Demographics	7
The Headquarters Church	8
An “Ephesian’s 4:11” Ministry.....	9
Covenant	10
Research Connection	11
Problem Presented	14
Purpose Statement.....	19
Basic Assumptions.....	23
Definitions.....	25
Limitations	30
Time Allotment.....	31
Facilitator	32
Interviews.....	33
COVID-19 Pandemic.....	33
Pandemic Cost	34
Delimitations.....	34
Research Study Materials	34
Location	35
Research Study Group	36
Thesis Statement.....	37
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	39
Literature Review.....	41
Priority of Topic.....	43
Spiritual Apathy	44
Spiritual Anxiety.....	46
Spiritual Despondency	47

The “Bounce Back”	49
Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice: The “Call”	51
Obedience	53
The Act of Obedience	56
Sacrifice	58
When Obedience Becomes the Sacrifice	61
Theological Foundations.....	65
The Resilient Leader: (Jeremiah 12:5).....	66
1 Samuel 15:22b, “Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice”	69
Genesis 37-50: Joseph, “Leadership 101”	70
David’s Sacrifice.....	71
Jesus the “Sacrificial Lamb”	71
Jesus and the Disciples.....	73
The Apostle Paul: A “Chosen” Vessel.....	76
Theoretical Foundations.....	79
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	84
Approvals	85
Phase I: Old and New Testament Leaders	86
Phase II: Live Interviews	87
Resources	88
Venue	90
Interview Sessions Schedule.....	91
Intervention Design.....	94
Interviews.....	94
Questionnaire	99
Implementation of Intervention Design	102
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	106
Phase I: Old and New Testament Leaders	109
Influence	110
Identity	112
Calling.....	115
Phase II: Live Interviews	117
Group I: Male Leaders	118
Group II: Female Leaders	122
Group III: Millennial Leaders.....	124
Group IV: Married Couples	126
Group V: Single Leaders	130
Summation	132

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	136
Bibliography	150
IRB Approval.....	158

Tables

1.1	Statistics of Leadership Challenges	67-68
1.2	Paul's Wisdom to Timothy	70-71

Abbreviations

CTCM *Call to Conquer Ministries*

DMIN *Doctor of Ministry*

HDQ *Headquarter Church*

CTCOC *Committed to the Cause of Christ*

CHAPTER ONE

Leadership involves four components: the “call,” obedience, sacrifice, and resilience. Understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying the call to lead is essential in developing resilient leaders. This thesis provides a deeper understanding of the connection between obedience, sacrifice, and resiliency. However, this is not another study about resiliency. This study does not negate the importance of resiliency in leadership; however, it fills in the blanks about the unexpected realities of ministry and its sacrifices.

The call to lead is often answered naively. Those who respond need to be made aware of the great sacrifices it entails. When the lay leaders are asked about their response, most answers allude to the often-quoted scripture in 1 Samuel 15:22, “To obey is better than sacrifice.”¹ Author Shavez Williams supports using 1 Samuel 15:22 as a standard response, adding that sacrifice is associated with “fulfilling a spiritual obligation.”² However, author Cinda M. Carter argues, “Submission to God is far greater than a sacrifice offered just to appease the Lord for a moment.”³ Carter’s belief references the Lord being pleased with a life surrendered to him versus meaningless ritualistic sacrifices. Samuel’s question in 1 Samuel 15:22a, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?” to Saul is explained by Carter’s belief. However, lay leaders soon learned that obeying the call of God involves significant sacrifices, causing some to rethink their decisions or experience confusion

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture referenced is from the *Authorized King James Version* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1998).

² Shavez Williams, *The Sacrifice of Obedience* (Middleton: Speak Fire Publishing, 2021), 3.

³ Cinda M. Carter, *Obedience Rather Than Sacrifice: 1 Samuel 15:22 “Behold, to Obey is Better than Sacrifice.”* (New York: Gold Touch Press, 2021), 1.

concerning the clarity of the call itself. Author Dr. Junior Nieuw agrees that “obedience is better than sacrifice.” However, there is a place where the two merge. Dr. Nieuw suggests that “sacrifices come after obedience to God.”⁴ Nieuw’s view that sacrifices follow obedience supports the suggestion of author Wayne Cordeiro concerning the staggering number of leaders vacating leadership roles at a rate of “1,500 ministers abandoning pastoral ministry, another 3,500 ministries perishing, and 35,000 more who could disappear over the next decade”⁵ due to unanticipated costly sacrifices encountered. However, updated figures suggest slightly inflated numbers. Author Roger Alford highlights positive and negative statistics concerning the “exodus” of pastors from the pulpit. Alford indicates that “40% of pastors have considered leaving the ministry, 14% lost confidence, and there was a 67% drop from 72% in pastors who felt satisfied.”⁶ Another note that coincides with this topic is that Alford believes that “increasing stress, differing pressures, burnout, loss of confidence, and a lack of clarity concerning calling attacking both pastors and churches”⁷ are contributing factors. Importantly, Alford’s reasons concerning leaders’ potential abandonment of ministry concur with Call to Conquer Ministries (CTCM) lay leaders’ recent views of ministry after the “yes.” Writer Kyle Rohane offers another reason leaders leave ministry’ claiming that “1% to 16% of young, beginning pastors thin out the first five years if their motives for ministry don’t align with God’s

⁴ Junior Nieuw, *Is It Not Better? Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice*. (Self-Published: Junior Nieuw, 2021), 11.

⁵ Wayne Cordeiro, Francis Chan, and Larry Osborne *Sifted: Pursuing Growth through Trials, Challenges, and Disappointments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 25.

⁶ Roger Alford, “Crisis in the Pulpit? Barna reports 40% of Pastors Have Considered Leaving Ministry.” March 10, 2024. <https://christianindex.org/stories/pastors-feeling-dramatic-drop-in-their-sense-of-well-being-questioning-calls-to-ministry-barna,47977>.

⁷ Alford, “*Crisis in the Pulpit?*” 1-2.

will.”⁸ Rohane’s suggestion is relevant today as the present generation gap is visible in church leadership. Despite variations in statistics or reasons presented concerning the exodus, a lack of understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying the call of God to lead is causing a hemorrhage of lay leaders and lay members. Wounded warriors feeling abandoned and left to die are choosing to crawl off somewhere to either heal or die, which is a crisis for the church.

In understanding the exodus of lay leaders and the role sacrifice plays in obeying God’s call to lead, the researcher believes it begins with the word “sacrifice,” which has been misinterpreted in terms of leadership. The word sacrifice is often associated with Old Testament offerings, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, or the time set aside for fasting, prayer, and study of the word. However, real sacrifice as it pertains to leadership also has a personal cross carried by the leader in view and is an integral part of continual growth. Author Raymond Cullen describes the connection plainly by highlighting the words “I DIE in the center of the word obedience, which signifies death in obedience to Christ.”⁹ Cullen’s breakdown of the word obedience incorporates sacrifice. However, the author suggests a struggle ensues concerning obedience because of an apparent “fear of the word sacrifice.”¹⁰ This fear may be the root of the problem concerning the CTCM lay leaders. They do not seem to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead.

This revelation concerning the misunderstanding of the role of sacrifice was determined after senior CTCM leaders observed the perplexed demeanor of the lay leaders. The lay leaders had become distracted and overwhelmed from being plagued by unexpected challenges in

⁸ Kyle Rohane, “Our Pulpits Are Full of Empty Preachers.” March 10, 2024. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2022/may-june/great-resignation-pulpits-full-of-empty-preachers.html>.

⁹ Raymond Cullen, *I Do Die in Obedience to Christ*. (Columbia: Anointed Fire House, 2022), XII.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 25.

ministry. Zeal had been replaced with confusion, frustration, and delusion concerning calling, serving, and suffering. The lay leaders allowed challenges to overshadow their leadership capabilities, validating what Cordeiro describes as a “season of sifting, which is the excessive pressure”¹¹ felt by the lay leaders. Because of this “season of sifting,” the CTCM lay leaders were abandoning their leadership roles after experiencing what can be described as the “reality” of ministry.

At the center of this reality is “sacrifice” and, most importantly, a lack of understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. According to author Dustan Christensen, the basic definition of sacrifice is “to suffer the loss of, give up, renounce, injure or destroy for an ideal, belief, or end”¹² is widely accepted. Christensen expounded on the meaning, arguing that sacrifice is about “Aligning choices with the compressive force inwardly in obedience while making the right outwardly or tensile force of sacrifice strengthens our walk to carry the purpose predestined by God.”¹³ The author’s definition highlights a very important word concerning obedience and sacrifice: “choices.” Choices are free, but the consequences of choices are not. Choices made without “sitting down first to count the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it” cause disappointment, discouragement, and despair, which is what the CTCM lay leaders feel now.

Christensen provides a direct correlation between the role of sacrifice and obedience. Therefore, the underlying root cause of the struggle the lay leaders of CTCM and others are experiencing is misunderstanding the role of sacrifice in obedience. Sacrifice connects the lay

¹¹ Wayne Cordeiro et al., *Sifted: Pursuing Growth Through Trials, Challenges, and Disappointments*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 60.

¹² Dustan Christensen, *Obedience vs Sacrifice: Man’s Quest to Align His Path With God’s Purpose* (Tarpon Springs: Two Penny Publishing, 2021), 21.

¹³ Christensen, “*Obedience vs Sacrifice: Man’s Quest*” 86.

leaders of CTCM and others accurately to three things outlined and exemplified by Jesus in Luke 9:23: “Denying self, taking up a personal cross, and following him” in becoming the sacrificial lamb in the salvation of souls. The role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead carries the pain of the cross, where the struggle ensues, but growth and promotion occur after the sacrificing, sifting, and pruning process.

During the research process, servanthood was a continuous theme that became necessary to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead, which was imperative in effectively training, preparing, and developing resilient leaders. Servant/servanthood can be considered a prerequisite before answering God’s call to lead. A good follower becomes a good or great leader. So, in helping the CTCM, lay leaders understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead begins with servanthood, modeled by Jesus when he “laid aside his garments, taking a towel, girding himself and began washing the disciples’ feet” in John 13:4-10.

This study employs an Action research method focusing on the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead in the leadership styles of Jesus, the disciples, the Apostle Paul, and the seasoned leaders of five distinct groups. Interviews with leaders from the following groups (seasoned male leaders with 20+ years, seasoned female leaders with 20+ years, millennial leaders with 10+ years, seasoned married leaders with 10+ years, and seasoned single leaders with 10+ years) were conducted by the researcher and incorporated into the study. Research outcomes include a deeper development in CTCM lay leaders’ understanding concerning what the “call” and the role of sacrifice means in obeying God. Research materials and results can be developed into a training class and manual for present and future CTCM lay leaders.

Ministry Context

The ministry context is a snapshot of CTCM's history and the events leading to this study. How the initial ministry weighs in on the project is the foundation to build on and is crucial to the expected outcome of the study, which is resilient lay leaders. Community collaboration among senior leaders, lay leaders, and members will prove the effectiveness of the training class, providing constructive feedback and productive input for the manual.

CTCM is a mobile ministry that came to fruition in 2018, starting with a weekly radio broadcast. Later, a weekly Saturday night Facebook live broadcast airing at 7:30 p.m. was added. In addition, a weekly Bible study is taught every Thursday at 6:00 p.m. with ten to twelve men and women between the age range of forty-eight being the youngest and eighty-three being the oldest in attendance. Eight participants already occupy leadership positions or were previously in leadership roles in different ministries. Monday through Wednesday at 5:30 a.m., a "Morning Manna" devotional teaching and prayer session engages four powerful and strong women of faith with leadership potential. The participants are being trained in leadership by taking turns leading and presenting a devotional word and prayer. In addition to the established weekly live events and broadcasts, a newly developed Monday night prayer group entitled S4S (Sisters 4 Salvation) involving prayer targeting the youth, children, young adults, family, community, and country known as "S. O. C. K. S" (Save Our Country & Kids) was recently added. Bible study, Morning Manna, and Monday night prayer groups are on a conference line.

On the first and second Sundays of the month, CTCM participates in a nursing home ministry inside a nursing home/rehabilitation facility. Patients, family members, and staff members participate in the monthly services. Holy Communion is distributed on the first Sunday of each month to clients who freely choose to be a part of it and are physically able to do it with

consent. A regular traditional service is performed on second Sundays. The ministerial team comprises lay leaders from CTCM, other leaders, and psalmists from different churches, denominations, and seminary backgrounds. In the summer of 2019, CTCM moved under the CCTC Kingdom International Ministries umbrella.

Demographics

Both CTCM and the Headquarters Church (HDQ) are located in Raleigh, North Carolina, a constantly expanding and bustling city that has a “population of 474,708 with a population density of 3,254(sq. mi) and household income levels of 36% below \$50k, 31% \$50k-\$100k, 25% \$100k-\$200k, and 8% over \$200k .”¹⁴ The “Male/Female ratio is 0.9:1.”¹⁵ An inner and outer belt line circles the city, with a significant airport adjacent to the external belt line. Public transportation via city bus lines, scooters, taxi cabs, Uber and Lyft services, and private transportation services for the elderly and disabled make mobility accessible and affordable. A recently renovated Amtrak railroad station is located downtown, and a newly renovated Greyhound bus station is in a remote part of the city.

The city is a college town (“91.8% high school grad or higher and 50.3% with a Bachelor’s degree or higher”¹⁶) and a medical mecca with building and expansion projects visible upon entrance. Although all generations are represented in the city's citizenship, the “medium age is 34.5.”¹⁷ The town is family-oriented, with “married couples (15 & older)

¹⁴ U. S. Census Bureau (2019), *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Raleigh, NC <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3755000-raleigh-nc>.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Department of City Planning, (2019), *City of Raleigh Databook 2018* <https://raleighnc.gov>.

¹⁷ U. S. Census Bureau (2019), *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Raleigh, NC <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3755000-raleigh-nc>.

representing 50% and families with kids under eighteen representing 43.3%.”¹⁸ As mentioned, building, reconstruction, and affordable housing projects for older adults, millennials, and low-income individuals are visible all over the city. The city is a “Melting Pot” full of diversity as different nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures are present. Most importantly, diversity is visible in faith-based communities, and the city is home to various churches, ministries, and religions.

The Headquarter Church

The HDQ is close to two shopping malls, apartment communities, bus routes, and other ministries. It is also conveniently located close to the city airport for members and visitors who fly in from different destinations for service. Fifty percent of the members have their own transportation, while others carpool. A healthy balance exists between married couples and single individuals in the ministry. Upon observation, a family-oriented atmosphere is present both naturally and spiritually. All generations are equally represented in the ministry, with a more significant proportion of millennials present. Although some churches have shifted their worship service to a different format, the HDQ combines traditional and modern settings. Weekly services are at 10 a.m. Sunday mornings with Sunday school at 8:30 a.m. and a weekly Bible Study or midweek service on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. There is also a 6 a.m. service. The daily Morning Prayer can be accessed via a conference prayer line.

As previously mentioned, the HDQ offers traditional and modern-day worship formats with a visible presence of mothers, deacons, and ushers. Youth Sundays are observed monthly on the fourth Sunday, with the youth in charge of the whole service. The leadership of the youth

¹⁸ U. S. Census Bureau (2019), *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Raleigh, NC <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3755000-raleigh-nc>.

department consists of a youth pastor and an assistant, who serve as directors at the HDQ church. The traditional Easter and Christmas play is performed with every age group participating along with the youth. The presence and love of the Lord can be observed in the church, with family, food, and fellowship embedded in the hearts of the members within both ministries and communities in which they are located.

An “Ephesian 4:11” Ministry

Both the HDQ and CTCM ministries are built on the foundation of the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:8-12 concerning “the ascension of Jesus and the gifts given unto men—some apostles, some prophets, some evangelist, some pastors and some teachers for the work of the ministry and to edify the body of Christ.” The atmosphere, tone, climate, and character of the ministries are deeply embedded in the five-fold ministry described by Paul. From senior pastors to lay leaders, leadership has engaged and entrenched itself with these words. Senior leaders are accessible to lay leaders and members before and after training. As previously mentioned, training is an ongoing part of ministry. Afterward, leaders are positioned over different organizations within the local assemblies, such as the music department, the women’s and men’s department, the media department, the dance and drama department, and the youth department. Seasoned ordained leaders are trained for specific positions and placed in newly developed church plants.

Whenever ministers stand to teach or preach, the word must be aligned and backed up with scripture. Mandatory leadership training classes are held periodically in the word, the discovery of gifts, and the sharpening of gifts. Training and equipping are continuous. The lay leaders can exercise their gifts and talents during special services. Senior leaders are hands-on

and accessible to lay leaders concerning the work of the ministry, preparing believers to fulfill their God-given assignment and become resilient leaders. The HDQ church extends its five-fold ministry knowledge and training by participating in a mentorship program to help others who are not a part of the reformation but are a part of the kingdom be effective in their God-given assignment.

The heart of senior leaders mirrors Jesus's training style with his disciples. Jesus taught, trained, and equipped his disciples with the tools necessary to carry out the "Great Commission," which included "miracles, signs and wonders." HDQ and CTCM are ministries that believe in "miracles and supernatural healing." Lay leaders are encouraged to identify, study, and operate their gifts and talents as people travel the distance to receive healing, breakthroughs, teaching, and training. Both lay leaders and members embrace the leadership style presented. Senior leaders of both ministries adhere to the doctrine, teaching, and training style of the biblical principles presented and modeled by Jesus in its totality. Most importantly, lay leaders are expected to lead by example and live a holy and acceptable lifestyle by exhibiting complete comprehension through the application of training received.

Covenant

As previously stated, CTCM moved under the umbrella and tutelage of Committed to the Cause of Christ with the HDQ church in the same city as the CTCM ministry. What started as a mentorship quickly became a covenant relationship between the two ministries. After visiting and observing services at the church, joining HDQ became the proper connection for CTCM to continue strengthening and growing the ministry and the lay leaders. A commonality shared between CTCM and the HDQ concerns the training, equipping, and teaching of lay leaders to

become resilient leaders in the body of Christ. Leaders are paired with others to serve as prayer partners and for accountability and responsibility.

Most organizations require their management teams to attend conferences, workshops, and other continuing education activities to stay abreast of swiftly changing markets and technological upgrades. The same applies to ministry. Lay leaders need continuous training and education on church growth (both spiritually and physically), evangelism, and the development of resilient leaders. Lay leaders are expected to display endurance during times of uncertainty while remaining practical in ministry and submitting to the “call.” Obedience to the Lord and senior leadership, who Paul writes are the “Shepherd and Bishop over their souls 1 Peter 2:25,” is an integral part of all training.” However, a comprehensive understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead is equally important. Here, another commonality shared by CTCM and the HDQ church is identified. Lay leaders do not seem to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead, which is an obstacle to developing resilient leaders.

Research Connection

This thesis topic and its connection to leadership today is relevant because it addresses the decline of leadership observed in other ministries and churches. Senior leaders from different churches and ministries in different areas witness similar behavior (e.g., despondency, lack of resiliency, and vacancy) in their ministerial staff. Although most churches conduct leadership training and workshops, the real challenge is developing resilient leaders who, as described by J. Oswald Sanders, “expect tests, temptations, and trials as a healthy part of leadership growth and development.”¹⁹ The desired result for the lay leaders will be to remain effective during the

¹⁹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 159.

stretching, which builds resiliency through understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead.

Because the lay leaders struggle with their calling, obedience, and the role of sacrifice, they are stagnant. The research study was a welcomed attempt to assist CTCM lay leaders in overcoming stagnation, moving forward in ministry, and developing resiliency. The findings of this research study are an added asset to their already established agenda. The research study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the necessity of "sacrifice" in leadership regarding their continued spiritual growth and development. As the lay leaders gain experience in sacrificial leadership, they will also understand the true nature of the "call" and what their obedience encompasses.

"Obedience" is already a well-researched topic associated with the proper response to ministry. However, author Dawn Wilson best explains the dilemma of the CTCM lay leaders, suggesting that "the known concerning obedience is the evidence of salvation and love for God while the unknown is the struggles/sacrifices that accompany obedience."²⁰ So, presenting the research topic concerning the "role of sacrifice" in obeying God's call to lead and how it could help develop resilient leaders piqued the senior leaders' interest in training and equipping their ministerial staff for their ministry assignment. The CTCM senior leaders and lay leaders believed that the research study is also acceptable and accessible in discipleship training, potential leadership training, and spiritual growth of the membership because of the nature of the study, which is "sacrifice," and the necessity to build resiliency.

Most churches already had established time slots for worship services and training workshops. However, a time slot was selected to implement the research study, review, and

²⁰ Dawn Wilson, "Obedience Is Better than Sacrifice – Meaning of 1 Samuel 15:22." December 5, 2023. Accessed February 28, 2024. <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-does-samuel-mean-when-he-says-obedience-is-better-than-sacrifice-html>.

discuss the results. It is possible to develop and incorporate the study results into a session in one of the in-house training classes already established or during leadership conference time. Most churches observe Holy Convocation and host various conferences. Usually, time slots are allotted for workshops. The research study presented can become a topic for one of the workshops.

Most churches are not idle but have an active membership within the four walls and within their communities. However, in 2019, COVID-19, a global pandemic, wreaked havoc, causing the world and the church to adhere to the guidelines of a government shutdown. Many ministries use social media outlets such as Zoom, Facebook, or live streaming to conduct services to maintain membership and reach other diverse audiences. However, because of various lawsuits and medical breakthroughs in vaccines, churches slowly re-opened, operating on a limited and scaled-back schedule. Some churches and ministries have continued using various social media platforms established during the pandemic due to a lack of membership attendance. Parishioners have chosen to attend via live stream from the comforts of their homes. They have traded church pews for their couches or beds, and instead of suits and casual wear, they prefer pajamas or loungewear. Some churches and ministries have not recovered or reopened because of membership rosters comprised of senior members with precondition health issues, making them vulnerable to the lingering virus. Uncertainty concerning the effectiveness of the new vaccines, mutations of new COVID-19 variants, and new restrictions have threatened leadership and membership. Some ministries have closed doors permanently and united with other churches for survival. However, the timing of the current events presented both a need and created a platform for the study. As mentioned, most research on the problem focused on the post-pandemic church, leadership, membership, and resiliency. However, the problem presented

addressed the issues of abandonment of churches by their leaders and the rising suicide rate among leaders before the pandemic. If senior leaders support the research study and its findings, the people may be interested in giving up another afternoon or using established social media platforms for more accessibility. Any financial support needed may be in the form of helping to pay for extra utilities, sound/media technicians, and security. This may have been an issue if the research study had not been incorporated into the church's established format. The topic “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice: Creating and Sustaining Resilient Leaders” is necessary to HDQ, CTCM, and other churches and ministries seeking to develop resilient leaders to perfect the ministry.

Problem Presented

The problem presented by the CTCM lay leaders is a lack of understanding concerning the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. CTCM senior leaders noticed signs of struggle with the lay leaders as they attempted to perform their ministerial duties. The lay leaders suffered from spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement concerning their ministry position and assignment. After meeting with the lay leaders, the struggles experienced and outlined included what author Lucille Williams describes as “the pressure or stress of leadership accompanied with high or unmet expectations”²¹ of ministry. The “pressure or stress of leadership” stemmed from experiencing the realities and responsibilities accompanying ministry. The pressure that the lay leaders encountered could be “compared to a CEO operating a company,”²² according to author Samuel R. Chand. The daily exhausting pressures CEOs face are fluctuating product demands, rising or declining revenues, hiring or downsizing staff, remaining sustainable in a competitive

²¹ Lucille Williams, (2020) *Suicide and Church Leadership [podcast] LUSAYS*, April 9, 2021, <http://www.lusays.com/suicide-and-church-leadership>.

²² Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 67.

market, and sustaining high-profit margins. Chand argues that leaders experience the same pressures when leading a church or ministry, such as Shepherding a flock, adhering to God's will, performing pastoral duties, meeting members' expectations, growing the ministry, and overseeing business administration and financials. The CTCM lay leaders also had "high expectations" about growing their personal ministry instead of helping to grow the church they were a part of while maturing in ministry. The lay leaders displayed a lack of servanthood. These expectations resulted from both the goals set by the lay leaders and the requirements of senior leadership regarding ministry needs. After experiencing hardships, some lay leaders felt inadequate in meeting the never-ending demands of ministry beyond sermon preparation and delivery taught in seminary. It was not what some lay leaders said "they signed up for," imagined, or expected it to be. This starkly contrasts author Andrew Burchfield's explanation of a leader. His explanation is not the definition of a leader but a spiritual job description. In his book, *"The Gift of Leadership,"* Burchfield explains that a leader is "willing to accept the terms and conditions of what comes with the responsibility and weight that leadership encompasses."²³ What the lay leaders of CTCM struggled and complained about is a part of the call to lead. However, the struggles and complaints were caused by a lack of understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead.

This is the problem to be addressed. This thesis will attempt to link the relevance of understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead to effectively train and prepare resilient leaders. However, the first step the lay leaders must take in the process is to understand or clarify what the "call" really means and what they are being "called" to do to comprehend the role of sacrifice accompanying obedience to God. Authors Scott Pace and Shane Pruitt highlight

²³ Andrew Burchfield *The Gift of Leadership: How to Find and Become a Great Leader Worth Following.* (Columbus: New Creation Network, 2022), 4.

the duality of the “call,” suggesting a “universal calling to believers and unique calling to individual disciples.”²⁴ Pace and Pruitt’s suggestion alludes to Matthew 22:14, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” The “universal” call concerns answering the call of salvation, but the “unique” call concerns the spiritual gifts described in Ephesians 4:11. As previously mentioned, problems in the CTCM, the HDQ, and other ministries included those lay leaders and potential leaders struggled while operating in their ministry assignment (a position or post of duty to which one is assigned,²⁵) which they were confident they were called to do. The lay leaders were not just picked and put wherever a vacancy existed. A three-fold process occurs before leaders are assigned, starting with a meeting with senior leaders, followed by prayer, fasting, and finally, training, which includes examining and observing the individual as they attempt to operate in their potential calling in-house before being released to fulfill their respective positions.

After the lay leaders undergo this process, they are placed into prospective leadership positions within the ministry they are planted in before their initial release. However, a process that author Wayne Cordeiro calls being “sifted (challenges and trials)” began to occur in the lives of the lay leaders, leaving some feeling discombobulated about their calling. Everything that the lay leaders had learned or thought they knew was being tested. Jesus further expounds on this point in his conversation with Peter in Luke 22:31: “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but Jesus prayed that Peter’s faith would not fail and upon his conversion, he may be able to strengthen his brother.” Peter later encourages believers in 1 Peter 4:12, writing, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try believers, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” Peter told believers 1 Peter 4:13 to “rejoice, inasmuch as ye

²⁴ Scott Pace and Shane Pruitt *Calling Out the Called: Discipling Those Called to Ministry Leadership*. (Brentwood: B&H Publishing Group, 2022.), 9.

²⁵ Turhonda S. Freeman *Anchored: Resilient Faith + Relentless Obedience*. (Bloomington: West Bow Press, 2023.), 31.

are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Cordeiro's definition of "sifted" explains Jesus's words (spoken to a zealous disciple named Peter); however, as the "sifting" process continued among the lay leaders' fear replaced their waning faith, causing problems in the church and ministry where they served. Senior leaders observed spiritual apathy concerning ministry assignments/positions and anxiety among the lay leaders. When leaders were scheduled to minister or oversee a particular project or ministry, author Stan Toler explains that their "confidence waned, and they suffered an inability to perform on the level"²⁶ they trained for, which became an issue. The leaders had plenty of experience but did not follow through in the prospective leadership roles because of the ensuing struggles. The previous statement exemplifies what employers are discovering concerning new hires: "looking good on paper, impressive but lacking in skills during performance!" Mark 9:14-29 gives an example of a father bringing his son to the disciples to be delivered from a demonic spirit. However, the disciples could not do so due to a lack of faith. Some lay leaders would attempt to start an assignment, but it would later have to be reassigned to someone else. Other problems that plagued lay leaders and their ministries involved some who could not overcome external issues and some who wrestled with balancing time with God, church, and personal pursuits.

The lay leaders still struggled despite continuous extensive training and formal education at a seminary, a church Bible school, or a leadership conference. Senior leaders explained to the lay leaders that real ministry is more caught than taught. As veteran pastor Bishop Dale C. Bonner explains, "There is no amount of formal training" that can prepare a leader for the magnitude of sacrifice, pain, and suffering that accompanies becoming the leader God is molding them to be. Like a natural diamond that goes through tremendous heat, pressure, and stress to be

²⁶ Stan Toler *Outstanding Leadership* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2016), 92.

formed, it is the same process for any believer “called” to Christian leadership. A further snapshot into the topic is author Jesse T Jackson’s work concerning pastors exiting their leadership roles. Jackson highlights Pastor Matt Murphy, suggesting that “pastoring has been harder since the pandemic with lack of commitment, anger, standing for Jesus versus people’s opinions members will attempt a coup, dwindling finances, and being overworked with no gratitude.”²⁷ It would be easy to assume that maybe CTCM lay leaders did not have a total commitment to obedience in the beginning; which argues the point about the premature “yes” given in obeying God’s call to lead but oblivious to what the call entails. However, this thought can be eliminated by assessing the call, lifestyle, and ultimate sacrifices of Jesus, the disciples, and the Apostle Paul as leaders. For example, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church concerning the “sufferings” he was experiencing. He stated that the “things which happened unto him had fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (Philippians 1:12).” This statement proves that Paul understood the role of sacrifice in his obedience to the call of God to be a “chosen vessel,” (Acts 9:15), to the Gentile nation.

During the monthly leadership meeting held by the senior leaders, concerns about the lay leaders’ responses and struggles were voiced. After much discussion, senior leaders of both CTCM and HDQ churches concluded that lay leaders need a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in connection with obeying God’s call to lead and all it entails. Helping the CTCM lay leaders understand that rejection is an integral part of obedience and developing resiliency in leadership through rejection is necessary. Lay leaders must know that all their training and learning will be tested and challenged as they accept leadership roles. What CTCM lay leaders

²⁷ Jesse T Jackson (2021) “This Is Not What I Signed Up For: Unsettling Exodus of Pastors Leaving the Ministry. May 7, 20024, <https://churchleaders.com/news/396413-reports-of-an-unsettling-trend-of-pastors-leaving-the-ministry.html>.

experience is a part of the pruning process that further develops a leader. Author Marc L House highlights three key points leaders should know: “1 a leader is not exempt from the pitfalls of life, 2 life can hit hard with excruciating effects, and 3 temptations to give up and throw in the towel is always there.”²⁸ The real meaning of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead becomes clear. The spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement observed by CTCM and HDQ senior leaders were observed in other churches and ministries, making this study relevant to various churches and leaders.

Purpose Statement

This Doctor of Ministry research study aims to explain to the CTCM lay leaders the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead, develop, and sustain resilient leaders. Senior leadership determined that a prerequisite course may need to be established, implemented, and included during training so that potential leadership candidates would develop a more comprehensive understanding of how obedience to God's call to lead involves sacrifice. The research study results can be compiled into a course booklet for future training.

The key to obeying God’s call to lead can be described with one word: “sacrifice.” Obedience involves and calls for sacrifice. The two terms are inseparable and should be included at the beginning of a potential leader's preparation process. However, obedience is not as easy as in 1 Samuel 15:22 suggests. Author Michael Phillips explains that “sacrifice is required to obey.”²⁹ However, Phillips argues that “we hate submission to anyone.”³⁰ This hate of

²⁸ Marc L House *Out of the Pit: Rediscovering Your Divine Purpose*. (Atlanta: Victory House Publishing, 2017), 7-8, 15.

²⁹ Michael Phillips *A Sacrifice of Obedience: Gethsemane Moments in the Life of Jesus*. (New York City: Rosetta Books, 2017), Loc 17, Kindle.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 23.

submission leads to a rebellious nature and hatred of authority beginning in Genesis 3, with the initial fall of humanity due to disobeying God's command, and it remains in existence today.

In early church history, obedience and sacrifice were embedded in the foundation of leadership. For example, the Levitical priesthood was responsible for the gifts offered in the temple. They performed daily rituals and sacrifices for the sins of the people. The priests' duties began with personal sacrifices for themselves and their families. Sometimes, leaders' lives were sacrificed because of sin. Thus, this thesis aims to teach lay leaders how sacrifice remains relevant to developing and sustaining resilient leaders by examining its origin from leaders of both the Old and the New Testament. A detailed discussion about the lives and leadership styles of Joseph, Jesus, the disciples, and the Apostle Paul provided a biblical foundation to build and explain the role of sacrifice concerning obeying God's call to lead. Interviewing present and past leaders on the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead provided a natural connection relatable to CTCM lay leaders. It prepared them to know what to expect concerning leadership. The interviews are with leaders who have served for decades, discussing how sacrifice impacted their ministry and helped them become resilient leaders while sustaining longevity, building faith, and encouraging lay leaders.

It is essential to look at the life and leadership of Jesus, the sacrificial lamb, whose obedience "even to death" is the most outstanding example of a resilient leader. Many believe that the songwriter, Elvina Hall, wrote, "Jesus paid it all," and that he made the ultimate sacrifice. It was believed that Jesus fulfilled all the required levels of sacrifice, which involved suffering, rejection, and persecution. However, a summation of Phillips's suggestion that the "sacrifice of obedience always leads to Gethsemane, the cross, the sacrifice of will, self, and

all”³¹ pulled the disciples, leaders, and members into the realm of obedience of Hebrews 10:5-7. Although the lay leaders believed obeying God's call to lead required minimal sacrifice, blogger Alison White pushes deeper into the realm of obedience and sacrifice of Hebrews 10:5-7 suggesting “stepping out of comfort zones, willingness to respond to the call, and relying upon the LORD for strength in times of weakness”³² is essential. However, after experiencing struggles, hardships, and persecution, the CTCM lay leaders learned that the call to lead surpasses the basic definition of obedience and the premature “yes.” Many leaders become disillusioned when ministry appears as the opposite of the megachurch viewed on television. They see other ministries patterned behind men instead of Jesus and compare themselves with others, oblivious of the sacrifices made and the behind-the-scenes work involved. The words of John 20:25-29 come into view as the lay leaders begin to understand that an individual cross signifies the leader's death of self, which involves “scars which authenticate true spiritual leadership,”³³ according to author J. Oswald Sanders. A deeper understanding of Jesus’s obedience to the Father and the impact of his sacrifice is developing in CTCM lay leaders now. Establishing clarity concerning the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead is also building resiliency.

As leaders model the leadership style of Jesus, every aspect of his life must be considered. Not only did Jesus train the disciples, but he also prepared them for the physical and emotional demands of ministry. For example, he told them they would be “hated without a cause,

³¹ Michael Phillips *A Sacrifice of Obedience: Gethsemane Moments in the Life of Jesus*. (New York City: Rosetta Books, 2017), Loc.123. Kindle.

³² Alison White (2023) “Obedience & Sacrifice and Understanding the Word of God. *Tirzah* Available at: <https://tirzahmag.com/blog/obedience-amp-sacrifice-and-understanding-the-word-of-god>.

³³ J. Oswald Sanders *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 141.

lied on, mistreated and killed” because of him (John 15:18-25; John 16:2). Jesus’s obedience to the Father exemplifies the selfless sacrifice needed for leadership. Author Dr. Helen Roseveare concludes that being a “living sacrifice involved all or nothing.”³⁴ Luke 5 is evidence of Roseveare’s words with the calling of Peter, James, John, and Levi. Luke 5:11 and 28 use the words “forsook all, left all, rose up, and followed him/Jesus.” Authors Charles F. Moore and Timothy Keiderling compile early church disciples who became martyrs to encourage believers and leaders today. Martyrs are “witnesses.”³⁵ One of the greatest examples of martyrdom is the story of Perpetua and Felicity, young mothers killed because of their faith. Both women sacrificed not only their lives but also their families. Perpetua and Felicity had given birth to newborn infants. When Perpetua’s father begged her to denounce her faith, she answered him by using a metaphor:

“While pointing to some pottery in her cell, Perpetua asked her father, do you see this container lying here? Is it a little pitcher or something else? It’s a pitcher, he replied. Perpetua asked if it could be called by any name other than what it is. No, he said. Perpetua stated neither can I call myself anything else than what I am – a Christian.”³⁶

Perpetua’s response is the response of resilient leaders and believers today, who remain obedient to God’s “call” regardless of the sacrifices it entails.

This study is designed to provide CTCM lay leaders, lay members, and other potential leaders with a “deeper understanding” of the role of sacrifice accompanying obeying God’s call to lead. According to author John MacArthur, a leader’s “sacrifice is contingent upon the

³⁴ Dr. Helen Roseveare, *Living Sacrifice: Willing to be Whittled as a An Arrow*. (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2021), 129.

³⁵ Charles F. Moore and Timothy Keiderling *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship*. (Walden: Plough Publishing House, 2016), x.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

magnitude of the call”³⁷ upon their lives. The greater the call, the greater the sacrifices. Conversations with other leaders show the same spiritual apathy concerning ministry assignments/positions, anxiety, and hopelessness in lay leaders of different ministries. Outside of CTCM and HDQ, leaders are abandoning their posts, committing suicide, and walking away from church entirely. In three words, John C. Maxwell summarizes the problem and the solution that must be embedded in the hearts of lay leaders and potential leaders: “Leadership means sacrifice.”³⁸

Basic Assumptions

The researcher believes that obedience goes beyond answering “yes” to the call of God to leadership, assuming that often, the answer is given prematurely without a complete understanding of the sacrifice it entails, which may be the CTCM lay leaders’ problem. Putman’s perspective provides the perfect introduction. Putman describes leadership as a “responsibility broader than discipleship”³⁹ as the lay member assumes the role of a lay leader. The researcher also believes that lay leaders may not fully understand what the “call” means in comprehending the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call. Author Loren Houlberg’s message concerning “the call” points to “clarity concerning God’s calling in a leader’s life provides the confidence needed for the sustainability of the call”⁴⁰ especially during tough times. Tough times can lead to both

³⁷ John MacArthur and the Masters’ Seminary Faculty, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 95.

³⁸ John C Maxwell, *the 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You. Revised & Updated 10th Anniversary Edition.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2007), 224.

³⁹ Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E Coleman *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 120.

⁴⁰ Loren Houlberg, *Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry.* (Self-published: Loren Houlberg, 2022), 14-20.

decisions and sacrifices. According to the author Peter Scazzero, these sacrifices may be “hardships and suffering.”⁴¹

The researcher assumes that if the lay leaders receive a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead, they will become resilient, or what author Tod Bolsinger suggests is being “tempered, which means to become stronger and more flexible”⁴² to lead in the face of adversity. Bolsinger’s suggestion defines “tempered glass.” A blog by an author known only as Caleb describes tempered glass as “being made stronger, resistant to impact forces, and scratching by passing through the tempering process using high temperatures to heat the glass and then cooling it quickly.”⁴³ Instead of hardship causing the lay leaders to become spiritually complacent, it should condition- or -temper them for leadership, which is part of the growth process. Joseph's story and his calling to leadership exemplify the image of tempered glass. He was shown his divine destiny at the beginning of Genesis 37:4 -11. However, what he experienced and encountered in Genesis 37:12-44:34 did not mirror his visions concerning leadership. Joseph’s process created resiliency and sustainability in him. The researcher assumes that if lay leaders understand that the purpose of the role of sacrifice is to help them be obedient to the call of God to lead, they can answer the call to the altar of sacrifice.

The researcher assumes that a study in the form of interviews with present and past leaders will provide clarity and reality about the role of sacrifice in God’s call to lead. A survey questionnaire discussing the leaders’ personal history and experience in leadership in conjunction with consulting the obedience of Jesus, the calling of the disciples, the conversion of

⁴¹ Peter Scazzero *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 27.

⁴² Tod Bolsinger *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 5.

⁴³ Caleb, “Tempered Glass Manufacturing Process: How is Tempered Glass Made? *GLAShern*. November 29, 2023, <https://customglassmfg.net/blog/tempered-glass-manufacturing-process>.

Paul, and his letter to Timothy provide the basis for this project. It will be a significant factor in creating and sustaining resilient lay leaders. It is assumed that the research study's findings will be published in a book and used as a prerequisite training class for other lay leaders and members becoming potential candidates for leadership.

The assumption concerning good participation from all targeted groups is correct, and the research study is deemed a great success. The goal is twofold: (1) providing a more profound comprehension to CTCM lay leaders concerning the role of sacrifice in leadership so that preparation and training are more effective, and (2) creating and sustaining resilient leaders.

The interviews and discussions dispel the influence of the false imagery seen on television and social media outlets concerning successful and problem-free mega-churches or the pristine televangelist ministry. They will illuminate the raw reality of the sacrifices made by obedient leaders.

Definitions

The thesis of this research study will reference the following keywords: “the call, leader, leadership, obedience, resilience, sacrifice, and tempered.” These words serve as a foundation to build a deeper comprehension of the role of sacrifice in leadership and creating resilient leaders and sustainability.

Understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead starts with defining what “the call” really means. Various sources allude to a person receiving an “invitation, summons or commission to follow God in trust and obedience.”⁴⁴ CTCM lay leaders have received this invitation. However, this second definition relates specifically to the topic as it references

⁴⁴ Stephen D. Renn *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts*. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 2020), 160.

“service to God in a specific way and specific purpose.”⁴⁵ Lay leaders must be confident in God’s call upon their lives and what they are called to do. The “call or calling” is vital to understanding the role of sacrifice and creating and sustaining resilient leaders.

Resilience is imperative in the ministry of lay leaders because it describes them as possessing “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness,”⁴⁶ especially during times of uncertainty. Tod Bolsinger’s definition of resilience coincides with the message conveyed by this project, which is the “ability to wisely persevere toward the mission God has called a leader to amid both internal and external challenges and resistance faced.”⁴⁷ Bolsinger highlights two significant components of resiliency: “surviving while facing harsh personal adversity, bouncing back from a failure or setback, and continuing” in ministry.⁴⁸ These are vital points lay leaders need as they experience much of what Bolsinger described. However, resiliency is more than the ability to “survive or bounce back” from adversity. Author Janine Schindler suggests that resiliency also involves the ability and willingness to “develop new skills, new attitudes, and new understandings”⁴⁹ that accompany changes that may occur.

Another term previously discussed closely related to resilience is “tempered.” Tempering is the process of being conditioned. Bolsinger better explains what being “tempered” would mean for lay leaders. Tempering involves “reflections, relationships, and practices during the act

⁴⁵ Karen Dockery, Johnnie Godwin, and Phyllis Godwin *the Student Bible Dictionary: A Complete Learning System to Help You Understand Words, People, Places, and Events of the Bible*. (Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2000), 55.

⁴⁶ Dictionary Data from Oxford Languages

⁴⁷ Tod Bolsinger *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 35.

⁴⁸ Bolsinger *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are*, ” 35.

⁴⁹ Janine Schindler (2020) “The Resilient Leader.” *Forbes Coaches Council*. November 14, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/05/05/the-resilient-leader/?sh=76c35a9f2aef>.

of leading that form resilience to continue leading when the resistance is highest.”⁵⁰ In the same way that sacrifice is vital to obedience, being tempered is critical in developing resilience.

J. Robert Clinton describes a leader as an individual with a “God-given capacity, God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people towards his plan.”⁵¹

Individuals combine their gifts, talents, skills, training, and experiences to carry out God’s will for their lives and those assigned. Leaders can be described by one of the three categories listed: (1) naturally born, (2) created, or (3) spiritually chosen. The Bible is filled with men and women chosen, prepared, and equipped to lead God’s people in battle, deliverance, and their promised land. Jesus chose twelve men described as “unlearned and ignorant” (Acts 4:13) and trained them to become the foundation and pillars from which the church emerged.

One word summarizes Sanders’s description of leadership: “influence.”⁵² Influence is leadership’s power to draw others, unite them, and equip them to become leaders. According to Sanders, this influence is based on having a “character that inspires confidence.”⁵³ Clinton highlights that leadership’s primary responsibility is “selecting leaders.”⁵⁴ They identify potential leaders, educate, equip, and remain involved in the continuous learning, growth, and development process of potential leaders. Most importantly, it is here where leadership instills in

⁵⁰ Bolsinger *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are*,” 5.

⁵¹ J. Robert Clinton *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development 2nd edition*. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 179.

⁵² J. Oswald Sanders *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 29.

⁵³ Sanders *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence*, 29.

⁵⁴ J. Robert Clinton *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development 2nd edition*. (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 2012), 254.

lay leaders their sole purpose, summed up by Sanders in one word: vital to understanding the role of sacrifice in obedience, which is previously mentioned as "service."⁵⁵

“Obedience” is the precursor to understanding the role of “sacrifice” in leadership. Spiros Zodhiates discusses the Old Testament usage of obedience as "to hear, to obey, to listen, to be head of, to be regarded, to cause to hear, to proclaim or to sound aloud."⁵⁶ Author Trent C. Butler references a more relevant definition of spiritual leadership and this research study as a two-step process: “(1) hear God’s word and (2) act accordingly.”⁵⁷ Note that the physical ear is the instrument by which hearing takes place. However, author August H. Konkel highlights the spiritual usage of the “ears” as a symbol of obedience according to the natural usage in Hebrew, which uses the word “hear” to mean “obey.”⁵⁸ The lay leaders, both physically and spiritually, heard the call of God to leadership and responded accordingly. Their response was based on the scripture in 1 Samuel 15: 22b, which notes that “...to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Author V. D. Williams deviates from the common definition of obedience by broadening the common understanding. Williams suggests that obedience is about “going out on a limb and trusting God without anything to hold onto but faith”⁵⁹ in response to the call. However, lay leaders must realize that the role of sacrifice is a vital part of obedience to God’s call.

⁵⁵ Sanders *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence*, 151.

⁵⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God’s Word: NASB*. Edited by Warren Baker and Joel Kletzing (Chattanooga: AMG International, Inc., 2008), 2052.

⁵⁷ Trent C. Butler et al., *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1035.

⁵⁸ August H. Konkel “The Sacrifice of Obedience” *Didaskalia2*, no. 2 (1991): 6. November 9, 2020. <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA00008338430&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁵⁹ V. D. Williams *Faith, Obedience, and Sacrifice: As Inspired By the Holy Spirit*. (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing Co., Inc., 2012), 18.

Dr. Michael Andam suggests that sacrifice is already “a part of the daily life cycle in the form of self-sacrifice, sacrifice for others, and sacrifice to be closer to God.”⁶⁰ However, sacrifice was pivotal in leadership in the Old and New Testaments. Sacrifice in “the Hebrew Bible is associated with ‘atonement,’ which removes obstacles that threaten the relationship between God and God’s people.”⁶¹ In the Old Testament, animals such as bullocks, sheep, and lambs were sacrificed. In the New Testament sacrificial system, Jesus became the sacrificial lamb, and today, the leader becomes the sacrificial lamb. Richard D. Nelson’s belief that “to offer something as a sacrifice means to transfer it out of the realm of human use and disposal into the domain of God”⁶² defines the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. The lay leaders understand that the part of sacrifice in obedience is offering their lives to become a servant of God.

The most important of the definitions is the word “servant.” According to Dr. James Thompson, a servant is a person who is “devoted to or guided by something; exists to carry out God’s will.”⁶³ Servanthood is the starting point in becoming a great leader. Gary L. McIntosh, suggests, “pastors are God’s servants serving God’s people, and an attitude of servanthood is a necessity.”⁶⁴ The lay leaders of CTCM’s understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead begins with accepting salvation. Choosing to serve the Lord develops in the believer’s heart. In the King James Version, the heading for Isaiah 53 is titled “The Suffering Servant.”

⁶⁰ Dr. Michael Andam *Sacrifice, Holy, and Acceptable*. (Orlando: Published by KDP, 2022.), 12-13.

⁶¹ Richard D Nelson, “He Offered Himself.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 57, no. 3 (July 2003): 7. DOI: 10.1177/002096430005700303.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ James Thompson, *Obedience Better Than Sacrifice; Failure is Not an Option Book 3*. (United States of America, 2021), 19.

⁶⁴ Gary L. McIntosh, *The Solo Pastor: Understanding and Overcoming the Challenges of Leading a Church Alone*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2023), 70.

Jesus is described as such because of his obedience to the will of the Father, which leads to the sacrifice described in this chapter.

Thus, it is concluded that leadership is a culmination of “obedience and sacrifice.” MacArthur’s definition sums it up by using an individual’s “spiritual gifts and talents under the call of God to serve.”⁶⁵ The lay leaders were excited about obeying the call of God, exercising their spiritual gifts and talents, and displaying the knowledge and extensive training received. However, what they received prepared them for the moment, but not to be sustainable, resilient leaders during moments of tests, trials, and temptations that accompany the call. Hamilton notes that the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call and building resilient leaders starts with clarifying “the call,” especially when “God’s direction is not as clear the moment it is received.”⁶⁶

Limitations

Any limitation to the research study would start with the survey itself. The leadership and the lay leaders must understand the researcher’s perception of the topic. Leadership could view this topic as criticism concerning the training of potential leaders. Some leaders believe they have thoroughly trained and prepared their people for leadership. It is also possible that the lay leaders may feel that their sincerity and obedience to the call of God to leadership is being questioned. A prior question asked in a leadership training class concerning commitment to God during a previous discussion board section yielded mixed results. Sensitivity concerning ministry callings and positions in the church has developed because of pre-existing biases, cultures, and traditions. For example, the age of women in ministry, the age of potential

⁶⁵ John MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary Faculty, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 229.

⁶⁶ Adam Hamilton, *the Call: The Life and Message of the Apostle Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 15.

candidates, and the marital status of ministry leaders are considered during the leadership selection process in some denominations.

Another limitation revealed hesitancy on behalf of the interviewees to speak openly about hardships, struggles, and private situations in front of their spouses if they are a part of the ministry's leadership. Confidentiality or anonymity could be challenging to maintain if a scandal concerning a highly respected, well-known leader is widely known due to comments given during the questionnaire. The leader may have a fear of being removed from their post.

Another limitation in husband-and-wife teams revealed during the interview is differences in leadership styles, especially when leading the flock together. However, in some instances, a spouse may be more vital concerning faith, spiritual gifts, and ministering and favored more by the congregation than the other spouse. This also places stress and strain on marital relationships and families for some ministry leaders. One spouse may want to speak in this place of struggle but cannot divulge that information to the other spouse. However, the couple's interviews were very insightful to the CTCM lay leaders on the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead.

Time Allotment

Most church calendars have already been established for the upcoming new year. Bible study, leadership training classes, conferences, revivals, and midweek services are already set in most churches to secure desired speakers and to make travel arrangements. As previously mentioned, CTCM is a mobile ministry housed under the umbrella of CTCOC- Committed to the Call of Christ fellowship. CTCM services are on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturday evenings. The HDQ church of CTCOC observes weekly Sunday worship services, Tuesday night Bible

study, and Wednesday night mid-week services. Whether or not the information garnered will be drafted into the established church calendar and developed into training classes, workshops, or leadership conferences by senior leaders and board members of the fellowship. Some CTCOC interviewees and lay leaders who participated in this project lived far from the researcher. However, interviews were conducted during special services such as 5th Sunday fellowships, leadership conferences, and other informal gatherings such as restaurants, hotel conference rooms, and homes. However, some CTCM lay leaders, and lay members did not live in proximity to their churches. Social media platform usage was good. Another factor considered was lay leaders and members with small to school-aged children. Switching to Saturday daytime gatherings with kid station workers motivated participation, thus avoiding the addition of another night.

Facilitator

Most established leadership training classes are conducted by senior leadership, so the members are used to their voices and styles. However, the researcher successfully led the interviews, facilitated the course, and trained potential others to conduct the class. Second, this active research included community involvement. Other senior leaders from sister churches housed under the same umbrella as CTCM and interviewees will be participants and recipients of the fruit of the research study. The research study's availability and timing synchronized with the participants' availability. Other concerns factored in included distance, travel, and financial support. Interviewees were aware that no participants received compensation.

Research Study Interviews

The group size may be a limited factor because of ministry obligations, absences caused by personal commitments, and health precautions because of the lingering threat of the pandemic. As previously stated, five distinct groups have been chosen from diverse backgrounds (seasoned male leaders with 20+ years, seasoned women leaders with 20+ years, millennial leaders with 10+ years of experience, seasoned married couple leaders with 10+ years, and seasoned single leaders with 10+ years). Each group consists of two people who provide backup in case of an emergency or if an interviewee changes their mind about participating. Interviewees will be asked questions that pertain to the research topic. The intent was to choose interviewees from members of the HDQ church, CTCM mobile ministries, the mentorship program, or the churches under the leadership of the CTCOC. However, because of unforeseen circumstances, interviewees have been polled from outside ministries who meet the criteria and experience the problem presented by this thesis. This is a viable topic for all leaders and all members because leaders identify, equip, and educate members to become sustainable, resilient leaders.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The most significant factor affecting the research study is partial participation because of city ordinances and quarantines. COVID-19 invaded the whole world between November and December of 2019, becoming a global pandemic in March 2020 and a viable threat today. At the beginning of the study, ordinances by the government and health organizations restricted gatherings of over ten people. However, many governmental and health mandates have been removed because of recent breakthroughs in vaccination, following mask mandates, and other safety practices. Today, all restrictions have been removed, with some businesses making the

mask mandate optional. COVID-19 remains a medical concern as new variants develop and infections are documented; however, hospitalization rates remain stable.

Pandemic Cost

The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc worldwide, affecting supply chains and causing shortages. Businesses felt the pinch of the shutdown because of the rapid spread of COVID-19. Business revenues were also affected, causing many owners to increase the prices of goods and services, including conference room rentals and other fees. Although death tolls and cases have decreased, it remains a dangerous predator emotionally, physically, and especially financially. Although the entire world has been affected, the church is reeling even harder from the effects of the pandemic. Declining memberships because of rising gas prices, utilities, rents, and violence. Couches and beds are replacing church pews because of members' switching to social media after restrictions prohibited live attendance. However, despite restrictions being lifted, church attendance is still low. Travel expenses and utilities are still factors in conducting interviews. Most interviewees preferred in-person interviews, either in the church or home office or via Zoom. However, live interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Delimitations

Research Study Material

The researcher is responsible for conducting confidential, fair, and unbiased interviews and providing reliable audio-visual equipment, including a private computer, tablet, or laptop with a USB for Zoom interviews and a digital voice recording device with a removal cartridge for the required three-year storage period. Reasonable and sound research will adhere strictly to

the potential problems presented and the required standards imposed. All opinions and beliefs are respected and treated fairly. The study stays within the established parameters of Phase I: Old and New Testament Leaders, Phase II: Live Interviews with seasoned leaders at 60 intervals, and a questionnaire provided to interviewees to prove the importance of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. The questions involved do not invade the privacy of the interviewees. The interviewees chose the interview location because of the previous issues listed under limitations and costs affecting travel and meetings.

Location

Three limitations could affect the interview location. First, whether HDQ, CTCM, or other ministries were willing to draft the research study into the training classes and the church calendars that had already been established. Second, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented limitations because of quarantines and restrictions imposed by local government. Some rules have allowed for the reopening of some establishments. However, some leaders are still adhering to ministry-imposed guidelines for protecting elderly members, members with compromised immune systems, children, and members concerned about transmission to other family members in the home. If the HDQ decides not to add anything to the current established calendar, it is the researcher's responsibility to have a backup location. Third, the interviewee's preference for where their interviews will be held. Some may prefer to do them in person in their controlled environment (church or home office), or they may be held via Zoom because of the pandemic restrictions. Updated guidelines from the CDC have removed all restrictions. The mask mandate is optional. However, interviews were conducted via Zoom because of inflated gas prices, distance, and times.

Research Study Group

As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 restrictions and quarantines limited gatherings to ten indoors and fifty outdoors to avoid exposure. After protest of the restrictions, the church was excluded from further closures. However, with COVID-19 and its variants remaining a credible threat, liability could remain an issue because of possible exposure. The researcher adhered to optional guidelines during the interview process to provide a safe physical and spiritual environment. Adherence to safety restrictions of the city officials, the church, and the leaders at the location sites was crucial. However, interviewees were given options to choose whether the interview was in person or via Zoom. Interviews conducted via Zoom stayed within time limits. Interviewees who could not participate on the established date and time because of unexpected ministry obligations informed the researcher of an alternative time. Research findings will be presented to both senior leaders and CTCM lay leaders.

A second issue was the screening and choosing of the research group. The main participants are the CTCM lay leaders who have experienced or are experiencing the problem presented. They are the ones that gauged the validity of the topic. The lay leaders gave either positive or negative feedback to the researcher. Senior leadership who observed the problem in their church or ministries will examine the findings for approval and evaluate whether the research provided a resolution. Information from the research study will be published in a book for future training of other potential leaders.

Thesis Statement

If the CTCM lay leaders are taught the importance of sacrifice in leadership, their training and preparation will be more effective in developing sustainable, resilient leaders. The lay leaders will discover the depth of their “yes” as what both obedient and sacrificial leadership encompasses is revealed. Defining and discussing the words outlined establishes a solid foundation for lay leaders to grow from during the educating, training, and equipping stage. As the research progresses, the theological aspect of the life of Jesus with his disciples, the life of the Apostle Paul, and his words to his “beloved” son, Timothy, a young pastor, and other Old and New Testament leaders is the next layer to establish further an understanding of the role of sacrifice in obedience. Through their interviews, the five distinct groups (seasoned male leaders with 20+ years of experience, seasoned female leaders with 20+ years of experience, millennial leaders with 10+ years of experience, seasoned married couples with 10+ years of experience, and seasoned single leaders with 10+ years of experience) will serve as witnesses to the importance of understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead.

The starting point in understanding the role of sacrifice in obedience to God is the “call.” The meaning of being “called” must be fully understood. Ruth Haley Barton suggests the call is birthed from the “identity of the individual and the fabric of their being.”⁶⁷ If the lay leaders do not understand their calling, they will be unable to comprehend the role of sacrifice. The call is the death of self through personal sacrifice on the cross to live a life of service to God and his people. The suffering experienced by CTCM lay leaders is a part of the sacrificial offering to achieve the sustainability necessary to become a resilient leader. This research study aligns with John 12:24, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it dies, it

⁶⁷ Ruth Haley Barton “*Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry, Expanded Edition*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 74.

bringeth forth much fruit.” Understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead leads to a life-long growth process in lay leaders and may help in retention. As previously stated, some lay leaders were abandoning their posts, becoming complacent, and desiring not to be elevated. The lay leaders may also understand that Jesus’s obedience and sacrificial life resulted from fully surrendering to the Father. His disciples gave up everything for the work of the ministry. The life of Jesus is mirrored in the life of a leader. Paul’s words to encourage his beloved son, a young pastor named Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, “to endure hardness as a good soldier and not get tangled up with the affairs of this life that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” conveys the message of this research study. Entanglements are distractions from the enemy.

The data gathered from all resources will be presented to senior leadership first and then to the lay leaders as an answer to the problem. Upon approval of senior leadership, the results of the research findings would be compiled in a course booklet to be incorporated into an existing training session, created as a new curriculum training class, or become a prerequisite class for lay leaders. A three-day leadership retreat to the mountains to introduce the course is desired, with the facilitators of the withdrawal being senior leaders or senior pastors of the ministries under the umbrella of CTCOC. However, with COVID-19 and its variants still looming, the initial startup will be hosted by the HDQ church instead of the mountain retreat. As previously mentioned, the location of the individual interviews of the three distinct groups section of the study will be left up to the discretion of the researcher and the interviewees. The options are between in-person interviews within the comforts of a controlled confined area such as the church office or home office with a recording device or via Zoom, Skype, or Teams.

According to the CTCM lay leaders, in 1 Samuel 15:22, refusal is not an option: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” However, “What happens when obedience becomes a sacrifice?” Understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead will enable lay leaders to become sustainable, resilient leaders.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The problem addressed in this research study is the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call. The CTCM lay leaders were experiencing challenges within their leadership roles. The reactions of the lay leaders can be compared with those of what author John Piper describes as a “new convert with a flash of temporary zeal, whose flames burn out and return to the reality of life in the world.”⁶⁸ The vacating of leadership roles by the lay leaders who faced the harsh reality of ministry mimics Piper’s words. Although obedience is a necessary and required character trait of all spiritual leaders, the role of sacrifice in obedience is not thoroughly explained or comprehended. The main focal point highlighted in previous discussions was the importance of obeying God. However, the information was limited in scope and depth and misleading concerning the hidden cost associated with the call. Author J. Oswald Sanders summarizes the cost of leadership as being a “high price, a heavy toll and an even greater cost the more effective the leader is.”⁶⁹ Understanding that sacrifice is a by-product of obedience develops resilient leaders, enabling them to answer God’s call that involves suffering, a cross, and death. The lay leaders of CTCM must understand that their obedience to the call is not limited to a response. For lay leaders to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to

⁶⁸ John Piper, *Why I Love the Apostle Paul: 30 Reasons*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 27.

⁶⁹ J. Oswald Sanders *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 139.

lead, they must first know that the call is not only a “call” to action but also a call for continual growth. Author Paul David Tripp describes it as “hardships for the redemptive good” of the lay leaders themselves. Therefore, it is imperative that, as author Loren Houlberg highlights in her book *Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry*, lay leaders possess “confidence and clarity,”⁷⁰ which are crucial characteristics of a resilient leader concerning their calling. The “call” serves a dual purpose in the lives of the lay leaders and those they are assigned to lead.

The topic of this study, “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice,” is an oxymoron to the words of 1 Samuel 15:22: “To obey is better than sacrifice.” The CTCM lay leaders must comprehend that obedience to God involves excellent sacrifice. As previously stated, 1 Samuel 15:22 is the backdrop for some lay leaders answering God's call to leadership. The lay leaders’ interpretation of sacrifice is associated with both avoiding disobedience to God and his punishment. The desire to obey overshadows the will to sacrifice. Why? Obedience is often seen as proof of an individual’s relationship with God publicly, while sacrifice is proof of God’s working on an individual privately. Author Nik Ripken received a startling revelation concerning obedience during their work in the Horn of Africa. He was warned that “successful conversion would lead to death because faithful obedience to Jesus’s call resulted in persecution, suffering, and martyrdom.”⁷¹ Ripken’s words mirror Philippians 2:8, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” The people who would receive the gospel message would face death in that country. It is here where the role of sacrifice in obedience to the gospel's call to salvation is evident. Hebrews 10:5 says, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,

⁷⁰ Loren Houlberg *Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry* (Salina: Loren Houlberg, 2020), 14.

⁷¹ Nik Ripken and Barry Stricker, *The Insanity of Obedience: Walking with Jesus in Tough Places*. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 57.

but a body hast thou prepared me.” The scripture leads to the overall belief that the word “sacrifice” is associated with the atoning work of Jesus Christ and the “finished” work of the cross. So, the desired outcome of the study is to bring a more comprehensive understanding of how obedience and sacrifice are integral parts of leadership and the development of resilient leaders. It will help lay leaders understand that Jesus is no longer on the cross, but they will be.

The literature review will cover the importance of understanding the topic of obedience and the role of sacrifice in leadership to help develop resilient leaders. In the following literature review, the words “call, obedience, sacrifice, and resilience” are defined, and the intimate relationships between Jesus and his disciples and the Apostle Paul and his beloved son, Timothy, will be discussed, providing a theological aspect of the topic. Theories that have recently been in the spotlight concerning the departure of leaders will add relevance to the importance of this study.

Literature Review

When discussing leadership, the first place to start is with a working definition of “leader,” not a job description. Author J. Robert Collin defines a leader as an individual who possesses a “God-given capacity and responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people towards his plan.”⁷² It is an individual who is led by the spirit and power of God to lead a people according to God’s word. However, that “influence” has waned in recent years because of a shift in leadership dynamics. In the past, leaders proclaimed the word, performed weddings, baptisms, and funerals, visited the sick and grieving widows, and were highly esteemed by their congregation. As leadership dynamics shift, the demand for the leader's office also shifts. Sheryl

⁷² J. Robert Clinton *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development 2nd edition*. (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 2012), 179.

Frances Chen describes the change as a shift from a position or title of “absolute power or reigning authority” to a more relational role of membership.”⁷³ An example of Chen’s message is how some parents today want to be their children’s friend or the “cool” parent. The parents take a less dominant, authoritative approach to handling problems and conversations with their children. As changes take place at the top, it flows down. The leadership platform, as well as the traditional church service setting today, has moved from behind the four walls of the local brick-and-mortar structure onto popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, live streams, and radio broadcasts, reaching millions. The face of leadership has changed in appearance from the seasoned, reserved elder in a suit, tie, and robe to the millennial, youthful, charismatic individual adorned in a T-shirt, jean jacket, jeans with cut-out knees, or camouflage pants. Age and gender can be factored into the non-traditional style of leadership. However, author John Piper highlights that the downside to both the shift and the change is the “depreciation” of one of the essential offices and, as previously stated, what used to be one of the most highly esteemed offices in the church. Authors Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby concur that the “once desired and observed has now become the least understood phenomena.”⁷⁴ As technology upgrades, so does the office of leadership. According to the author John Piper, the expectation and the pressure of leadership are now comparable with the role of “productive managers”⁷⁵ and entertainers. The demands of people looking for something different are family-oriented, innovative, and time-sensitive to members' attention spans. Changing demographics,

⁷³ Sheryl Frances Chen, “Leadership, Authority, and Obedience: A Psychological Approach.” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34 no. 3 (1999): 380.

⁷⁴ Henry & Richard Blackaby *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda. Revised & expanded.* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 31.

⁷⁵ John Piper *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry.* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 66.

declining church attendance, and most importantly, what Blackaby and Blackaby describe as “fearing failing both people and God,”⁷⁶ plus additional responsibilities such as counseling services because of rising mental health issues, have all heightened the stress levels of leaders. Two words synonymous with leadership are “stress and pressure.” Author Samuel R. Chand highlights what to expect from lay leaders. Chand states, “Christian leadership is one of the most difficult jobs in the world, and it is full of risks, strains, and challenges that affect both the individual leader and their families.”⁷⁷

The Priority of this Topic

As Christian leadership is becoming more of a job instead of a calling and as the church is becoming, as can be deduced from author Bruce Epperly’s work, “more of an option”⁷⁸ instead of the necessity and the priority it once was, it is here where leaders are challenged in obeying God’s call to lead. The unexpected sacrificial demands have become daunting tasks outside of the scope of the leader’s training and education. For example, Epperly, commenting on his “calling,” did not expect “custodial work”⁷⁹ to be a part of the call or his resume`. The zeal once displayed by leaders has been replaced by the stark realities of what leadership entails. Suicide among leaders has risen as they experience burnout at an alarming rate, are caving under the pressure of leading, and, according to author J. Robert Clinton, are dropping out after “three

⁷⁶ Henry & Richard Blackaby *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People to God’s Agenda. Revised & expanded.* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 4.

⁷⁷ Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 51.

⁷⁸ Bruce Epperly *A Center in the Cyclone: Twenty-First Century Clergy Care.* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 13.

⁷⁹ Epperly *A Center in the Cyclone*, 6.

to four years”⁸⁰ in their perspective roles. Superficial obedience to God may be the culprit plaguing leadership, causing an inability to lead sacrificially.

This is the problem with CTCM's lay leaders and the body of Christ. Spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement have been observed taking a toll on individuals, churches, and ministries cooperatively.

Spiritual Apathy

Apathy and apostasy are close relatives. Trent Butler defines apostasy as “rebellious, forsaking, abandoning or falling away from what is believed.”⁸¹ The lay leaders’ attendance had decreased concerning weekly Sunday services, Bible study, and training sessions. As previously mentioned, the zeal the lay leaders first experienced had begun to wane because of personal hardships, struggles, and sufferings. In Thom Rainer’s blog post “Five Reasons Many Pastors Struggle with Depression,” one of the reasons listed concerned the “surprising reality of pastoral leadership.” One leader expected to “preach the word only, but after a year into his pastorate, he was dismayed by the harsh real-world reality of leadership at the age of 31, in a local church, which resulted in his depression.”⁸² Highlighting depression at this point is a necessity as it has led to suicide among leaders. Although it is believed that no spirit-filled believer can or should be oppressed or depressed, depression has a history with notable great leaders in both secular and gospel circles. Author Tim LaHaye dedicates a chapter on depression in his book *Spirit-*

⁸⁰ J. Robert Clinton *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development Second Edition*. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 86.

⁸¹ Trent C. Butler et al., *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 74.

⁸² Thom S. Rainer “Five Reasons Many Pastors Struggle with Depression.” *Church Answers (blog)*, February 26, 2018. Accessed April 9, 2021. <http://www.churchanswers.com/blog/five-reasons-many-pastors-struggle-depression>.

controlled Temperament. LaHaye references Dr. Raymond Cramer, who describes depression as “an emotional illness to which many of our socially most useful and productive people are subject.”⁸³ Spiritual apathy is a by-product of depression, which was observed among CTCM lay leaders.

Bill Hull underlines that “suffering”⁸⁴ is an inseparable part of sacrificial leadership. It has two fundamental components: (1) death to self and (2) faith towards God. Author Jim Davis concurs with Luke 18:1, where Jesus warns his disciples about “coming offenses” while leading. However, a startling fact highlighted by Davis is that not only is suffering hard, bitter, and uncomfortable, but “by human nature, it hurts, and some leaders are offended by it!”⁸⁵ Because of the unexpected and unwanted suffering, ministry assignments were abandoned. The fear of rejection tormented some of the lay leaders, especially among the youth leaders. So, like Saul in 1 Samuel 15, some lay leaders compromised their position of authority. The lay leaders noted other hindrances: the members' traditional and cultural biases. However, Blackaby and Blackaby contrasted the actions of the lay leaders. They summarized that the obstacles faced were not for “discouragement but for to be built upon and for personal growth.”⁸⁶

⁸³ Tim LaHaye, *Spirit-Controlled Temperament: The Bestselling Classic on Who You Are and Who You Can Become*. (Carol Stream: Tyndale Momentum, 1994), 161.

⁸⁴ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 137.

⁸⁵ Jim Davis *Why Me? And Why That's the Wrong Question: A Godly View of Suffering*. (Abilene: Leafwood Publishers, 2014), 34; 57.

⁸⁶ Henry & Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People onto God's Agenda Revised & Expanded* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 63.

Spiritual Anxiety

Author Karen Dockery characterizes and describes “anxiety as worry, distress, trouble, nervousness and unease.”⁸⁷ Jesus speaks Dockery’s words in Luke 10:40-41 concerning Martha. In Luke 10:40, the opening sentence describes Martha being “cumbered about much serving” until Martha complained about Mary not helping. Jesus added that Martha was also “careful and troubled about many things.” The scripture verifies Dockery’s words and describes the CTCM lay leaders. The lay leaders experienced anxiety out of concern about present ministry assignments as some were serving in other capacities and not necessarily the areas where they felt gifted. The lay leaders felt stressed about pleasing God, senior leaders, and lay members. Some expressed a readiness to be released to fulfill their personal ministry assignments outside the four walls. Anxiety occurs when the lay leaders realize that the road between points A and B is not straight. At this pivotal intersection of ministry, author Paul David Tripp describes it as the “space between God’s promises and the details of a situation; but most importantly, where the leader is spiritually, and the leader’s mindset”⁸⁸ are essential factors. The mind serves as the battlefield of the enemy. An additional exciting note serves as a reminder for the lay leaders concerning the “call” being answered. Author Russell Huizing brings order to the chaos in the mind of the lay leader as the role of sacrifice in connection with obedience to the “call” is summed up with three words: “servanthood, trials, and then exultation.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Karen Dockery et al., *The Student Bible Dictionary* (Uhrichsville: Barbour Books, 2000), 29.

⁸⁸ Paul David Tripp *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 133.

⁸⁹ Russell L. Huizing, “Leaders from Disciples: The Church’s Contribution to Leadership Development.” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35, no. 4 (October 2011): 337.

Spiritual Despondency/Discouragement

Spiritual despondency resulted from the lay leaders experiencing what Dockery defines as a “spiritual low due to loss of hope or courage”⁹⁰ concerning their divine destiny after answering the call of God. During the “wait,” or what Tripp believes is the “hardship of not knowing,” determining the following steps to be made is crucial. It is here where the lay leaders must learn to continue to “trust, obey and believe” in the Lord who called them while feeling forsaken. Many of the lay leaders began to struggle with both their faith and their calling. The lay leaders revealed that doubt crept in because they believed they should have reached a defining moment or milestone in ministry. Some lay leaders had begun to pattern after and compare their ministry with other people’s ministries. Patterning and comparing one’s ministry with someone else’s ministry leads to discouragement, competition, and jealousy, which are all wrong motives for ministry. The influence of televangelism also impacts how lay leaders view their ministry. The stagnation experienced was perhaps the result of the fear of failure that gripped them. The downside for leaders that Tripp identifies as allowing “fear to be a ruling factor”⁹¹ in ministry is becoming complacent and failing to grow.

The CTCM and other lay leaders had been experiencing what author Carey Nieuwhof called the “dark struggle of leadership that leads to discouragement, defeat and for some, quitting leadership due to pressure.”⁹² These are the pressures that were both unforeseen and unexpected by the lay leaders. Leadership carries a stress that accompanies the everyday course of its nature. Blogger Tim Challis highlights that leaders began to feel “isolated and overwhelmed due to

⁹⁰ Karen Dockery et al., *The Student Bible Dictionary* (Uhrichville: Barbour Books, 2000), 76.

⁹¹ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 127.

⁹² Carey Nieuwhof, “Suicide, Leadership, and the Dark Inner Struggle Few Understand.” *Carey Nieuwhof (blog)*. April 9, 2021, <https://careynieuwhof.com/suicide-leadership-and-the-dark-inner-struggle-few-understand>.

demands on their resources such as time and energy, making them easy prey to the enemies of burnout and fallout”⁹³ mentioned earlier. This is a potentially growing problem among spiritual leaders today as more leaders abandon leadership roles and pastors vacate the premises of their sanctuary. Two more reasons to be highlighted from Rainer’s blog relevant to this topic are “spiritual warfare and inadequacy.”⁹⁴ The “spiritual warfare” describes the destructive demonic personal attacks experienced by a leader in both their private and public lives. Attacks can take the form of membership problems, marital problems, family problems, and personal pulls or vices such as temptations, unresolved habits, or unconfessed sins. The warfare is so great that leaders become worn out and question their ability to lead, just like the lay leaders of CTCM and others. For example, author Bruce Epperly suggests that the pressure and warfare pastors and churches are experiencing is because of a “rise in “unchurched/unaffiliated, spiritual but not religious people who have made evangelism challenging for leaders.”⁹⁵ It is here where a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead is necessary. Author Peter Scazzero highlighted these two constants associated with leadership: “it is hard, and it involves suffering.”⁹⁶ Unfortunately, they are constants that will remain throughout the administration. This is why this research topic is necessary for current and potential leaders answering the call. It will help educate, equip, and train leaders who will become resilient to the harsh realities associated with leadership.

⁹³ Tim Challies, “Confronting the Current Church Leadership Crisis.” *Tim Challies (blog)*. May 9, 2016. <https://www.challies.com/sponsored/confronting-the-current-church-leadership-crisis>.

⁹⁴ Thom S. Rainer, “Five Reasons Many Pastors Struggle with Depression.” *Church Answers (blog)*. February 26, 2018. <http://www.churchanswers.com/blog/five-reasons-many-pastors-struggle-depression>.

⁹⁵ Bruce Epperly, *A Center in the Cyclone: Twenty-First Century Clergy Self-Care.* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 21.

⁹⁶ Peter Scazzero *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 27.

The “Bounce-Back”

According to authors James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, resilience is the “ability to recover quickly and continue to pursue the vision of the future”⁹⁷ despite past or present setbacks. Leaders can “bounce back” by possessing the staying power or “grit” necessary to navigate troubled waters. Kouzes and Posner highlight Angela Duckworth, a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, describing grit as the ability to “persevere with passion, work strenuously, face challenges, maintain momentum and interest despite past failures, adversity and plateaus in progress.”⁹⁸ CTCM lay leaders, and other leaders desperately need “grit” to become resilient leaders. Resilience is not limited to just possessing the ability to stick and stay. As mentioned in Chapter One, Bolsinger adds “becoming stronger and flexible” to the list of what resilience means to leadership. For resiliency to be established in leaders, there must be a thorough understanding of the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to leadership. Here, the lay leaders of CTCM will understand that resiliency is developed through what author J. Robert Clinton describes as a “lifetime of lessons” gleaned from every experience and scenario encountered. Romans 8:28, which is about how “all things work together for good to them that both love God and are called according to his purpose,” will become internalized by each of them.

Becoming resilient means that lay leaders will understand when author Bill Hull describes leadership as “emotionally exhausting as the heart takes a beating.”⁹⁹ Leadership takes

⁹⁷ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner *the Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations 6th edition*. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017), 189.

⁹⁸ Kouzes and Posner, “*The Leadership Challenge: How to,*” 189.

⁹⁹ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 61.

heart because the leader must love the people they lead. A resilient leader's perspective concerning adversity changes from negative to positive as it is viewed as what John Maxwell terms a "learning tool,"¹⁰⁰ which concurs with the words of Romans 8:28. Maxwell stresses the fact that "God develops leaders in a "crockpot,"¹⁰¹ This can be compared to the vision of the Potter's house in Jeremiah 18:1. The "crockpot and the potter's wheel" describes the heat, the pressure applied, and the slow development progression. Author Matt Gavin suggests that resiliency is not an "endowed gift but one that is developed."¹⁰²

The CTCM lay leaders identify with other leaders struggling in ministry who believed the "call" was to "preach, teach, and perform other ministerial duties." However, they soon realized that obedience involves a personal sacrifice, a Christlike sacrifice of its own. It is here where leaders must understand what author August H Konkel describes as the "full knowledge of the costly kind of sacrifice required in obedience to God"¹⁰³ to lead. This "knowledge" of the role of sacrifice in obedience to God begins with the lay leaders' thorough understanding of their "calling."

¹⁰⁰ John C. Maxwell, *Leading in Tough Times: Overcoming Even the Greatest Challenges with Courage and Confidence*. (Santa Ana: Hachette Book Group, 2021), 3.

¹⁰¹ John Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible: NKJV 3rd Edition*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 67.

¹⁰² Matt Gavin, "How to Become a More Resilient Leader," *Harvard Business School Online Business Insights (blog)*. December 17, 2019, <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/resilient-leadership>.

¹⁰³ August H. Konkel, "The Sacrifice of Obedience." *Didaskalia2*, no. 2 (1991): 3, accessed November 9, 2020. <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA00008338430&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

“Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice: The Call”

1 Samuel 3 gives the most outstanding example concerning the “call” of God. The prophet Samuel was “called” four times. 1 Samuel 3:10 reads, “And the Lord came, stood, and called as at other times.” Samuel’s call to leadership came at the early age of 13. Author Glenn Packiam highlighted that “half (53%) of American pastors are called between ages 14-21.”¹⁰⁴ Samuel was a judge, priest, and prophet. Author Ruth Haley Barton describes God's “call” as an “essentially spiritual experience of human existence as it is the place where God’s presence intersects with man.”¹⁰⁵ God’s divine plan intersects with the lay leaders’ plan. God’s ability to work in and through the lay leader can be halted if the lay leader chooses to pursue their own personal plan and path. However, God’s divine plan and will must prevail over the lay leaders. This is why it is a “calling” often unthinkingly obeyed and cannot be mistaken, missed, or shunned. In 1 Samuel 15:22, Saul was chosen to lead. The lay leaders heard the call of God, responded, and believed they were chosen to lead. However, after observing CTCM lay leaders and other churches, it was noticed that there may be a misunderstanding concerning what the “calling” of God means.

However, it may not necessarily be the call or the obedience that is a problem. According to author Adam Hamilton, it is possible that the “lack of clarity concerning God’s direction in the moment of the call”¹⁰⁶ is the missing link. Confusion about where the call originated was another possibility that affected Saul and could be a problem for some lay leaders. When the call is from God, obedience to God is sustained. Saul’s obedience became a sacrifice when he “hearkened to

¹⁰⁴ Glenn Packiam, *The Resilient Pastor: Leading Your Church in a Rapidly Changing World.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2022), 57.

¹⁰⁵ Ruth Haley Barton *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry Expanded Edition.* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 76.

¹⁰⁶ Adam Hamilton, *the Call: The Life and Message of the Apostle Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 52.

the people” instead of God. (1 Samuel 15:15, 21). What is the big deal about “calling?” A summation of author Loren Houlberg’s belief is that leaders who are “confident in their calling, stand strong, and do not waver,”¹⁰⁷ regardless of what it entails. Saul’s weakness is that he is constantly disobedient because he worries about people's thoughts and reactions. The leaders described by Houlberg possess the “grit” needed to lead in turbulent times. Barna's research, used by Packiam, supports the previous statement about leaders being "66% more confident in their calling in comparison to 2016’s numbers of 97% remaining confident in their calling.”¹⁰⁸ Revelations 17:14 references the war with the Lamb and how those with him are “called, chosen, and faithful.”

During a meeting with senior leaders, a lay leader defended answering God's call to leadership by stating, “Obedience is better than sacrifice!” The quote concerns King Saul's failed leadership because he disobeyed God in 1 Samuel 15:22 after being anointed King of Israel. The “call” is more than answering what Dockrey defines as a “summons or appointment from God to serve him in both a specific way and a specific purpose.”¹⁰⁹ So, the lay leaders of CTCM must be confident about their calling and understand, according to Clinton, that it also involves being continuously “processed and developed to their fullest potential by God.”¹¹⁰ The lay leaders must realize that the calling identifies them and encompasses what is in them, categorized by

¹⁰⁷ Loren Houlberg, *Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry*. (Columbia: Loren Houlberg, 2020), 14.

¹⁰⁸ Glenn Packiam, *The Resilient Pastor: Leading Your Church in a Rapidly Changing World*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2022), 57.

¹⁰⁹ Karen Dockery et. al, *The Student Bible Dictionary: A Complete Learning System to Help You Understand Words, People, Places, and Events of the Bible*. (Uhrichsville: Barbour Books, 2000), 55.

¹¹⁰ J. Robert Clinton *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development 2nd edition* (Colorado Spring: NAVPRESS, 2012), 178.

their “skills, talents, character traits, and experiences,”¹¹¹ as highlighted by Maxwell. Most importantly, obedience and sacrifice are integral parts of the call of God to leadership. People want and will follow confident and obedient leaders.

Obedience

According to author George W. Coats, obedience is “required of God”¹¹² and a precursor to sacrifice. However, author Heather Adams expounds further by explaining why obedience is considered better than sacrifice. Adams’ article “Why Does the Bible Say Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice?” highlights the following points: it is the “1 response God seeks, 2 it shows that he is the first priority, and 3 it displays trust in God.”¹¹³ Coats' discussion of Abraham’s call to sacrifice Isaac, the promised seed, exemplifies what Abraham tries to convey to leaders.

Obedience is one of the major themes of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. “Obedience” was the main struggle for the children of Israel, starting with leadership. For example, Aaron (Exodus 32) and King Saul (1 Samuel 15) shared the same commonality in leadership. They both compromised their position by yielding to the people's voice instead of obeying the voice of the Lord. Two critical points stressed by both Coats and Maxwell are that God “calls for obedience” and, most importantly, that “leadership is sacrifice.”¹¹⁴ Obedience involves sacrifice, and as the

¹¹¹ John C Maxwell, *Leader Shift: The 11 Essential Changes Every Leader Must Embrace*. (New York: HarperCollins Leadership, 2019), 237.

¹¹² George W. Coats, “Abraham’s Sacrifice of Faith: A Form-Critical Study of Genesis 22.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 27, no. 4 (1973): 398. November 19, 2020. Doi: 10.1177/002096437302700402.

¹¹³ Heather Adams “Why Does the Bible Say, “Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice?” February 21, 2024. <https://biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/why-does-the-bible-say-obedience-is-better-than-sacrifice.html>.

¹¹⁴ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You. Revised and Updated, 10th Anniversary Edition*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 224.

children of Israel struggled with obedience to God, the lay leaders of CTCM are struggling in the same area. So, we begin to see that understanding the role of sacrifice starts with “obedience.”

As author Spiros Zodhiates pinpoints, obedience means “to hear, to obey, to listen, to be heard of, to be regarded, to cause to hear, to proclaim and to sound aloud.”¹¹⁵ Zodhiates’ definition coincides with author Trent Butler’s definition in the *Holman Dictionary*, which offers a more relevant definition for spiritual leadership today: “To hear God’s word and act accordingly.”¹¹⁶ August H. Konkler highlighted the “ears as a symbol for obedience is natural in Hebrew, which uses the word ‘hear’ to mean ‘obey.’”¹¹⁷ Zodhiates also defines “obey” as “to hear with attention or obedience, and to give undivided attention.”¹¹⁸ The commonality among all three definitions is “hear.” The lay leaders of CTCM heard the “call” to leadership but not the “call” to sacrifice. They did not hear or understand the fullness of the “call.”

The word “obedience” is used twelve times in the New Testament, and the word “obey” is used 114 times in both the Old and New Testament (Old Testament eighty-two; New Testament thirty-two). Obedience is the first step concerning both the call of God to salvation and leadership. Author Andrew Murray stresses that it is the “central nucleus or foundation of a Christian’s life.”¹¹⁹ Murray’s statement coincides with the previous information concerning obedience being one of the most deeply woven themes of the Bible. For example, Samuel’s

¹¹⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: NASB*, Edited by Warren Baker and Joel Kletzing. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 2052.

¹¹⁶ Trent C. Butler et al., *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991) 1035.

¹¹⁷ August H. Konkler, “The Sacrifice of Obedience.” *Didaskalia2*, no. 2 (1991): 6. November 9, 2020. <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0008338430&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹¹⁸ Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study*, 1670.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Murray. *The School of Obedience, Updated and Modern Edition*. (Abbotsford: Aneko Press, 2018), 11.

response to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,” concurs with Murray’s statement and the response of the lay leaders. In the scripture, the prophet Samuel used the word “hearken,” another reference for the word “obey in the Old Testament,”¹²⁰ according to author Edward G Dobson. The “sacrifice” referenced in the text pertains to the Old Testament sacrificial system. Saul tried to use the people and the Old Testament sacrificial system as an excuse for not obeying the instruction of the Lord. The Levitical priesthood and leaders were required to offer the sacrifice of animals on behalf of the people. However, legalism and ritualism were at play here. Saul's disobedience to the leader rendered the sacrifice unacceptable because his obedience was not to God but to the people. However, author Richard P. Nelson highlights for the leader how “obedience to God is more effective”¹²¹ than the legalistic rituals.

The CTCM lay leaders’ answer to the call of God to lead is based on obedience to God, which is better than any sacrifice. Yet when obedience became a personal sacrifice, and struggles ensued in the lives of the lay leaders, the lay leaders were faced with the realization that obedience to the call of God to leadership becomes itself a sacrifice. This is not a play on words here. Many potential leaders answer the call to serve, seeking to obey God’s will. It is both taught and believed that it is better to say “yes” to God than to, like Saul, forsake the will of God and sacrifice blessings. Author Mary Fairchild suggests that “obedience isn’t learned overnight but is a lifelong process to be pursued by incorporating it into our daily lives.”¹²² Obedience and submission are taught in most leadership classes. However, when obedience becomes a sacrifice,

¹²⁰ Edward G. Dobson et. al. *Bible Commentary: King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2005), 311.

¹²¹ Richard P. Nelson, “He Offered Himself.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 57, no. 3 (July 2003): 3. DOI: 10.1177/002096430005700303.

¹²² Mary Fairchild (2020) “Why Is Obedience to God Important?” *Learn Religions*. December 22, 2023. <https://www.learnreligions.com/obedience-to-god-701962>.

Christ's cross becomes hard, heavy, and personal for the leader to bear. It is here where the answer “yes” seems to be premature. Obedience serves as the primary key, but sacrificial leadership is the byproduct. Obedience goes beyond the word “yes” and lasts longer than the breath uttered. It is a deep commitment to serve at all costs. Obedience comes with a price, and according to Trent Butler, the cost of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead should be “analyzed.”¹²³ In Luke 14:28, Jesus references the word “cost” concerning discipleship. That “cost” is bearing a personal “cross.” Many admitted that they hit the ground running about the issues revealed by the lay leaders at CTCM, not clearly understanding what “yes” meant or the cost of that “yes.” The gap between the call and the manifestation, which is not covered in the textbooks, has derailed the CTCM lay leaders. To comprehend the critical roles of obedience and sacrifice in leadership, a tangible definition of each is necessary that goes beyond the surface of “yes” to an in-depth look at the heart of both.

Thus, “obedience” has been thoroughly defined. It is hearing, complying, and submitting to God or authority. The act of obedience is equally important. The problem being addressed is emphasizing “obedience” more than sacrifice.

The Act of Obedience

J. E. Johnson points out that the “obligation to obey God”¹²⁴ is innate because “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:18).” It is here where the propensity to obey God’s call and command is established. The Holy Spirit

¹²³ Trent C. Butler, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Luke* Edited by Max Anders (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 238.

¹²⁴ J. E. Johnson, “The Prophetic Office as Paradigm for Pastoral Ministry.” *Trinity Journal* 21, no. 1 (2000): 80.

prompts and prods the potential leader to do the will of the Lord despite opposition. It is also a deeply woven theme in people from childhood rearing of parents. The CTCM lay leaders understand that the zeal to obey the call of God to lead is embedded within them from the foundation of the world. However, obedience should not be done ritually, legalistically- (a reference to OT legalism because of the Law), or fanatically. This is possibly why it was necessary for CTCM lay leaders to walk in superficial obedience because of what was embedded during childhood and taught from scriptures such as 1 Samuel 15:22. The lay leaders did not have a problem with obedience; the problem, again, is the hidden cost of obedience, which is sacrifice. The lay leaders admitted that the problems started after the “Yes!” Hamilton alluded to the fact previously mentioned that “many lay people respond to a degree blindly to the call to serve without all the information, direction or being completely certain what they are signing up for.”¹²⁵ Obedience to God’s command pushes the spiritual leader outside their comfort zone and into a personal “Gethsemane” where the heaviness of the call is felt, and the urge to quit looms. The resilient leader, when the desire or “cup doesn’t pass, nevertheless” screams from the heart, “not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matthew 26:39).” Murray suggests that “wholehearted obedience is what satisfies God.”¹²⁶ The reason for Saul's rejection was that it was not a sacrifice from the heart but of compromise through disobedience. Psalm 51:17 reads, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Saul’s explanation and sacrifice were one of convenience and compromise. It was partial obedience, which was total disobedience to the will of God.

¹²⁵ Adam Hamilton, *The Call: The Life and Message of The Apostle Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 59.

¹²⁶ Andrew Murray, *the School of Obedience Updated and Modern Edition*. (Abbotsford: Aneko Press, 2018), 7.

A resilient leader understands Murray’s belief that “obedience is to be unto death.”¹²⁷ Here, the role of sacrifice is introduced at an even deeper level. At the follow-up meeting between senior leaders and CTCM lay leaders, the question was, “Where and when did this death take place in their lives?” Here, the CTCM lay leaders understood Maxwell’s point that the “heart of good leadership is sacrifice.”¹²⁸ Obedience calls for sacrifice.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is about giving up something precious or sacred to an individual. Zodhiates uses the word “slaughter”¹²⁹ which can be associated with both animals and the analogy in Isaiah 53:7 concerning Jesus as the “sacrificial lamb” before his murderers. Author Richard D. Nelson summarizes “sacrifice” in the Hebrew Bible with one word, “atonement, meaning the removal of obstacles.”¹³⁰ The “removal of obstacles” such as pride, distractions, entanglements, and especially, self was important to CTCM lay leaders in understanding the role of sacrifice in God’s calling to lead. A depiction of Nelson’s summary is given as the author of Hebrews shows the obedience of Jesus in Hebrews 10:5 and 10:7,

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me and ... Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

¹²⁷ Andrew Murray, *the School of Obedience Updated and Modern Edition*. (Abbotsford: Aneko Press, 2018), 10.

¹²⁸ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You. Revised and updated, 10th Anniversary Edition*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 222.

¹²⁹ Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: NASB*. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1850.

¹³⁰ Richard D Nelson, “He offered Himself.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 57, no. 3 (July 2003): 7. DOI: 10.1177/002096430005700303.

The scripture refers to Jesus' fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Author August Konkel provides relevance to the topic by connecting the role of sacrifice in obedience, highlighting that “The need for obedience under the old covenant was expressed through the continual offering of sacrifices for sins.”¹³¹ This point may be most beneficial to the lay leaders as they become the new bodies in preparation for daily sacrifices. Lay leaders may comprehend a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in leadership due to the revelation and realization that sacrifices will be made continuously. In retrospect, the problem of the lay leaders at CTCM can be summed up by Maxwell concerning the mindset of leaders who think that because of the finished work of the cross, “there are no more sacrifices to be made when the process is reciprocal.”¹³² Answering the call of God does not negate sacrifice. Some lay leaders felt that sacrifices had already been made through obedience to the call of God to leadership, attending seminary school, time away from family, study time, fasting and prayer time, and isolation time with God. However, in retrospect of the previous definition highlighted by Nelson, the word sacrifice also points to the “removing of obstacles that threaten the relationship between God and his people.” The role of sacrifice in leadership is removing any obstacle that may hinder the relationship between God and leadership; the biggest obstacle is the self! Self always seeks gratification and satisfaction, not the rejection that sometimes comes with leading others. Murray describes this as possibly “the great curse”¹³³ of leadership.

¹³¹ August H. Konkel, “The Sacrifice of Obedience.” *Didaskalia2*, no. 2 (1991): 5-6. November 9, 2020. <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0008338430&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹³² John C. Maxwell, *the 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You. Revised and updated, 10th Anniversary Edition*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 224.

¹³³ Andrew Murray, *Absolute Surrender: The Blessedness of Forsaking All and Following Christ* (Abbotsford: Aneo Press, 2017), 84.

Although an understanding of the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to leadership is essential, the road to resiliency begins in having a relationship with “God and people.” However, relationships are hindered by the curse of “self.” Jesus provides the requirements for discipleship and leadership in Luke 9:23, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” The personal cross to be carried daily is a reminder and symbol of sacrifices made daily in leadership. Self is the greatest sacrifice to be offered upon the throne of God, as highlighted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1: “Present him/herself as a living sacrifice,” which is the true service of obedience.

In the previous section, a working definition of the word “sacrifice” was given to the CTCM lay leaders. The next step for the lay leaders is to answer the question, “What does it mean to sacrifice?” Nelson describes it as a “transfer of something out of the realm of human use and disposal and into the domain of God.”¹³⁴ It is the surrendering of all to God for his usage. A commonality among the lay leaders was the desire to be used by God. However, the problem for some lay leaders was the mystery of how God would use them. Some lay leaders had a problem with working outside of their specific calling or gifting. Hamilton clarifies what is to be offered up and what is to be surrendered is “personal ambition,”¹³⁵ which could become a hindrance or distraction if not aligned with the call. An example of how the “self” or the flesh can become a problem is found in Matthew 20:21. It records the desire of James and John to “sit on each side of Jesus in heaven.” Jesus’s response in Matthew 20:22 brings a summation of the problem that the lay leaders at CTCM are experiencing. He asked them if they “understood what they were

¹³⁴ Richard D Nelson, “He Offered Himself.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 57, no. 3 (July 2003): 2. DOI: 10.1177/002096430005700303.

¹³⁵ Adam Hamilton, *The Call: The Life and Message of The Apostle Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 25.

requesting?” In obeying God’s call to lead, the CTCM lay leaders should be asked if they, too, fully understand the total gravity of the call and whether they have been adequately prepared.

Author John McArthur describes three “S’s: service, sacrifice, and selflessness.”¹³⁶ All three are essential in building resilient leaders. The role of sacrifice in leadership is about surrendering all to serve the Lord and His people. Obedience brings the lay leaders to the altar of sacrifice. The examination of Jesus, who chose and trained twelve ordinary men to do extraordinary things, provides an understanding of the depths of sacrifice. An important component to be considered is the connection developed, the sacrifices offered, and the relationship established through obedience to the summoning of Jesus in Luke 5. Jesus provides the ultimate example of obedient and sacrificial leadership. (For more elaboration, see *Theological Foundation*.) Henry and Richard Blackaby explained what they believed to be the pinnacle of Jesus’s ministry: his “absolute obedience to the Father’s will,”¹³⁷ which ended in the ultimate sacrifice. The lay leaders could not fathom the depths of what it meant to be like Jesus and to follow the pattern that Jesus established for leadership.

When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice

Obedience and sacrifice are two words that are integral, inseparable, and impactful to leadership. Hull highlights that the call of Christ is not only to obedience but also a “bid to come and die”¹³⁸ to both the self and the world. It is the example that Jesus gave to both leadership and membership. In reaching the true essence of obedience, fully understanding what sacrificial

¹³⁶ John McArthur, *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), v.

¹³⁷ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda Revised & Expanded* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011) 47.

¹³⁸ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 152.

leadership encompasses, and developing resiliency, the lay leaders of CTCM must concur with Hull in concluding that the call also pertains to “emptying of self to serve and live for others.”¹³⁹ The key words to remember concerning leadership are humility, emptying, and self-denial. Humility, emptying, and self-denial are lay leaders' spiritual detoxing formula. This is a breaking point for them. Some lay leaders came from other ministries, attended seminary, or received other credentials and believed that they were prepared to answer God's call to lead. However, the “emptying of self” fills the gap between the call and the manifestation. At this point, lay leaders must realize that all the tenets of leadership are not necessarily taught but caught through revelation during personal encounters with God.

Again, reiterating the purpose of the topic concerns helping the CTCM lay leaders understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead by thoroughly understanding all that compliance entails. Regarding leadership, obedience, and sacrifice, collaborate to build and equip resilient leaders. Obedience is a willingness to serve sacrificially at all costs. Leaders in both the Old and New Testaments displayed the role of sacrifice in their obedience to the “call” of God to various assignments that involved testing and experiencing great trials. The “wait,” which describes the time between the initial call and the actual fulfillment of the call, serves as real-time preparation and growth. However, author Andrew Murray describes the pivotal point in obeying God's call to lead is “self-sacrifice.”¹⁴⁰ In addition to Murray's description, Hull's reminder about Christ's obedience and his “self-sacrifice” should serve as motivation¹⁴¹ to the lay leaders. Both lay leaders and members desire to be “like” Jesus in obedience to the Father,

¹³⁹ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 120.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew Murray, *Like Christ* (Columbia: Blessed News Publishing, 2019), 77.

¹⁴¹ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 152.

but the struggle comes at the altar of sacrifice. A sobering reality highlighted by Blackaby and Blackaby is that “a great number of spiritual leaders never reach this depth of submission”¹⁴² needed to lead sacrificially as Jesus and others did. Instead, Blackaby and Blackaby suggest that “many may commit, but few surrenders all.”¹⁴³ The answer can be found in Luke 18:22-24’s story about the rich young ruler who wanted to “gain eternal life” but did not want to “give up the great riches he possessed.” The CTCM lay leaders may be experiencing the same thoughts. The struggle to sacrifice or “let go” of people, places, things, or the self presents a significant hindrance. This struggle that entangles some leaders could stem from being created and possessing “free will.” Free will could lead to partial obedience, which cannot lead to sacrifice; however, once the call is answered, there is no option to pick and choose what part of leadership to obey or like. Blackaby and Blackaby’s previous statement concerning the inability of some spiritual leaders to reach “total submission” is detrimental to sacrificial leadership. John MacArthur further elaborates on Blackaby and Blackaby’s point by highlighting the knowledge that a committed leader should possess, which involves understanding the requirements of spiritual leadership, which calls for “discipline, self-sacrifice, great patience, and a host of hardships.”¹⁴⁴ The previous statements support the argument presented here on understanding the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to leadership.

After observing spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement among the lay leaders of CTCM, the problem may be a lack of understanding of the role of sacrifice in leadership.

Obedience is a precursor to sacrifice, and obeying God's will and calling in leadership entails

¹⁴² Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda Revised & Expanded* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 162.

¹⁴³ Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On*, 162.

¹⁴⁴ John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 240.

sacrifice. The two terms are intertwined and inseparable but have distinct purposes in the life of a leader. Obedience is humility, and sacrifice is “atonement” to God. “Atonement” references the offering of the leader's life for service to God. Again, Luke 14:28 concerns “counting up the cost” of discipleship. The same can be applied to leadership. This is not to be a deterrent to answering the call of God. However, “counting up the cost” simply means understanding obedience and the sacrifice involved in leadership for training and preparation to be effective. The need for more resilient leaders is crucial. Murray highlights “the increasingly stringent demands of ministry on leadership and how the family experiences the aftermath of the fallout”¹⁴⁵ to explain why individuals should fully understand the price to be paid.

The role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead could be summed up with one word: “development.” During this time, gifts played their most significant part in the lives of lay leaders. It is here where CTCM lay leaders may feel stagnant. However, the spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement observed among the lay leaders could be used as ministry strengtheners. How? Joseph summarized all that happened to him concerning his brothers, Potiphar’s wife, and his imprisonment with these words in Genesis 50:20, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day. To save many people alive.” Joseph knew his divine destiny and understood that everything that happened was the preparation process for his destiny. The problem identified in the ministry at the center of this research study may also be the same problem at other area ministries. The same observation was noted during a monthly leadership luncheon from other local assemblies (spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement). A few mentioned how some leaders known personally have given up ministry and joined in with other churches because of the stress of

¹⁴⁵ Derek J. Prime and J Alistair Begg, *Understanding Our Calling and Work: On Being a Pastor* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 19.

leadership. Some marriages and families have been negatively affected because of the possible lack of understanding of the role of sacrifice in leadership.

Theological Foundation

The pinnacle of this research study is the “role of sacrifice” in obeying God’s call to lead. However, this research aims to explain the role of sacrifice in leadership to the lay members of CTCM. It is believed that if lay leaders are taught the importance of sacrifice in leadership, the church can train, prepare, and build resilient and effective leaders. In layman’s terms, “sacrifice” means to “offer or give up” something of value to an individual. According to Dockery, a more relevant meaning of sacrifice focuses on an “individual’s commitment to God.”¹⁴⁶ This latter definition serves as the foundation of this study about the role of sacrifice in leadership. Some authors and theologians handle “obedience and sacrifice” as separate entities. Thus, the scope of the research was extended to scholarly articles, books, magazines, and commentaries, with the primary focus being on the relationship of trust between God and man. At the same time, the word sacrifice dealt primarily with the animal sacrifices offered for atonement by the priest. However, in the scriptures, evidence of the relationship between obedience and sacrifice is proven to be intertwined and inseparable. For example, the calling of Moses, who suffered from a speech impediment, stubbornness, and fear, was not disqualified from being used to bring deliverance to God’s people. Joshua was instructed to “be strong, be courageous, observe to do according to all the law, not to turn away from the book of the law; but meditate on it for success.” (Joshua 1:7-8)

¹⁴⁶ Karen Dockery, et. al, *the Student Bible Dictionary* (Uhrichsville: Barbour Books, 2000), 207.

The Bible is relevant to the research topic because it teaches both obedience and the sacrifice that goes with it. Murray suggests, "In God's school of obedience, the Bible is the only textbook."¹⁴⁷ The Bible provides a foundation where resilient leaders can be developed.

The "Resilient" Leader: Jeremiah 12:5

Again, Joshua was promised "success and the presence of God with him wherever he went" (Joshua 1:7-9). Jesus, during the hour of temptation from Satan, said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Through the study of the word of God, the lay leaders of CTCM will develop an understanding of the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God, and the desired result of the development of resilient leaders can be accomplished. However, as previously stated, resiliency is not limited to just possessing the ability to, as the prefix "re" suggests, go back to the way that something was before¹⁴⁸ or the ability to stick and stay. It is not about "1- surviving personal adversity or 2- bouncing back from failure or setback and persevering on"¹⁴⁹ through the two categories highlighted by Bolsinger in his discussion about resiliency.

There are three main points for CTCM lay leaders to grasp, along with understanding the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to leadership. First, Hull's point concerning that the "call to preach is permanent."¹⁵⁰ Ministry is not like a secular job, but it is often compared to

¹⁴⁷ Andrew Murray, *The School of Obedience*. (Middletown: The New Christian Classics Library, 2018), 33.

¹⁴⁸ www.etymonline.com.

¹⁴⁹ Tod Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 35.

¹⁵⁰ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 184.

and mirrored after secular jobs because of the work involved. However, unlike a secular job, the qualifications and the benefits can neither be reached nor justified. Unlike the company's CEO or an employee, there is no resignation, new job search, or further application to complete and submit; it is a gift given, a burden experienced, and a call answered. Jeremiah 20:5 explains it best: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones!" Interpreted, the prophet tried to abandon the call but could not. In ministry, there is a cross where self-sacrifice is performed. Author J. Oswald Sanders concurs with the words of Jesus in Luke 9:23 concerning "self-denial and taking up the cross daily." Sanders highlights the fact that the "cost must be paid daily."¹⁵¹ According to Sanders, "scars authenticate faithful discipleship and true spiritual leadership."¹⁵² A scar indicates a wound that has healed or is in the process of healing. Scars are reminders of a trauma suffered and are often hidden or covered. The lay leaders of CTCM must understand that wounds will be incurred, and the scars are not to be hidden or hated. John 20:25 records the words of "Doubting" Thomas after hearing about the appearance of Jesus from the other disciples. Thomas responded, "Except he shall see in Jesus's hands the print of the nails and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, he would not believe." As highlighted by Sanders, the scars are "authenticating marks" incurred by a trustworthy and experienced resilient leader who has been in the war and understands and knows how to execute the battle plan.

¹⁵¹ J. Oswald Sanders *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 140.

¹⁵² Sanders, "*Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence*," 141.

An additional note concerning the importance of the lay leaders' comprehension of the role of sacrifice in obedience to God can be found in Jeremiah 12:5. The scripture begs the question, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?" The weariness experienced by the prophet prompted his complaints concerning the prospering wickedness of the evil doers, the delayed destruction of the evil doers, and the suffering of the righteous. However, the scripture was the response of the Lord to the prophet that if he could not handle what he witnessed, then what was he going to do with the intense opposition coming because of "a plot developed against him in his hometown and being betrayed by his family" as outlined in the text. In understanding the interpretation of the scripture, being resilient is having the ability to continue despite fierce opposition.

The CTCM lay leaders and other ministries observed complained about the pressures of ministry, the struggles to balance church leadership with their family and life, and the ministry assignments versus personal expectations. The importance of this topic is reiterated here because of the rising statistics of suicide, depression, and church vacancy leadership in the churches. The senior leadership of CTCM and other ministries observed spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement among the lay leaders. Obedience to the call of God to leadership consists of a life of sacrifices that come in different forms. However, as stressed by author Albert Mohler, the resilient leader can "reset the equation by going back to the convictions and leaning into their passion"¹⁵³ for ministry that prompted the initial "yes" during times of uncertainty.

¹⁵³ Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 56.

1 Samuel 15:22b “Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice.”

The spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement observed among the lay leaders may result from a lack of understanding of the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to leadership. As previously mentioned, the “yes” answer the lay leaders gave was based upon a truncated scriptural reference to 1 Samuel 15:22b: “obedience is better than sacrifice.” A thorough examination of 1 Samuel 15:22-1 Samuel 23a in its totality is provided within the passage,

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23) For rebellion is the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Author Edward G Dobson highlights the word “hearken” as being the “same as obedience”¹⁵⁴ according to the Old Testament books. So, the lay leaders' reasoning concerning obedience to God's call to leadership aligned with Dobson’s analysis of the word hearken. The prophet Samuel pointed out to King Saul that the Lord would have delighted more in his obedience to his will, obeying his voice, and understanding his full instructions than in the tainted sacrifice. Author Max Anders, in his commentary, concurs with the previous statement and supports obedience as sacrifice by highlighting the thought that “sacrifice is acceptable in conjunction with an attitude of obedience, devotion to God and his commandments.”¹⁵⁵ Saul’s obedience was to the people but not to God, as pointed out in 1 Samuel 15:21, “But the people took...” His disobedience brought about a different sacrifice as it “repenteth the Lord that Saul was made King” (1 Samuel 15:11). Rejection of the Lord’s word led to the rejection of Saul as

¹⁵⁴ Edward G. Dobson, et al., *Bible Commentary: King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 311.

¹⁵⁵ Max Anders, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel* Edited by Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D. Bergen (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 105.

King (1 Samuel 15:23). The CTCM lay leaders interpreted sacrifice in this passage as it pertains to punishment for disobedience and loss of position. However, the point is that obedience does not negate the sacrifice that goes with it. The words “obedience and sacrifice” are two separate entities; however, sacrifice is predicated upon obedience. A more profound comprehension of the role of sacrifice in obedience may teach the lay leaders of CTCM to avoid the temptation of compromise and may understand sacrifice is the opposite of it. Obedience and sacrifice are intertwined in the leader's life and were exhibited in the leadership acts of Joseph, David, Jesus, his disciples, and the Apostle Paul.

Genesis 37-50: Joseph, “Leadership 101”

Joseph’s story reveals the frustration of the lay leaders of CTCM. Some of the lay leaders expressed concern about their ministries. They felt stagnant and believed they should have been further along than their current position. In between the call and manifestation is the test of endurance. After two visions depicting Joseph’s divine destiny, he experiences the greatest trial of his faith and obedience. His brothers plotted his demise, and he was falsely accused, imprisoned, and finally, promoted. During what can be called the “wait” is the preparation process. However, the weight of the wait causes some lay leaders to buckle in their faith. It is here where the words of Romans 8:28, “...all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are called according to his purpose,” come into view. Everything that transpired in Joseph’s life prepared him for his divine destiny. Authors Kenneth O. Gangel and Stephen J. Bramer highlighted that Joseph was the “fulfillment of a covenant promise given to Abraham” in Genesis 15:13.”¹⁵⁶ Joseph, a shadow of Jesus, has a story almost parallel to Jesus’s

¹⁵⁶ Kenneth O. Gangel and Stephen J. Bramer, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Genesis*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 306.

story. The CTCM lay leaders can identify with Joseph's report concerning the vision, the wait, and the manifestation.

David's Sacrifice

David's anointing to be king over God's people follows a similar course of action concerning obedience, sacrifice, the call, and the wait. The word "sacrifice" appears in David's story as the prophet God instructed Samuel to go to Jesse's house to anoint the next king. He went under the instructions of the Lord to tell Jesse that he had come to "sacrifice to the Lord" (1 Samuel 16:2)." The real sacrifice was not the "heifer" that was brought with him, but it was David, whose life would be offered unto the Lord. 1 Samuel 16:13 records the anointing of David to be king in Saul's place. However, David did not head to the palace immediately; instead, he returned to the backside of the mountain with the sheep. He was described as "cunning in playing, a mighty valiant man, a man of war, prudent in matters, a comely person, and the Lord was with him" (1 Samuel 16:18)." However, it would be 15 years later before he would be anointed again as king over Judah and later, Israel. At one point, David lived with King Saul and Joseph in Potiphar's house. During their downtime, these potential leaders had hands-on experience in training and preparation to meet their destiny. Obedience and submission are taught in most leadership classes. However, the gap between the call and the manifestation not covered in the textbook has derailed the lay leaders.

Jesus: the "Sacrificial Lamb"

Jesus is the epitome of sacrificial leadership. Hebrews 10:5 and 10:7 depict his obedience to God:

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not but a body hast thou prepared me...” and Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

The Old Testament scriptures contained prophecies about the coming “Messiah,” and the New Testament scriptures fulfilled those prophecies. Jesus knew his identity and understood his assignment at the tender age of 12, as the scripture stated that he was “about the Father’s business” (Luke 2:42; 49). However, he understood submission to authority through being “subject unto his parents” (Luke 2:51). His earthly ministry did not begin until the age of 30 after his baptism by John the Baptist, his anointing as the “heavens opened unto him, the Spirit of God descended like a dove, lighting upon him, and his affirmation as a voice from heaven proclaiming him to be the beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17).

There are two crucial factors concerning Jesus during what was previously discussed as the “wait” (his time between the ages 12 and 30) to fulfill his divine destiny that are essential points for the lay leaders of CTCM. First, Jesus studied his craft. When Jesus was missing for three days, he was found in the “temple amid the doctors hearing them and asking questions” (Luke 2:46). Secondly, while under his parents’ rule, he “grew in wisdom, stature, and favor” (Luke 2:52). Again, Jesus fully understood the assignment that he was born to die. The CTCM lay leaders must understand Bill Hull’s words concerning the calling being a “bid to come and die.”¹⁵⁷ The four gospels depict his earthly life, deity, ministry, and fate at the hands of the religious leaders. However, it is Isaiah 53 that describes the actual “sacrificial” life of Jesus. In retrospect, of the issues that the lay leaders of CTCM spoke of, many commonalities are shared between Jesus and the lay leaders. Words such as “despised, rejected, afflicted, wounded,

¹⁵⁷ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 152.

oppressed, bruised, and grief” all describe the sacrificial life of both Jesus and a leader. Isaiah 53:7 reveals the “resiliency” of Jesus as it records his response to it all: “...yet he opened not his mouth, he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter/a sheep before her shearers are dumb, he openeth not his mouth.” Jesus knew it was a part of his obedience to the Father and to be the sacrificial lamb. The words of Romans 8:28 come into view here, which states that “all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose.” Everything that happened between his obedience to leave his heavenly abode and live a sacrificial life on earth was necessary. The role of sacrifice in obedience to the Lord is clear now because obedience does not come without sacrifice. Some lay leaders were uncertain of their spiritual identity in Christ and doubted their assignments. Murray highlighted Christ’s “selfless”¹⁵⁸ obedience to his Father. This was the aim of the lay leaders concerning “Obedience being better than sacrifice”; however, there is no faithful obedience without sacrifice.

Jesus and the Disciples

Becoming a great leader starts with discipleship. The requirements of discipleship are outlined in Luke 9:23 in one word: “self-denial.” Jesus told Peter to “launch out into the deep and that he was going to make them fisher of men” (Luke 5:4&10). The disciples did exactly what was spoken. The word “forsook” is used in Luke 5:11 in the calling of Peter, James, John, and Levi. As highlighted by Dockery, forsake means to “leave, abandon (someone or something), or to let go (something valued or pleasant).”¹⁵⁹ According to Murray, “Forsaking

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Murray, *Like Christ* (Columbia: Blessed News Publishing, 2019), 69.

¹⁵⁹ Karen Dockrey, et al., *The Student Bible Dictionary* (Uhrichville: Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2000), 95.

all”¹⁶⁰ is the epitome of sacrifice, taking the potential leader beyond the physical realm into the spiritual. Twelve men were chosen and trained to carry out the “Great Commission,” the work that Jesus had begun on the earth. They were being moved from familiar territory into uncharted waters. The lay leaders of CTCM must understand that the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to leadership may take them into similarly uncharted territories. In Matthew 10:24, Jesus spoke the most impactful words to his disciples compared to other parables, teachings, and training, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.” The scripture prepares the disciples for sacrificial obedience. Jesus prepared the disciples for his departure and what they would face. The words of Luke 14:28, “count up the cost,” are reiterated as the lay leaders of CTCM must take inventory of sacrificial leadership. Even after the disciples had “forsaken all,” they questioned their decision because of the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:23-30. Murray concurred with Luke 14:28 concerning the “ministry demands”¹⁶¹ that push and pull leaders.

During discussions, the CTCM lay leaders spoke about balancing the call of ministry, the call of family, and the call of self. Some of the leaders were experiencing burnout and taking sabbaticals. The findings of a study by author Samuel R. Chand concur with the words of the lay leaders. The chart below outlines the following results:

- “90% of pastors work between 55 to 75 hours per week.
- 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families.
- Many pastors’ children do not attend church now because of what the church has done to their parents.
- 33% believe the ministry is a hazard to their families.

¹⁶⁰ Andrew Murray, *Absolute Surrender: The Blessedness of Forsaking All and Following Christ* (Abbotsford: Aneko Press, 2017), 5.

¹⁶¹ Derek J. Prime and J Alistair Begg, *Understanding Our Calling and Work: On Being A Pastor* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 19.

- 75% report they have experienced a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
- 90% feel inadequately trained to cope with the ministry's demands.
- 50% feel unable to meet the demands of the job.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.
- 70% say they have a lower self-image than when they started.
- 33% confess having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.
- 50% have considered leaving the ministry in the last months.
- 94% of their families feel the pressures of the pastor's ministry.
- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, burnout, or contention in their churches.
- 50% of pastors' marriages end in divorce.
- 80% of those who enter the ministry will leave within five years.
- 70% of pastors chronically struggle with depression."¹⁶²

A "second study of 1,050 pastors by Dr. Richard J. Krejcir of the Francis A. Schaffer

Institute of Church Leadership Development"¹⁶³ records the following statistics:

- "100% had a close associate or seminary friend who had left the ministry because of burnout, conflict in their church, or a moral failure.
- 90% stated they are frequently tired and worn out weekly and daily.
- 71% stated they were burned out and battled depression beyond fatigue on a weekly and even daily basis.
- 89% considered leaving the ministry at one time, and 57% said they would leave if they would leave if they had a better place to go-including secular work.
- 77% felt they did not have a good marriage.
- 75% felt they were unqualified and poorly trained by their seminaries to lead and manage the church or to counsel others. This left them disheartened in their ability to pastor.
- 38% were divorced or currently in the divorce process.
- 30% had either been in an ongoing affair or a one-time sexual encounter with a parishioner.
- 23% said they felt happy and content with who they are in Christ, their church, and their home."¹⁶⁴

Krejcir and Schaffer understand the growing pains of the CTCM lay leaders and other ministries in crisis because of the turnover rate in leadership, which may be caused by a lack of

¹⁶² Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 68.

¹⁶³ Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for*, " 69.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

understanding about the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. However, it is believed that the lay leaders will see through the examples of Old and New Testament leaders that sacrifice is a “tireless” effort of obedience. Another note by Hull stresses an essential fact in building resilient leaders: the call is permanent.”¹⁶⁵ The “call” does not diminish because of sacrifices, disappointments, or growing pains.

The Apostle Paul: A “Chosen” Vessel

The gap between the call and the manifestation is where the CTCM lay leaders struggled with obeying God’s call to lead and its required sacrifices. Doubt and fear crept into the minds of some of these lay leaders. Examining the conversion, the call, and the ministry of Paul reveals to the lay leaders that the gap between the call and the manifestation is a time of preparation. Acts 8:1 & 3 introduce Saul, who persecuted both the church and Christians but later experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road. Act 9 records the conversion story of Saul to the Apostle Paul. Ironically, author Adam Hamilton points out that Paul’s original name, Saul, was “after the first king Saul of Israel, who was also of the tribe of Benjamin.”¹⁶⁶ When Ananias questioned the choosing of Paul, the Lord stated three reasons: Paul was a 1- chosen vessel, 2- Paul would bear his name before the Gentiles, kings, the children of Israel, and 3- Paul would suffer great things on his behalf (Acts 9:15 & 16). After his Damascus Road encounter with the Lord, Paul did not immediately join the other apostles. Galatians 1:17-18 states that Paul was away for “three years.” Hamilton describes the three years as “spent alone in prayer,

¹⁶⁵ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 184.

¹⁶⁶ Adam Hamilton, *The Call: The Life and Message of the Apostle Paul*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015) 18.

studying the Scriptures, seeking to work out the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for humanity, with implications for both Jews and Gentiles."¹⁶⁷ The Apostle Paul was one of the most prolific carriers of the gospel with demonstration (miracles, signs, and wonders) accompanying proclamation. Paul also suffered great persecution (stoned, left for dead, shipwrecked, bitten by a viper) but continued to live a life of excellent obedience to the Lord. The word of the Lord concerning Saul came into fruition in Acts 13:1-4. In verse 2, "the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Paul completed three missionary journeys, but most importantly, he lived a sacrificial life. Philippians 1:18 "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" is a summation of Paul's defining moment. The CTCM lay leaders interpreted this scripture as the attitude that Paul possessed and the attitude that they should mimic.

Maxwell highlights that the "heart of good leadership is sacrifice."¹⁶⁸ In Philippians 3:7-8, Paul's attitude concerning ministry is summed in the following words:

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

By understanding the example of these biblical leaders, the CTCM lay leaders will understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead: losses will occur: a loss for worldly desires, materialistic gains, and selfish desires. Romans 12:1-2 means that leaders are to "Present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service..."

¹⁶⁷ Hamilton, *The Call: The Life and Message*, 35.

¹⁶⁸ John C. Maxwell, *the 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You. Revised and updated, 10th Anniversary Edition*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 222.

be not conformed but transformed by the renewing of the mind.” A breakdown of the scripture contrasts the “Old Testament sacrifice, which was dead, with the New Testament sacrifice, which is living. The Old Testament sacrificial system required animals to be killed and placed on the altar. However, the New Testament sacrificial system places the self on the altar. Author Edward G. Dobson suggests that the word “present” in Romans 12:1 is a later translation of the word “yield” used in Romans 6:13 and verse 6:19 referencing service to God. The scripture was strategically presented last in this study because it encompasses the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead; it may be viewed differently. The examples depict the sacrificial lives of each leader who obeyed the call of God. When Paul faced adversity, he stated that “it was for the furtherance of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:12). The CTCM lay leaders must learn that adversity is not for destruction but for construction.

Paul’s encounters and experiences gave him the wisdom to prepare a young pastor named Timothy, “his son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2), for what to expect concerning leadership. Scriptures such as the following are imperative in understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead, building endurance, and developing resilient leaders:

- 1 Tim 6:12: “Fight the good fight of faith.”
- 2 Tim 1:5 “unfeigned faith”
- 2 Tim 1:6: “Stir up the gift of God.”
- 2 Tim 2:3-4, “endure hardness...avoid entanglements.”
- 2 Tim 2:15: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God...rightly divide the word of truth.”
- 2 Tim 3:1: “Perilous time shall come.”
- 2 Tim 3:12: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

- 2 Tim 3:14: “But continue in the things learned and assured of...no compromise.”
- 2 Tim 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”
- 2 Tim 4:2: “Preach the word at all times.”

Theoretical Foundations

At the beginning of this research study, there was not much literature on “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice.” A professor suggested dropping the word “obedience” and dealing initially with the role of sacrifice in leadership. However, it was discovered during research that the words “obedience and sacrifice” are both an integral and inseparable part of leadership.

Three primary relevant articles discuss obedience and sacrifice together. The first article by Patrick Oden, “Obedience Is Better than Sacrifice: Atonement as the Re-Establishment of Trust,” equated obedience to an act of re-establishing trust with the Father. Sin, a clear act of disobedience and violation of trust, breaches the intimate relationship with God the Father. Oden believes that the atoning work of Christ re-establishes an avenue of faith for humanity. The author highlights that the “act of obedience becomes both the avenue of trust for humanity and God, who trust those who trust the son.”¹⁶⁹ Oden compares the obedience of Abraham with the disobedience of Saul. Abraham’s obedience and willingness to offer the promised seed as a sacrifice unto God displayed his relationship and trust in the Father. Oden highlights Saul’s disobedience as a “violation of the trust God put in him to be king.”¹⁷⁰ However, the author describes David’s “obedience to God’s calling to be absolute trust despite his character flaws that

¹⁶⁹ Patrick Oden, “Obedience is Better than Sacrifice”: Atonement as the Re-Establishment of Trust,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 50 no. 1 (2015): 102, November 20, 2020,

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

were comparably far worse than Saul's disobedience."¹⁷¹ A relationship leads to obedience to the will of God because of trust. The takeaway for CTCM lay leaders is that obeying God's call to lead is about faith in him, based on the level of relationship the leader has with him. God will not call what cannot be trusted.

August Konkel wrote an article, "The Sacrifice of Obedience," highlighting the obedience of Jesus in seeking to do the "will" of the Father. However, Konkel equates sacrifice with the "giving up of rights (selfish demands) for a right relationship with God and people."¹⁷² Relationship with God is highlighted again as the foundation upon which obedience and sacrifice are built. Hebrews 10:5-10 and Psalm 40:6-8 serve as the basis of the discussion, precisely the words "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." In doing the "will" of the Father, Konkel stressed the importance of knowing both the necessity and cost of the sacrifice of obedience to God. Here, the author concurs with the purpose of the research study. If the CTCM lay leaders had a deeper understanding of the cost of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead, they would be better trained, prepared, and effective, resilient leaders. A recurring theme in both articles is the word "relationship." Again, God requires obedience and sacrifice, and the lay leaders exhibited understanding in their willingness to obey God in answering and accepting their call. However, the role of sacrifice from Konkel's viewpoint may be a place of weakness for them. The relationship that Konkel describes supersedes faith and trust and is transformed into "knowing" God. Daniel 11:32b explains Konkel's words best, "But the people that do know their God shall be strong and do

¹⁷¹ Patrick Oden, "Obedience is Better than Sacrifice," 105.

¹⁷² August Konkel, "The Sacrifice of Obedience," *Didaskalia* 2, no. 2 (1991): 2-3. November 19, 2020, <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA00008338430&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

exploits.” Knowing means “knowledge or awareness that is secret or known to only a few people.”¹⁷³ So, the lay leaders who “know” God understand that God has power over the ministry's work. For example, Jesus said in John 9:4 that he “must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day.” Jesus assigned the miracles done because of the Father. Paul explains (knowing) with this scripture in 2 Corinthians 4:7: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

Author Kenneth Boa used one word in his description of sacrifice and obedience: “risk.” Boa’s article concurs with Konkel and other definitions concerning the word sacrifice because it involves the “giving up of something.” The author describes it as a “faith-building exercise to trust God.”¹⁷⁴ A different perspective was presented concerning “obedience” in “risk-taking based on Hebrews 11:1 and a test revealing the quality of trust and dependence on God’s character and promises.”¹⁷⁵ As stated concerning the perception of the lay leaders in the interpretation of 1 Samuel 15:23, Boa concurs with their belief that disobedience leads to “self-destruction,” reflecting what happened to Saul. The foundational word for sacrifice and obedience points again toward trust and relationship with God.

Authors Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman highlight another interesting view of obedience, describing it as the way to “grow to be like Jesus.”¹⁷⁶ However, the authors stressed the contention associated with obedience, which is disobedience. Putman, Harrington, and Coleman describe this contention as getting into the “nitty-gritty details of

¹⁷³ www.oxforddictionaries.com

¹⁷⁴ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 86.

¹⁷⁵ Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical*, 33.

¹⁷⁶ Jim Putman et al., *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 159.

struggles and difficulties in following a particular teaching or obedience in a particular area of life.”¹⁷⁷ The authors briefly discussed obedience as it pertained to the discussion on how leaders can make disciples who will go out and make disciples. Sacrifice was not mentioned. However, this view relates to the topic because God's “calling” of an individual to ministry involves continuous development. Leaders are developed through the trials, sufferings, and sacrifices that mold and shape them during the process of becoming resilient leaders.

Richard D. Nelson, in his article “He Offered Himself,” highlights the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The word sacrifice is often associated with “atonement,” specifically, the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Jesus willingly offered himself, specifically his body, as a sacrifice. The Old Testament sacrificial system is brought into view here concerning the history of its institution requiring animal sacrifices offered by the priest in obedience to the law. Thus, obedience is the ultimate calling, and sacrifice is the corresponding response to God.

The CTCM lay leaders see an example of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead in Abraham. He obeyed God's instruction to sacrifice the promised seed and believed God to provide the sacrifice. According to Oden, Genesis 22:1-19 demonstrates the “demand of God for obedience.”¹⁷⁸ Oden’s article summarizes the concept of CTCM lay leaders' offering of themselves (Romans 12:1-2, “their bodies as living sacrifices”) on behalf of the people they lead.

Additional research on obedience and sacrifice supports obedience being more important than sacrifice. Sacrifice can be ritualistic and void of authenticity. Author Ben Sternke presents two interesting views of sacrifice in his discussion of 1 Samuel 15:22, suggesting that it can lead

¹⁷⁷ Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *Discipleship: Five Steps that Help*, 159.

¹⁷⁸ Patrick Oden, (2015), “Obedience Is Better than Sacrifice”: Atonement as the Re-Establishment of Trust.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 50 (1): 103.

to “independence from God and God’s indebtedness to his people.”¹⁷⁹ Saul did act independently of God’s command. However, God was not indebted to Saul. Disobedience breeds rebellion, rebellion breeds sin, and sin breeds separation. An article by Nakawala Amponsah acknowledges the importance of obedience as being “more respected and the key thing.”¹⁸⁰ However, a commonly found keyword used during research was “submission.” Obedience is considered submission to God because of the relationship and trust in Him. As stated at the beginning of this study, there is much information concerning “obedience/obeying the Lord.” However, the role of sacrifice in obedience is not thoroughly explained. It is the missing piece or well-kept secret concerning leadership.

Most of the research materials concerning “obedience and sacrifice” center on doing the will of the Lord. Obedience is associated with relationship, reconciling, and restoring a lost connection between God and humanity caused by sin in the Garden. Obedience is a running theme throughout the Old Testament, and most of the contemporary literature presented dealt primarily with this theme, but neither extends to include the role of sacrifice. Obedience is stressed concerning both hearing with the “ear,” the voice of God (as previously mentioned) and submitting to the will of God. However, many leadership books manufacture the same material that only says sacrifice is time spent in prayer, study, and pastoral care. However, suppose a connection can be made by spotlighting the role of sacrifice more extensively in obedience and its cost as an integral part of leadership. In that case, it will give CTCM lay leaders a better glimpse and expectation of the realities of ministry leadership. It is understood that a portion of the knowledge and wisdom to be gained will come from personal encounters and hands-on

¹⁷⁹ Ben Sternke, “Why Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice.” January 1, 2023, <https://bensternke.com/why-obedience-is-better-than-sacrifice>.

¹⁸⁰ Nakawala Amponsah, “Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice.” *Heavenly Treasures Ministries*. February 14, 2023.

experiences. However, the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead and its associated cost must be understood to reach the desired outcome, effectively training and preparing resilient leaders.

The need for resilient leaders in the church is essential. Examining the lives and ministry of the Pillars of Faith establishes a foundation of resilient leaders who persevered despite danger and death. However, they remained committed to the cause of Christ. This research topic explores how to build resilient leaders by helping CTCM lay leaders understand the "call," the cost, and the role of sacrifice in obedience to God. The connection between "obedience and sacrifice" must be established and comprehended by lay leaders to produce resilient leaders.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The proposed problem addressed in this research study is that the lay leaders of CTCM need to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. CTCM senior leaders observed spiritual apathy, anxiety, and discouragement, causing the lay leaders to struggle in their call to teach and their assigned leadership roles. After a discussion at a monthly pastoral luncheon attended by the senior leaders of CTCM, it was revealed that the same problem was observed by other leaders from surrounding ministries. It is believed that if lay leaders are taught the importance of the role of sacrifice in obedience to the "call" of God to lead, then training and equipping leaders will be more effective, especially in developing resilient leaders. Therefore, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. The desire is to restore and retain the current CTCM lay leaders, devise a practical plan for developing resilient leaders, and provide a training manual for other ministries.

The intervention plan chosen to address the proposed problem is action research through a two-phased approach of biblical research of Old and New Testament leaders and personal interviews. This intervention plan was selected because it is the best way for positive interaction and exchange. The first phase of the process involves discussing the sacrifice and obedience of both Old and New Testament leaders who were unwittingly chosen by God but answered the call by blind faith. Here, the role of sacrifice in obedience can be seen as both an integral and continuous part of a maturing leader, instead of punishment only for disobedience as it pertains to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22-23. However, the second phase of personal interviews with seasoned leaders from five distinct groups will fill in the blanks concerning the objective reality of the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to lead through proper representation. Interviewees will answer a questionnaire with five questions about the topic during the personal interviews. Interviewees will then be allowed to expound upon responses from the questionnaire further. It is believed that the testimonies of experienced leaders will be the best strategy to accomplish the proposed purpose of this study.

Approval

Approval is obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the research topic the researcher chose. After receiving permission, recruitment letters are distributed to interviewees, and consent forms are signed, dated, box-checked, and collected from interviewees as stipulated by the guidelines, which were contingent upon IRB approval. An initial meeting with senior leaders is scheduled for interviews with in-house leaders, and the timeline for the survey is added to the church calendar. Implementing the results in a training class determines the research study's success. As mentioned, most churches continuously conduct training classes throughout

the year. However, this research study is implemented as a replacement for one of the established training classes. An additional night of training is necessary or optional, contingent upon the progress and success of the first night of class. Approval for the interviews with in-house leaders chosen for the research study is obtained according to the discretion of senior leadership. A copy of the questionnaire is provided. Senior leadership knows personal issues that may interfere with an interviewee's objectivity in participating in the study. Additional approval is obtained for a designated space to hold the interviews.

Phase I: Biblical Old and New Testament Leaders

Phase one focuses on the study of both Old and New Testament individuals chosen by God, obeyed, and suffered great sacrifices during their call to lead. The Bible is the ruling authority on both Christian living and leading. It depicts the leadership callings and experiences of various leaders called to serve. For example, the Old Testament records the calling of Abram/Abraham from "his father's house, his kinfolk, and his native country" (Genesis 12:1), which is relevant to the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead and the demands placed on the family structure. Chand's study is validated here as it was determined that "94% of families feel the pressures of the ministry and how some pastor's children don't attend church because of its effect on their parents."¹⁸¹ Abraham's call was not exclusive; according to verse 5, Sarai/Sarah went with him (along with his nephew and a few others). The CTCM lay leaders can relate to Abraham's call because some struggled to balance ministry, marriage, and family. The CTCM lay leaders can also look to the New Testament for another example, Paul, who God stated, "Great things he must suffer for his name's sake." (Acts 9:16). Suffering is a relatable topic to the CTCM lay leaders and others because some have suffered both spiritual and physical

¹⁸¹ Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 68.

(e.g., depression and sickness) attacks. Discussing the callings, experiences, and teachings of both Old and New Testament leaders provides a connection the lay leaders can relate to and learn from.

This study will use the Bible as the primary source for studying these leaders because it provides evidence of ordinary people who were called to do extraordinary exploits for God. Secondary sources include Bible commentaries, magazines, scholarly journal articles, and other related materials that may be used to expound further upon points highlighted concerning the leaders explored in this study. Some authors, such as Tim LaHaye and Timothy Keller, have written series on specific leaders of the Bible, such as John and Luke. These sources are accessible through the Liberty University online library, the author's local library, Barnes & Noble, and wherever other scholarly books and magazines are sold or can be accessed. Membership may be required and can be obtained at local libraries, Barnes & Noble, and other social reading houses to print articles and check out books and other materials. Some places serve as reading club venues for book clubs. Resources needed for collection at home from websites, online libraries, and scholarly journal articles may include highlighters, copier/printer paper, printer, and ink.

Phase II: Live Interviews

Phase II involves interviews with experienced leaders from five groups: seasoned leaders with 20+ years, women in ministry with 20+ years, millennial leaders with 10+ years, couples with 10+ years, and single leaders in the church with 10+ years. These groups were chosen to represent the range of diversity among the lay leaders of CTCM and ministry today. As mentioned previously, the face, the voice, and the style of the church have evolved from the

aged, married, and children male figure of the past decades. Leadership today also encompasses the fivefold ministry discussed by Paul in Ephesians 4:1-16 “gifts given unto men... some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and some teachers.” CTCM is a five-fold ministry that believes in educating, equipping, developing, and birthing the talents and gifts of the CTCM lay leaders.

Resources

In Phase II, audiovisual equipment resources were used to conduct interviews on social media platforms such as Zoom, Duo, or Teams. Although Zoom, Duo, and Teams offer free membership, a fee may be required depending on the interview length. The researcher may use a desktop, laptop, or iPad equipped with a camera, a video recorder such as a camcorder, or a mini-cassette tape recorder for interviews via the previously mentioned platforms or live interviews. A USB flash drive or mini cassette tapes will be needed to store each interview. In compliance with the thesis project guidelines, the information must be stored for three years, and computers, laptops, and iPads must be password-protected. Interview information will be removed and stored on either a USB flash drive (Zoom, Duo, or Teams) or cassettes (live taped interviews or camcorder). They will be held in a safe and secure lockbox free from weather damage, erosion, and breach. A unique coding system known exclusively by the researcher will be assigned to each group and individual interview. This system will be used for identification purposes only by the researcher during the interpretation stage of the project. Interviewee names are anonymous. Identification will only be by group and ministry titles. During the interview, names are not called, and faces are not shown during Zoom, Duo, Teams, or live feeds. A brief overview of the title and purpose of the research project will be reiterated, and oral consent will

be given for the interview. The researcher's vehicle is used for travel to locations for live interviews. The researcher will record time, distance, and mileage so that the right amount of time is allotted for discussions. The researcher must recognize and respect the interviewee's schedule by adhering to the time constraints communicated in the signed consent form.

Two journals or tablets and pens are needed for the live interviews. Each participant and the researcher will be given a journal and pen to record any comments or reflections on each session. The researcher will have a journal to record observations, facial expressions, or new information that may give a unique perspective on the proposed problem. The researcher will use a dry-erase board to list commonalities among the interviewees during the interpretation and compilation process. A poster board or construction paper is used to transfer information from previous interviews from the dry-erase board for new information for the current discussion to be written. A confidential and secure venue(s) must be established where interviews may be conducted. A cost analysis may be performed to budget for items needed to be purchased. The researcher will wear a name tag only to build a more positive, friendly, and professional atmosphere during the introduction to all interviewees. Food or snacks may be provided based on the timing of the interviews. Audiovisual equipment will be used to record interviews for transcription purposes only during, as previously stated, the compilation and conclusion process. The audio-visual equipment will also be used to confirm spoken words or jog the researcher's memory of something said during the interview phase, which is vital to the validity of the presented topic.

Venue

The location of the research study interviews is essential. It must be a relaxed atmosphere where the researcher and interviewee feel free and open to discussing the proposed topic. However, security and confidentiality must remain the top priority concerning the location because interviewees' identities are to remain anonymous. One of three venues is chosen. The first venue to host the interviews will be the church or the interviewee's home office. It would be the responsibility of the interviewee to ensure that the allotted time chosen is free of distractions and does not interfere with the ministry's daily operations. As previously mentioned, the researcher must respect the allotted time set by the interviewee to avoid disrupting any events. The venue atmosphere must remain a controlled environment to maintain confidentiality. Once the interview date and time have been determined, travel times will be the next factor to be considered by the researcher after establishing the allotted time needed for the interviews.

A second venue to consider is a restaurant with meeting rooms that can handle unique accommodations through reservation. For example, a local restaurant is famous for hosting special events because of its different seating arrangements and private spaces available through booking. The restaurant also has a second location. Easy accessibility, distance, and travel time are important factors to be considered by both the researcher and the interviewee. A medium distance should be calculated so that the results will be equal distances for both parties. The time allotted for interviews can be decreased if accessibility is hindered due to lunch traffic, rush hour traffic, or the interviewee being tasked by distance and travel time. The researcher must remind the interviewee that no monetary compensation, gas mileage, or meal reimbursement will be offered for the interview. This is an essential factor in determining the venue and its location. If the restaurant has a particular area for private meetings or special gatherings. It is the

researcher's responsibility to determine whether the time allotted for interviews follows the time allotted by the establishment for booking or reserving space. Most restaurants offer a lunch special that may be affordable for participants between specific hours.

A third venue to be considered is the HDQ church; it is already equipped with a media center, sound booth, and other materials, such as a dry-erase board and tables and chairs. Most churches have an education department with extra rooms that can also be used for interviews and dining halls. A fourth venue will be chosen as a backup to the previous choices.

After the research study is approved and adopted into the training schedule, the first location is for the training staff and will be a location that is compatible with them. So, as previously mentioned, it may involve travel time for the training staff chosen after approval of the study. The second through fourth locations will be kept near the church to lessen travel time for participants. A fourth venue for a group setting and an outing may be one of the many local area hotels, community centers, or conference rooms. In public places, the highest priority will be the confidentiality and security of participants' identities, which will not be revealed during the discussion session. Meeting times and locations may be at the discretion of the researcher and interviewee, the training staff, and the participants.

Interview Session Schedule

There will be five interview sessions scheduled. All five sessions will be at sixty-minute intervals, and questions from the questionnaire developed by the researcher will be administered to the interviewees. Questions will pertain to the thesis topic and issues observed by senior leaders concerning the CTCM lay leaders. Sixty minutes is sufficient for the researcher to reiterate to the interviewee the nature of the research topic, administer the questionnaire, provide

adequate time for responses, and expound upon the answers. The desired plan to be implemented is to schedule two interviews every other day. This will leave space for travel and transcription of notes for the researcher. The researcher will submit dates and times to interviewees one week before scheduling and confirming appointments to avoid conflicts with the daily operations of the interviewees. Dates and times will be contingent upon the interviewees' schedules. The researcher desires interviews to be conducted and completed within two weeks. Interviewees who choose to be interviewed via Zoom, Teams, Skype, or Duo will be emailed the questionnaire in advance so the researcher can receive the information needed for preparation for the interview session. Interviewees who choose in-person interviews will be recorded using a mini-cassette player. The questionnaire will also be emailed to in-person interviewees. Questionnaires will be on hand during the live interviews so the interviewees can follow along with the researcher.

A breakdown of each session is listed below as follows:

- Session one: Interviews with seasoned male leaders with 20+ years of experience.
- Session two: Interviews with seasoned female leaders with 20+ years of experience.
- Session three: Interviews with millennial leaders with 10+ years of experience.
- Session four: Interviews with married couples with 10+ years of experience.
- Session five: Interviews with single leaders with 10+ years of experience.

A brief wrap-up session will conclude the interviews, including final remarks, reflections, or the researcher's or interviewee's feedback. Interviews that time out on Zoom can be finished by submitting answers via a questionnaire emailed before the interview. Interviewees will be asked to email their responses. The researcher will conclude with "Thank you" to each interviewee for their participation and time. The researcher will ensure that all necessary paperwork has been

signed and interviews are securely stored away until interpretation for summation. After the recap, interviews will be transcribed onto cassette tapes for storage. As the IRB requires, the cassette tapes and USBs will be moved to permanent storage for three years.

The desired goal of the research study is to provide a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead the CTCM lay leaders in the development of resilient leaders. A secondary goal is to restore and retain current CTCM lay leaders. After the research completes this study and graduates, a proposal will be drawn up and presented to the church's senior leadership with the findings and results for implementation. Other sessions can be developed and implemented, presenting the research study findings during a pilot training session at the church. However, timing will be contingent upon whether the results will replace or be drafted into the weekly training slots already existent on the church calendar. If the research study findings are not drawn into the already established training classes on the calendar, then an alternate night or day may be needed.

The first session may be extended because it will serve as a meet-and-greet/icebreaker. It can be used as a time to introduce the origin and history of the research study. It will also be a time of fellowship with other ministries from sister churches, allowing participants and the researcher to become acquainted. The last session can be used to finish any information left from the first session, the previous and final comments of the facilitator, and any feedback from the audience. The participants and the facilitator of the training session will be able to conduct live in-person sessions or audio-visual sessions because of COVID-19 public and personal restrictions. The time frame for Zoom, Teams, Skype, and Duo sessions should remain the same. At this time, most COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, and ministries have reopened.

However, upon implementation of the findings of this research study, senior leaders who choose this option should receive a “schedule of events” at each session.

Intervention Design

Interviews

Five distinct groups have been chosen for Phase II of the research project. The groups are (1) seasoned male leaders with 20+ years, (2) seasoned female leaders with 20+ years, (3) seasoned millennial leaders with 10+ years, (4) seasoned married leaders with 10+ years, and (5) seasoned single leaders with 10+ years. Participants chosen for interviews represent one of these five groups. Two leaders will be selected from each group to meet the research study requirements of ten primary participants. The selection process is not arbitrary but based on the researcher's general requirements for interviewees. These requirements ensure that the participants are not only representative of their respective groups but also bring a wealth of experience and insight to the study. The requirements include being eighteen years of age, to have formerly been or currently be in a leadership position such as pastor or assistant pastor, and to have ten or more years of experience. Each group represents the evolution of ministry style, culture, and transition from the traditional church witnessed today, which has also served as a source of tension for leaders. The generation gap can be a significant factor in understanding the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call to lead based on educational advantages, spiritual experiences, and ministry trends. A widening of the gap can be seen because millennials are delaying childbirth.

The first group consists of seasoned male leaders with 20+ years of experience. Leaders are believed to settle into their perspective calling when the ten-year mark is reached. However,

leaders with twenty or more years of experience are chosen for this study because of the overall knowledge gained through the ups and downs and the ministry shifts experienced over the years. Many of the leaders in this group started with educational advantages and training that are required today. However, this group's input, influence, and impact can positively bridge the gap, repair the breach experienced in most ministries, and develop resilient leaders. A mixture of the old traditional and the new trending church eras will be observed. An assessment and comparison can be performed, noting the differences between the two generations. By interviewing seasoned leaders, the researcher will highlight reasons for the high stress levels and lack of resiliency observed in leadership today.

The second group will consist of female leaders with twenty or more years of experience serving or have served in a leadership capacity that men once predominantly dominated. The role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to leadership may include bearing scrutiny while barriers are being torn down. Information from this group may help the women of CTCM who are discouraged in ministry or have been hindered from answering the call because of gender bias experienced in church. According to blogger Susan Burden, women's place in ministry is carefully defined in Genesis 2:18 with the word "helpmeet translated into the Hebrew word Ezer, meaning strong helper/strong power."¹⁸² Women were created to be what Genesis 2:18 calls "a help meet" beside men. However, it is Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12, concerning the "silence of women in the church, not to teach or usurp authority over the man" has been used as the basis for the rejection of women as both pastors and carriers of the gospel. Some female law leaders have felt the resistance from both male and female members,

¹⁸² Suzanne Burden 2014, "The Strong Power in Every Woman." *WomenLeaders.com Blog*, June 2014. March 18, 2023.

who hold to the misinterpretation of Paul's words. Another blogger, Mandy Smith, found solace in moving forward in personal ministry from her husband's study of the Greek translation of the word "silence" in 1 Timothy 2:11-12": "ἡσυχία also refers to peacefulness."¹⁸³ It goes beyond the literal meaning to "be quiet" taken by many. The researcher believes that this group's encounters and experiences of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead will be an asset to CTCM lay leaders.

The third group consists of seasoned millennials with ten or more years of leadership ministry experience in a church with a mixed congregation of the elderly and youth. The feedback from this group can speak to leading while in the crosshairs of both age groups and how they bridge the gap between them. The millennial group has a different sound, image, and format for worship that is different from the traditional church. The mixed-age congregation challenges some CTCM lay leaders in their ministry assignments. The interviewees will get an opportunity to discuss their most challenging situation while trying to answer the call to lead.

The fourth group comprises seasoned married leaders with ten or more years of experience. This group represents a shift in the evolution of the church. There are married couples in the CTCM ministry. However, they serve in different capacities in the church. Some lay leaders whose spouses attend and serve in other ministries. One of the most significant challenges CTCM lay leaders mentioned was balancing marriage, ministry, and family. Chand's statistics suggest that "50% of the marriages of pastors end in divorce."¹⁸⁴ Thus, the CTCM lay leaders' concerns were valid. Dr. Domenick L. Harris suggested that to make marriage and

¹⁸³ Mandy Smith 2012, "When the Path to Ministry Is an Obstacle Course." *WomenLeaders.com Blog*. March 18, 2023.

¹⁸⁴ Samuel R. Chand *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 68.

ministry work, “recognition of individual gifts, talents, and respecting boundaries can aid in avoiding pitfalls in the marital relationship.”¹⁸⁵ The couple's answers can serve as a guiding light for married lay leaders who may be called to pastor a church.

The fifth group includes seasoned single men/women who have been in ministry for at least ten years. The evolution of the family structure has also caused a shift in the dynamics of the church structure. Blogger Amy Jackson highlighted an essential factor supporting the previous statements: “Since 2014, single adults outnumbered married adults in the U.S.; however, the numbers are not visible in church ministries, programs, or leadership.”¹⁸⁶ Some of CTCM's single lay leaders expressed feeling pressured to get married for the sake of ministry. Jackson agrees with the discussion concerning the “church’s focus on marriage and singleness being viewed as a less-than status.”¹⁸⁷ In the old traditional church, elder church mothers and deacons, it is believed that single ministry leaders may fall into temptation. However, Paul speaks of the advantages of being single in 1 Corinthians 7:34a: “The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit.” Single CTCM leaders can glean knowledge of maintaining integrity, avoiding traps, and becoming vulnerable from the seasoned leaders of this group.

These groups were chosen to represent the evolution that has taken place in ministry today. These areas of evolution must be covered to clarify the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call lead. Most importantly, each group represents some of the many challenges that have

¹⁸⁵ Dr. Domenick L. Harris 2018, “Ministry Marriages.” *WomenLeaders.com Blog*. March 18, 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Amy Jackson 2017, “Why We Need Single Women Leaders.” *WomenLeaders.com Blog*. March 18, 2023.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

discouraged leaders to the point of vacating positions, quitting ministries, and committing suicide because of the despair experienced. The interviewees concur with author Dr. J. Robert Clinton, who identifies the “long haulers in ministry as exceptions that understand how God develops leaders to maturity,”¹⁸⁸ through moments perceived as personal attacks, struggles, and suffering. Clinton highlights the work of God in using problems as “steppingstones to maturity”¹⁸⁹ needed in the development of resilient leaders.

The researcher chose personal interviews versus the Likert scale to make the topic more relatable and relevant. During the research stage, it became apparent how various authors widely used the Likert scale. However, the researcher's goal is to spotlight the severity of this topic from a different perspective. In an interview conducted by Ben Hall with Dr. James Hudnut-Beumler, a professor from Vanderbilt University, he denotes that “40% of pastors have considered resignation due to clergy burnout.”¹⁹⁰ The interviewees concur that burnout among leaders is one of the reasons that leaders abandon the ministry. This research aims to implement the finished product from the study as a training session for potential and current lay leaders. The topic can also be extended to the lay members of the ministry. At the end of the final session of implementation of the training, the CTCM lay members should be allowed to (a) tell their story, (b) provide feedback, and (c) help in both the development and implementation of an effective plan of action by both peers, lay leaders, and lay members. The success rate is projected to be good because the group participants are the ones who provided the information to bring about the

¹⁸⁸ J Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, 2nd edition, revised and updated (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 86.

¹⁸⁹ Clinton, *the Making of a Leader*, 86.

¹⁹⁰ Dr. James Hudnut-Beumler Interview by Ben Hall. “Issues of Faith: Understanding the Great Resignation within Churches Part 1.” WTVF 5 Nashville, TN. May 9, 2022. www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/issues-of-faith-understanding-the-great-resignation-within-churches.

possible change needed. In other words, it will not come from one person who may have a biased perception of the problem. The possible solution will come from a group of individuals from various backgrounds and experiences coming together in unity for a common goal and purpose. A small meeting may be established so senior leadership can introduce the research study topic and the facilitator to the lay leaders and members.

Questionnaire

In the preparation process, questions were explicitly tailored to the problem presented in this research project. Interviewees will be asked questions about the topic but at the level of their experience. Five questions have been developed specifically from the research material gathered. The sixth question will allow the interviewee to provide any feedback or reflection on how the topic and questions may have influenced or impacted them personally. According to author Ernest Stringer, questions are “possible answers to the solution provided and tested.”¹⁹¹ The question-and-answer session should start with a reminder of the discussed topic and reiterated guidelines. The questions will build upon each other and pertain to Christian leadership. As answers are given, the interviewees should be encouraged to expound more on whatever experience they encounter. Again, the atmosphere is crucial because it should allow the interviewee to flow freely while answering the interview questions. Before the questions are presented to the group, a copy should be given to the researcher and interviewee. The senior leadership of the ministries represented should also receive a copy of the questions. Ground rules/boundaries should be established to ensure the atmosphere and environment are conducive to a productive session. The following questions will be presented to interviewees of each group:

1. How long have you served in ministry, and in what positions have you served?

¹⁹¹ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research 4th Edition* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 107.

a. This question establishes compliance with requirements set by the researcher for interviewees to be met.

b. The groups established for the study are (1) -seasoned leaders with 20+ years of experience, (2) -seasoned women leaders with 20+ years of experience, (3) -seasoned millennial leaders with 10+ years of experience, (4) -seasoned married leaders with 10+ years of experience, and (5) -seasoned single leaders with 10+ years of experience.

2. Do you have formal training from a Seminary, a local Bible College, or a mentorship program?

a. This question establishes the interviewee's history as it pertains to both their ministry assignment and the thesis topic.

b. Some of CTCM's lay leaders participated in formal training for the assignments they were attempting to fulfill.

3. Do you feel that you were prepared for the positions held? If not, in what specific area could more training have been utilized?

a. This question pulls the interviewee deeper into the topic presented, establishing a steady flow of discussion with the researcher.

b. Relatability can be determined between the interviewees' responses and the lay leaders' responses to senior leaders concerning the issues discussed previously that were bothering them.

4. The scripture 1 Samuel 15:22b reads, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (KJV) This scripture is usually the answer given concerning answering the call of God to leadership. The topic of this thesis is "When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice."

When did obedience to the call of God to lead become a sacrifice?

- a. This is a moment of transparency for the interviewee. It calls for deep reflection concerning the interviewee's spiritual journey. It involves retracing and reliving a time of brokenness or vulnerability in ministry.
- b. The researcher should give the interviewee plenty of time to answer. The interviewee should feel safely secure, confident, and free to flow when speaking about their time of sacrifice.

5. What do you believe makes a "resilient" leader?

- a. Here, CTCM's lay leaders can learn from the interviewees what may be considered the "secrets of longevity."
- b. At this point, the seasoned leaders in each group reveal the lessons learned, adjustments made, and biblical measures applied. What it takes to "endure until the end."

6. Can any comments, questions, or feedback be provided now?

- a. This question will serve as the wrap-up of the interview. Any further discussion or insight from the seasoned leaders of each group can be summarized here. If there is additional discussion concerning the thesis topic, the researcher may engage only if the interviewee initiates it. The researcher must comply with the agreement and terms established with the interviewee concerning the subject and the time allotted. The researcher can record any additional notes, points, or messages to be conveyed via audiovisual, tape recorder, camcorder, or written down on the questionnaire provided at the beginning of the interview.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

After gathering resource materials and obtaining approvals, interviewees will be chosen from various ministries. The names of any interviewee from CTCM will be submitted to senior leadership for support. The senior leadership may have information on potential candidates that may hinder objectivity in problem-solving. Information will be gathered, and interviewees will be contacted concerning location, date, and timing. Reservations will be made for interviews conducted in a private dining room setting. Questionnaires will be emailed to the interviewees and provided on the interview day. The researcher will meet with interviewees in the desired location and confirm confidentiality and security. It is the responsibility of the interviewee to ensure that if the sanctuary, church office, or home office is their location of choice, it should be free from any interruptions. Before meeting with interviewees, all equipment will be tested to avoid failure during the interview process. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom, Teams, Skype, or Duo, and a practice run will be shown to correct errors. The researcher will ensure that a noise-free professional backdrop is used. On the day interviews are conducted, the researcher will dress professionally in business or casual attire, whether in-person or via teleconferencing software.

The researcher will briefly reiterate the proposed topic and confirm the participation of the chosen interviewee. Consent forms will be distributed, signed, and collected by the researcher. The recording equipment will be set up after the consent forms are secure. Next, the interview phase will begin as the timer is set. Interviews conducted via Zoom must be completed within the time allotted and established during the meeting set up and before the invitation is sent. Interviewees will be given a copy of the questions to follow along with the researcher and to jot down any additional notes that may come to mind. As questions are asked, the researcher

will observe the interviewee's body language and facial expression to ensure compatibility and comfort with the question. The researcher should not deviate from questions presented to avoid any awkwardness, especially during the married lay leaders' interview. Interviewees should not feel rushed or pressured to beat the timer. Journals should be presented to the interviewees in case of session timeouts (especially Zoom meetings). Interviewees will be asked at the end of each interview session if any additional questions or comments are needed concerning the topic presented. Any other information suggested, not included in the questions but freely offered by the interviewee, will be accepted. Additional data presented, not included in the questions but freely offered by the interviewee, will be recorded. However, it will be up to the researcher's discretion whether additional information will be included in the final submission of the research.

After all interviews have concluded, the researcher will use either a dry-erase board or construction paper to compare answers, highlight differences, and interpret information. Any notes gathered during the interview will also be considered. A compilation of all the solutions that are relevant to the topic will be presented in a summation of the outcome. As the guidelines state, all recordings will be in a locked and secure container for three years. Upon completion of the interview, the interviewee should properly receive verbal appreciation for their participation and be reassured of the confidentiality of their identity.

The researcher believes that the results from this project will clarify the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead, and resilient leaders will be developed. A secondary goal of the project is to use it in the ministry of CTCM and others facing the same issues observed by senior leaders and previously discussed at the monthly pastoral gathering. Senior leaders from other churches will be invited to attend the training and view the manual. A different venue location

will be considered when implementing the training class. A manual for training purposes and a reference to be used by lay leaders during times of difficulty and uncertainty will be developed.

The research will not just be limited to lay leaders but will also be open to lay members. The research will be open to lay members because, during a Sunday school lesson, it was mentioned that new converts should be given more insight into the Christian walk after answering the call of God to salvation. If leaders struggle, lay members will, too. No one is exempt. Jesus his disciples in his preparation for the cross and ascension, “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:18 & 20). However, senior leadership will decide to present the research study to lay members. After accepting the research proposal, the senior leaders will implement it in a training class or as part of orientation for new lay leaders. A list of resource materials, a budget, and a list of venues are developed. Materials such as journals, pens, dry-erase boards or poster boards, food or snacks, name tags, and audio-visual equipment may already be on hand or donated by members. Depending on the strategy, a team of facilitators and audio-visual operators is required. If implementation of the outcome is desired for training purposes, the first session will be held at a restaurant for a meet-and-greet icebreaker on a Saturday. After lunch, senior leaders may introduce both the facilitator and the topic with a brief explanation. The facilitators will re-introduce themselves and welcome the group. A full description will be given, and potential candidates can accept or deny participation.

Guidelines, training schedules, and venues will be chosen. Topics and questions will be addressed before the first training session. Questions to be presented in the training session will be designed to build upon each other to build rapport and conclude with a peaceful resolution. A small meeting with senior leaders will be held for feedback and critique. Audio-visual equipment

will be used to record each session. This will help review and make needed adjustments. Each participant will be encouraged to journal their thoughts at the end of the session. At the beginning of each session, participants should be asked if there are any reflections on the topic to be highlighted. During the implementation of the training class, an additional observer or proctor will be on hand to help monitor each session's tone and atmosphere. The observer may see body language or expressions from the participants that the facilitator does not see. The proctor will help clarify questions being asked and maintain respect while participants respond to questions or comments. The same rules and procedures should be applied during the research and interview stages. The atmosphere should be conducive to establishing a steady flow of rapport between participants and the facilitator. The participants will be encouraged to answer questions and elaborate on their answers. Participants will write answers on a dry-erase board to highlight commonalities or important points spoken during the session. At the end of each session, the information will be transferred from the dry-erase board to the poster board to set up for the next session. The data transmitted to the poster board should be compared to highlight commonalities, differences, and new issues to be addressed at the next training session or to create a recent training session. Enhancements to the training class should be encouraged and welcomed in the quest to provide a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead and develop resilient leaders. Appointments will be established between lay leaders and senior leaders to discuss private concerns about the ministry or clarify any information discussed during the training session. Journals will be distributed at each training session for notes, questions, and reflections by participants. After journals are collected, the facilitator may determine the need for a follow-up class to address new questions asked; the facilitator and senior leaders should open with a brief general overview of the purpose and goal(s) of the training class, a review of

information from the previous session, and reflections that will help answer questions and address new information. Journals will be returned to participants to be used as a tool for continual development.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Considering 1 Samuel 15:22, the topic of this study is “When Obedience Becomes A Sacrifice.” The CTCM lay leaders did not seem to understand the “role of sacrifice” in obeying God’s call to lead. Part of this research study aimed to explain to the CTCM lay leaders that the sacrifices accompanying God’s call to lead are the struggles, trials, afflictions, and sufferings they experienced. What is felt to be destruction is reconstruction in the lives of the lay leaders because leadership is not “one size that fits all.” It surpasses what is learned in seminary, begs for more than the three-point sermon on Sunday morning, and does not adhere to banker’s hours. These were some of the complaints made by the lay leaders after the “yes.” Senior leaders observed spiritual anxiety, despondency, and apathy among the lay leaders. Some concluded it “wasn’t what was taught or signed up for!” After the senior leaders’ observation, they decided more training was needed concerning the realities of leadership that the lay leaders were experiencing. Resilient and effective leaders will be trained and prepared by developing a deeper understanding of the importance of the role of sacrifice in leadership.

The methodology for this study was action research carried out in two phases. Phase I focused on Old and New Testament leaders and their calling, servanthood, obedience, sacrifice, and resilience. Phase II focused on personal interviews of seasoned leaders from five distinct groups representing the evolution of ministry. The research was also extended to scholarly magazines, articles, blogs, books, and commentaries that helped lay leaders begin to understand

the importance of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead.

As previously mentioned, “obedience and sacrifice” were discussed as two separate topics with the belief that obedience truly is better than sacrifice. Writer Mary Kamau’s article “Marketplace Training For Kingdom Advance: Obedience > Sacrifice” acknowledges the “commonality of the scripture and attests to the validity that obedience to God will always be better than any sacrifice.”¹⁹² Obedience reflects on the relationship and the continuous trust between the leader and God. The CTCM lay leaders also agree that obedience is a natural response embedded within the human psyche from childhood. The desire to please the natural father carries over to the desire to please the Heavenly Father. During the discussion of the meaning of “sacrifice,” as it pertains to leadership, Dockery’s definition connects the lay leaders to the topic because it focuses on an “individual’s true commitment to God”¹⁹³ beyond just giving a few moments for study, prayer, and meditation.

This study examines the importance of the “role of sacrifice” in obeying God’s call to lead and clarifies what sacrificial leadership means beyond the cross of Christ. For example, writer Jon Brown’s article “Exhausted Pastors Suffering Decline in Overall Health, Respect, Friendship: Study” discusses the toll taken on leaders “after the pandemic and issues they felt unequipped to discuss such as politics.”¹⁹⁴ Brown outlines the culprits in the article, which include “declining respect from their community, lack of true friends/loneliness, and

¹⁹² Mary Kamau, “Marketplace Training for Kingdom Advance: Obedience > Sacrifice.” *Kairos Consultancy Group*. May 8, 2018. <https://kairosconsultancygroup.com/2018/05/28/obedience-sacrifice>.

¹⁹³ Karen Dockrey ET. Al, *the Student Bible Dictionary* (Uhrichsville: Barbour Books, 2000), 207.

¹⁹⁴ Jon Brown, “Exhausted” Pastors Suffering Decline in Overall Health, Respect, Friendship: Study.” *Fox News.com*. June 24, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/exhausted-pastors-suffering-decline-overall-health-respect-friendship-study>.

emotional/mental exhaustion leading to an increased rate of 42% burnout.”¹⁹⁵ Brown’s article registered with the lay leaders and validated the topic’s importance. Some of the CTCM lay leaders expressed feeling abandoned by friends and families. Others expressed feelings of competition, envy, and jealousy from peers. It is here that the lay leaders felt the pangs of personal sacrifice. However, after an in-depth discussion of the Old and New Testament leaders both “called and chosen” to lead, a great understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead began to emerge in the minds of the CTCM lay leaders.

Phase I was implemented during a retreat with 14 participants at a beautiful log cabin situated on 90 acres of timber land and a man-made pond. The two-story cabin contained beautiful hardwood floors, a spacious kitchen, a den, a sitting area, three large rooms, and a wrap-around porch. The retreat started on Friday afternoon with a meet-and-greet session and an introduction to the topic and ended on Sunday morning in prayer. Participants were CTCM lay leaders and other ministries under the umbrella of CTCOC reformation. The participants were presented with gift bags filled with journals and pens. Participants stated their names, ministries, and positions.

The discussion began with the study’s topic, which summarized the thoughts of the lay leaders. Participants spoke about negative encounters they experienced. They felt like the disciples in Matthew 17:14-21 when they could not “cast the demon out of the son.” The scripture opened the door for Phase I’s discussion of the Old and New Testament leaders.

¹⁹⁵ Jon Brown, “Exhausted” Pastors Suffering Decline in Overall Health, Respect, Friendship: Study.” *Fox News.com*. June 24, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/exhausted-pastors-suffering-decline-overall-health-respect-friendship-study>.

Phase I: Old and New Testament Leaders

The Bible is the ruling authority that great leaders eat from, and resilient leaders are developed from. Matthew 4:4 reads, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The scriptures provide what Paul calls “ensamples” in 1 Thessalonians 1:7: different types of leaders, their unique callings, and their sacrificial obedience. Discussion of the biblical leaders reminded the lay leaders of their purpose and rekindled both the zeal and fire that prompted their “yes” response to the call of God to lead.

Phase I’s discussion began at the point of origin, 1 Samuel 15:22b: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,” the words of Prophet Samuel to Saul after disobeying God’s command concerning the destruction of King Agag and the Amalekites. After revisiting the appointment of Saul to be King of Israel, two focal points were discussed. The first highlights that Saul’s disobedience started before the commandment concerning the Amalekites was given. 1 Samuel 13:8-14 records Saul’s impatience in waiting for the prophet Samuel as instructed and “offered the burnt offering.” Samuel questions him, rebukes, and warns, “But now thy kingdom shall not continue” (1 Samuel 13:13-14). The first highlight in 1 Samuel 13:13-14 validates the words of 1 Samuel 15:22b and the belief that “obedience is better than sacrifice.” However, the commonality between the events in 1 Samuel 13:8-14 and 1 Samuel 15:1-35 serves as the “root” cause of King Saul’s demise was “people.” Saul was a “people-pleaser.” It was his excuse for his actions in 1 Samuel 13:11, “Because I saw that the people were scattered from me,” and in 1 Samuel 15:24b, “because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.” During the discussion, the CTCM lay leaders highlighted this as both an area of importance and a significant red flag about how members responded to them in ministry. In understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead, the discussion revealed three

critical areas to examine: “influence, identity, and calling.”

Influence

As the discussion transitioned into influence, identity, and calling, it was essential to start by redefining the terms “leader and leadership” concerning today’s members, generations, and expectations. It was easy for the CTCM lay leaders to believe that the definition of these terms should not have changed but remained the same over the years. However, as the lay leaders discussed the evolution of the church’s dynamics, the stresses, and the pressures experienced, a deeper search of today’s definition of “leader and leadership” was necessary. Out of the many definitions, one word constantly captured the lay leaders' attention: “influence.” According to authors Blackaby and Blackaby, influence is the power “to draw, to compel, and to move followers, who promoted personal agendas, to pursue God’s plan for their lives.”¹⁹⁶ This was a crucial point for CTCM lay leaders; as previously mentioned, some believed that the influence once held by leaders in the past had begun to wane. Some articles about this topic spoke of the lack of respect shown towards the pastoral office, which was once one of the most socially revered positions. However, the lay leaders understood how influence is essential in winning, leading, and developing souls. A vital factor to be understood by lay leaders and others is that this influence is not based on a gift, talent, or popularity but on the power of God received through a relationship with Him. Phase I’s discussion of Old and New Testament leaders highlighted that Joseph, David, and Jesus influenced authority figures and followers. The words “But the Lord was with Joseph (Genesis 39:2, 39:21, and 41:38)” followed him from Potiphar’s house to prison and to Pharaoh to interpret his dream. When the “evil spirit” was upon Saul, and

¹⁹⁶ Henry & Richard Blackaby *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda Revised & Expanded* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2011), 37.

he needed a minstrel, David was described as “cunning in playing, a mighty valiant man, a man of war, prudent in matters, a comely person, most importantly, and the Lord is with him” (1 Samuel 16:18) followed. Isaiah 53:2 describes Jesus as not having “form nor comeliness; and when seen, there is no beauty that he should desire.” However, in John 7:46, when the officers were asked about Jesus’s capture, the officer’s response was, “Never man spake like this man.” The lay leaders began to understand that the commonality between all three was the presence of God’s spirit and the oil/anointing in their lives, which was the influence used. God’s nature takes control, and the oil is expelled when the flesh is buried in a pit, humbled on the backside of a mountain while keeping sheep, nailed to a cross, and receives resurrection power.

At this point in Phase I, the CTCM lay leaders begin to see the importance of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. They realize that the sacrifice of obedience is the life of the leader. Jesus both proclaimed and demonstrated three things highlighted in Luke 9:23 that impacted the CTCM lay leaders’ understanding, thus verifying the topic of this discussion. Jesus said, “If any man come after me, let him 1- deny himself, 2- take up his cross daily, and 3- follow me.” Denying the self, specifically flesh, which harbors emotions, cultures, religious ideologies, and opinions, must occur. Paul explains concerning the flesh in Romans 7:18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” Jesus is the example of Luke 9:23 and John 10:11 concerning how the “good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” The influence possessed by Jesus is also seen again in “how the sheep hear and know his voice and a stranger they will not follow” (John 10:3-5). The lay leaders understood that not everyone would hear their voices, only those assigned to them. Their influence is over a particular group and a specific demographic area. A discussion on the life of the Apostle Paul, highlighting his successful missionary journeys, solidifies the previous point. Paul was “called,” according to Acts 9:15, to

the “Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” He first had a “Damascus Road experience” which challenged everything he thought he knew and constrained him to the words of Philippians 3:10: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings and being made conformable unto his death.” Paul’s influence was in the “demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Corinthians 2:1-5) as he ministered the word. All that the Apostle Paul both experienced and encountered in ministry, he passed on to a young pastor named Timothy, which is why Phase II of the study was necessary. Phase II mirrors this passing of knowledge by interviewing seasoned leaders to teach leaders. A crucial foundational point serving as a reminder of hope to the lay leaders spoken by Paul to Timothy was reliance upon “faith and sound doctrine (2 Timothy 1).” The second point stressed by Paul was the “stirring of the gifts received by the laying on of his hands (2 Timothy 1).” Although they were familiar points to the lay leaders, it was the order that Paul gave them to Timothy. The order represents the balance necessary for a resilient leader. This discussion reiterates the importance of influence as a tool required in leadership: an effect that is not based on the leader's popularity but on the power of God in the leader’s life. Influence is closely connected to identity, so Joseph, David, Jesus, and Paul were influential leaders.

Identity

Writer Sanjana Gupta describes identity as “a set of traits that distinguishes a person from others.”¹⁹⁷ Identity is the glue that helps to solidify influence and calling, and it is also the crisis-crippling development of resilient leaders. Some lay leaders were uncertain about their identity, causing them to doubt their calling and struggle with their assignments. This verifies Gupta’s findings concerning the importance of possessing a solid identity. In his article “Why Identity

¹⁹⁷ Sanjana Gupta, “Why Identity Matters and How It Shapes Us.” *Verywell Mind* (May 30, 2023): 1-6. November 20, 2023, <https://www.verywellmind.com/why-identity-matters-and-how-it-shapes-us-7504546>.

Matters and How It Shapes Us,” Gupta listed six findings. Of the six findings, Gupta suggests that a strong identity “provides direction, motivation, clear understanding of values and interest, and clarity.”¹⁹⁸ This was a crucial point for the lay leaders. Identity is often associated with a title, especially the fivefold ministry listed in Ephesians 4:11-12. However, Barton’s belief concerning “calling being birthed out of identity and the fabric of an individual’s being”¹⁹⁹ gave belief in the importance of knowing and understanding identity to the CTCM lay leaders.

Barton’s words mean that everything, every experience, and every encounter that has taken place in the life of the lay leader encompasses who they are now. The natural self has become spiritual. The words of 1 Corinthians 15:45 come into view: “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” The role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead and developing resilient leaders begins with an identity founded in Christ Jesus. Discussion of the scriptures reminded the lay leaders of their identity in Christ, serving as an outline of a resilient leader. Paul begins this famous scripture in 2 Corinthians 5:17 with the words, “Therefore if any man is in Christ,” and continues identifying and confirming his stance with 1 Corinthians 6:17-(joined unto the Lord is one spirit) 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 – (stablisheth, anointed, and sealed,) 2 Corinthians 5:20- (ambassadors,) Galatians 3:26-28- (one in Christ Jesus.) Paul knew his identity being “called to be an apostle- (Rom 1:1,) born out of due time- (1 Co 15:8,) least of the apostles- (1 Co 15:9,) and finally saying, I am what I am- (1 Co 15:10.)” David knew his identity as he chose to fight Goliath. Joseph knew his identity from the visions given to him by the Lord. Finally, Jesus knew and understood his identity from age 12, stating it when his parents found him in the temple. It was proven in the scriptures; familiar scriptures are

¹⁹⁸ Gupta, “*Why Identity Matters and How*,” 1-6.

¹⁹⁹ Ruth Haley Barton “*Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry, Expanded Edition*.” (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 74.

often quoted but sometimes misunderstood contextually. Author Bishop John K. Vincent suggests that “cataclysm catastrophes (violent events causing abrupt change, altering the norm often left in permanent ruin) and propaganda (using information, ideas, facts, and sometimes lies promoting points of views, reshaping the mentality and behaviors of people under their influence)”²⁰⁰ can affect identity.

Three powerful statements presented by Bishop Vincent and author Susan Cooper Creel provide a solution to the struggle of understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. Vincent suggests that people who do not know their identity in Christ “become whatever and whoever others designate them to be,” which is comparable to a natural crime prevalent today but applied spiritually known as identity theft.”²⁰¹ Satan seeks to rob leaders of their spiritual identity in Christ rendering them void of the power necessary to lead others to victory. Creel also suggests that the “loss of identity could result in missing the call and failing the assignment”²⁰² given by God. During the discussion, these statements resonated strongly with the CTCM lay leaders. Knowing and understanding one’s identity builds confidence, resulting in the development of a resilient leader. The lay leaders understood that people will follow confident leaders. The influence wielded by Joseph, David, Jesus, and Paul resulted from their knowing their identity. The importance of identity was expressed frequently during the live interviews with seasoned leaders in Phase II. The words “knowing who you are” were often repeated. Like influence, identity is not tied to a position or title. It is solely based upon the lay

²⁰¹ Bishop John K. Vincent, *Identity Crisis: The Debilitating Disease of the Church*. (Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, 2023), 101-102.

²⁰¹ Vincent, *Identity Crisis: The Debilitating Disease*, 42.

²⁰² Susan Cooper Creel, *My Journey to Finding My Identity, Calling, and Assignment: And the Difference in the Three*. (Goodyear: Spotlight Publishing, 2021), 33.

leader's understanding of their identity in Christ through their relationship in and with him. This is the first layer in the foundation of understanding the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to lead. Gupta suggested an additional note concerning the previous belief that lay leaders not knowing their identity results from a "weak sense of identity, making it more difficult to be grounded emotionally during times of stress and more confusing when trying to navigate major life decisions."²⁰³ This statement served as an answer to the problem some lay leaders experienced. Likewise, Ruth Haley Brown's suggestion concerning the "call being birthed out of the individual's identity"²⁰⁴ explains the CTCM lay leaders' inability to fulfill ministry assignments based on title, talent, and training. Many of today's leaders are stuck in an identity crisis, stepping into places and positions to which God does not call them.

Calling

In understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead, the leader must understand, know, and be confident in the "call." Creel defines the "call simply as an invitation to be prepared to do something."²⁰⁵ However, it is that "something" Hamilton refers to as a "lack of clarity concerning God's direction in the moment of the call," suggesting that a lack of understanding concerning what the call entails and what leaders are called to could also result from a weakened sense of identity. Calling is a combination of the natural self and the spiritual self. Calling is based upon a desire, passion, or burden placed inside the lay leader. For example, many lay leaders were already leaders serving in capacities such as heads of households,

²⁰³ Sanjana Gupta, "Why Identity Matters and How It Shapes Us." *Verywell Mind* (May 30, 2023): 1-6. November 20, 2023, <https://www.verywellmind.com/why-identity-matters-and-how-it-shapes-us-7504546>.

²⁰⁴ Ruth Haley Brown *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry Expanded Edition*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 74.

²⁰⁵ Susan Cooper Creel, *My Journey to Finding My Identity, Calling, and Assignment: And the Difference in the Three*. (Goodyear: Spotlight Publishing, 2021), 33.

managers/supervisors on jobs, possessing the law of attraction, and working hobbies that became ministries such as group homes and missions. The words of Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations,” come to the minds of the lay leaders in the group. Jeremiah 1:5 is quoted often but grossly misunderstood because the focus is on the gift instead of the words and work entailed. Romans 8:30 uses the term “predestinate” before the word “called,” which verifies what is already inside the believer called to serve and lead. The natural man's transformed spirit responds to the Holy Spirit's call. Phase I's discussion of Old and New Testament leaders reflects upon this point and the process attached to the call. Joseph's call to leadership through visions did not include the process he endured, David's anointing for kingship did not involve running to escape death at the hands of Saul and his son, Absalom, and finally, Hosea's call to the prophetic ministry would include marrying a prostitute. Possessing influence and knowing identity helped the Old and New Testament leaders to answer the “call” to lead.

Author Loren Houlberg's belief that leaders should be “confident in their calling, stand strong, and do not waver” sums up the importance of lay leaders' understanding of “calling.”²⁰⁶ Resilient leadership, regardless of what it entails, describes a resilient leader! This project aimed to give the CTCM lay leaders a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead and develop resilient leaders. Old and New Testament leaders knew their identity and possessed influence, preparing them to obey God's call to lead despite the sacrifices they experienced. Reading the scriptures provided evidence to help the CTCM lay leaders understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead by giving them biblical examples to follow.

In reading the scriptures, intricate and delicate details are often overshadowed by the

²⁰⁶ Loren Houlberg, *Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry*. (Columbia: Loren Houlberg, 2020), 17.

story's glory. There is a propensity to approach the scriptures from an emotional viewpoint instead of an instructional one. Instead of reading for comprehension, reading is done for familiarization. The Bible is read like Aesop's fables. Creel's suggestion that “it takes time to develop a calling”²⁰⁷ is depicted in the lives of both Old and New Testament leaders. Lay leaders understand that the role of sacrifice, which involves Cordeiro’s sifting and Bolsinger’s tempering- (both of which build character), possessing influence, and recognizing identity, is necessary for obeying God’s call to lead. Sacrifice cannot be avoided because it is integral in developing obedient and resilient leaders.

Phase I provided a biblical foundation of leadership to build upon. However, Phase II applies what was learned in Phase I in practice. Phase II consists of live interviews conducted with seasoned leaders from five distinct groups representing the evolution of leadership today. The use of live interviews was relatable and personable and aided in helping the lay leaders understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call of God to lead.

Phase II: Live Interviews

Phase II consists of interviews with seasoned leaders from five distinct groups: (1) male leaders with 20+ years, (2) female leaders with 20+ years, (3) millennial leaders with 10+ years, (4) married couples with 10+ years, and (5) single leaders with 10+ years. The word seasoned, “meaning experienced,” is employed here because it describes the interviewees: men and women who have founded ministries from the ground up and overcome obstacles, persecution, and scrutiny. The interviewees passed on what was learned as Paul mentored Timothy with the wisdom and knowledge gained. Creel’s words concerning calling being “an invitation to be

²⁰⁷ Susan Cooper Creel, *My Journey to Finding My Identity, Calling, and Assignment: And the Difference in the Three*. (Goodyear: Spotlight Publishing, 2021), 51.

prepared to do something”²⁰⁸ come into focus as some interviewees started at a young age. They learned of God, served in the church, and developed into ministry and church leaders. The CTCM lay leaders could relate to their words. To conduct interviews, the researcher developed a questionnaire based on the thesis topic “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice” and concerns. It was used to conduct interviews. Each interviewee receives a copy of the questionnaire for preparation purposes. All discussions are impactful, with information that resonates well with the CTCM lay leaders. Despite the different groups, they shared many commonalities and some of the same concerns as the lay leaders. The results of the interviews are discussed below.

Group I: Male Leaders with 20+ Years

Question 1a How long have you served in ministry? 1b What is the current or former position?

- Both interviewees meet the criteria of 20+ years.
- Interviewee #1:
 - 1a. Has served for 47 years.
 - 1b. Senior pastor and founder of the existing ministries they lead.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 1a. Has served for 43 years.
 - 1b. Senior pastor and founder of the existing ministries they lead.

Question 2. Any formal training such as seminary, Bible College, or some other form of exercise?

- Interviewee #1:

²⁰⁸ Susan Cooper Creel, *My Journey to Finding My Identity, Calling, and Assignment: And the Difference in the Three*. (Goodyear: Spotlight Publishing, 2021), 51.

- Received extensive formal training from university and divinity school and possesses a law degree.
- Interviewee #2:
 - Received formal training from divinity school and local church bible institutes.

Question 3a. Were you prepared for this position? 3b. If not, what specific area could more training be utilized?

- Interviewee #1:
 - 3a. Answers “Yes,” expounding further that the degrees were a part of it. It allowed access to some of the exploits participated in. However, the most significant preparation was life experiences, having encountered life, all its vicissitudes, and challenges.
 - 3b. Interviewee #1 believes that training was successful; no additional training could be utilized to prepare for the position occupied at this time. Interviewee #1 further expounded that training gives others the indication that there is capacity to persevere. Also, training gives exposure and equips to gain access to other avenues. Training helps an individual to gain tools, hold a position, and lead in different capacities.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 3a. Answers “Yes” and that there was proper preparation for where they are now. An additional note is that without some formal training, an individual advancement would be hindered, and an individual would not understand all the legalities of operating a church or starting a church.
 - 3b. Despite answering “Yes” to the previous part of the question, Interviewee #2 replied “Yes” to more training in leadership, which could have been utilized. Why?

An individual is still moving forward because of still being a student. They would have advanced earlier in assignments if they had had more formal training.

Question 4. The scripture 1 Samuel 15:22b reads, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (KJV) This scripture is usually the answer given concerning answering the call of God to leadership. The topic of this thesis is “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice.”

When did obedience to the call of God to lead become a sacrifice?

- Interviewee #1 gives a comprehensive answer to this question:
 - “Hating to be contentious, but the passage speaks more to the command of God to do something versus whether there is a willingness to adhere to the authoritative voice of God and follow what he told you to do or commanded. Obedience is not a sacrifice but mandatory if an individual will have an opportunity to serve in leadership and remain in leadership! There is a propensity to believe that what we do is a sacrifice to God when God does not require a sacrifice. He requires obedience to what has been commanded to be done. Disobedience causes an individual to lose their position and standing with God. It must be understood that we cannot do and live as others. The real challenge is conformity to the world’s way of living! The example given concerns the desire to be married when God wants you to be exclusive to himself. The ones used the most were not permitted to marry. This is the price paid for being chosen, which comes with a cost. There is no way around the cost of being considered or chosen.” The scripture reads, “Many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14).” The scripture is true that many will be called. Here is the depth of what Interviewee #1 highlighted: some do not mind being called, but few want to be

chosen because of the high cost. Here is where a fundamental understanding of what SACRIFICE is and means comes into view because an individual must be ready to die literally.

- B. Interviewee #2:
 - Obedience became a sacrifice when trying to go to another level without gas. Motivation was needed to get there. Interviewee #2 concurs with the lay leaders of CTCM concerning leaving family and making extra sacrifices.

Question 5. What do you believe makes a resilient leader?

- Interviewee #1:
 - Interviewee #1 uses this word in an acronym, “F. O. C. U. S., (Fixated On Causes Ultimately Significant). It takes staying focused on God. It takes a person sold out, all in, and not holding back. It is an understanding of death to self, living exclusively for God, and being unshakeable. II Timothy 2:
- Interviewee #2:
 - “Not accepting no as an answer, moving on from what disguises itself as defeat, and staying in control of any situation.”

Question 6. Do you have any questions or further comments on this topic?

- Interviewee #1 was honored to be a part of the project.
- Interviewee #2 answers to be sure of the “call” because there must be love for people. There must be surety concerning the call because knowing how to navigate situations is vital when they happen. Finally, the word “focus” is reiterated: know what moves to make and understand the challenge of releasing a new ministry.

Group II: Female Leaders

Question 1a. How long have you been in ministry? 1b. What is the current or former position?

- Both interviewees meet the criteria of being 20+ years in ministry.
- Interviewee #1:
 - 1a. Has served for 25 years, and Interviewee #2 has served for 24 years.
 - 1b. The current position is Pastor/Founder of the ministry they serve.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 1a. Has served for 24 years.
 - 1b. Serves as a Campus Pastor in their current position.

Question 2. Any formal training such as seminary, Bible College, or some other form of training?

- Interviewee #1 attended Bible College and Leadership classes.
- Interviewee #2 attended a local Bible Institute for three years.

Question 3a. Were you prepared for this position? 3b. If not, what specific area could more training be utilized?

- Interviewee #1:
 - 3a. The training helped, but nothing prepares you like hands-on experience.
 - 3b. Yes, it would have been better if there had been an opportunity to sit under a pastor and walk through situations. Mentored.
- Interviewee #2:

- 3a. No. I learned through trial and error and hands-on.
- 3b. The Interviewee believes no more training is needed, but if God calls you, he will provide, give strategy, and put people in place.

Question 4. The scripture 1 Samuel 15:22b reads, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (KJV). This scripture is usually the answer given concerning answering God's call to leadership. The topic of this thesis is “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice.”

When did obedience to the call of God to lead become a sacrifice?

- Interviewee #1: Obedience to God’s call to lead became a sacrifice during growth into the pastor position. People do not understand what leadership is. They do not understand the sacrifices.
- Interviewee #2: Obedience to God’s call to lead became a sacrifice as the family was affected. The family did not understand. I resigned from the pastoral position to deal with personal issues that had been suppressed. After leaving the Pastoral position, the first time, comfort came when I saw how my obedience to the call of God to lead was a blessing to so many who came back with testimonies. Family members began to understand when the fruits of the labor were seen.

Question 5. What makes a resilient leader?

- Interviewee # 1: A resilient leader is steadfast in fasting and prayer, does not allow obstacles to stop them, and keeps moving forward. The hard times build, shape, and mold a leader.
- Interviewee #2: A resilient leader is spirit-led, rooted, grounded in the word, and continues pursuing God's heart.

Question 6. Do you have any questions or further comments on this topic?

- Interviewee #1: No one is ready for sacrifice when stepping into ministry. It is an excellent sacrifice to family, friends, and all connected.
- Interviewee #2: Was glad of the opportunity to share what she learned from stepping down from pastoring the first time, which equipped her to be in the pastoral position she is in now.

Group III: Millennial Leaders

Question 1a. How long have you served in ministry? 1b. What is the current or former position?

- Both interviewees meet the criteria of 10+ years.
- Interviewee #1:
 - 1a. I started ministry at age 14, serving for 30 years.
 - 1b. My current position is Pastor.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 1a. I started ministry at age 13, serving for 13 years.
 - 2a. My current position is Pastor.

Question 2. Any formal training such as seminary, Bible College, or some other form of training?

- Interviewee #1 received two years of formal training.
- Interviewee #2 was an understudy with his pastor, attended seminary, and possesses both a Master's and Doctorate degrees. He considers that every day is training.

Question 3a. Were you prepared for this position? 3b. If not, what specific area could more training be utilized?

- Interviewee #1:

- 3a. I do not feel at times that I was prepared or sure about what I was called to do. However, he has been groomed for it from an early age.
- 3b. What specific area could more training have been utilized? According to the interviewee, not every preacher is a pastor. Leaders never reach a place of perfection. There is continual growth in every area.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 3a. I am not ready to say it casually, but I am reminded that God has prepared whom the Lord has called.
 - 3b. What specific area could more training be utilized in? I am going back to seminary for lifelong learning. I am interested in pastoring virtually. I am learning how to balance it all.

Question 4. The scripture 1 Samuel 15:22b reads, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (KJV). This scripture is usually the answer given concerning answering the call of God to leadership. The topic of this thesis is “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice.”

When did obedience to the call of God to lead become a sacrifice?

- Interviewee #1: There is sacrifice; family, finances, time, and effort take a toll on the physical body. Surrendering all. Sacrifice is realizing it is one’s “reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1). Saying “yes” to God becomes one’s reasonable service.
- Interviewee #2: My whole life, I have been a follower and lover of God. A presentation of one’s life. I accepted the call to the pastor when I had only been married a year; my wife was pregnant and just purchased a home, so the commute would be challenging. Preached at the church while the church was in a time of transition and accepting

applications for candidates. I met with the committee three times but did not realize they were candidates since they had not completed an application. However, being obedient slowed down to consult and hear from God.

Question 5. What makes a resilient leader?

- Interviewee #1: A resilient leader is determined, focused on the vision and the fulfillment of God's word, prays, and understands how the bad helps. Interviewee #1's answer concurs with Sanders's suggestion that those "entrusted with spiritual authority should expect tests, temptations, and trials. Sanders expounds further concerning the three "T's- (tests, temptations, and trials)" purpose in the life of the lay leader is to purify, clarify, work for good, growth, success, and progress."²⁰⁹
- Interviewee #2: A resilient leader is consistent and committed to seeing it through. It doesn't depend on you because it is more significant than you. Recognize that God is doing it through you. A resilient leader can't be fashioned by personal strength, thinking they did it. This can make things stressful!!! Finally, I focused on God.

Question 6. Do you have any questions or further comments on this topic?

- Both Interviewees were honored. It made them take inventory of where they came from and where they are now and helped them get where they are headed.

Group IV: Married Couples

Question 1a. How long have you served in ministry? 1b. What is the current or former position?

- Both Interviewees meet the criteria of 10+ years.

²⁰⁹ J Oswald Sanders *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 159.

- Interviewee #1:
 - 1a. The Wife has served in ministry for 18 years, and the husband has served for 16 years.
 - 1b. The current position served is Pastor/Founder of the ministry.

- Interviewee #2:
 - 1a. The Wife has served in ministry for 21 years, and the husband has served for 17 years.
 - 1b. The current position served is Pastor/Founder of the ministry they serve.

Question 2. Any formal training such as Seminary, Bible College, or some other form of training?

- Interviewee #1 received training from a local Bible College, participated in online courses, and received mentorship.

- Interviewee #2: The Wife received training from the local Bible Institute. The husband none.

Question 3a. Were you prepared for this position? 3b. If not, what specific area could more training be utilized?

- Interviewee #1:
 - 3a. Wife: Preparation is basic training because people are different, and you must know people. Husband: It is daily basic training. However, the Holy Spirit will

lead and guide. It is the anointing. Ask God for wisdom like Solomon.

- 3b. No one explained that ministry was a 24/7 job.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 3a. Wife: Yes, I believe I am prepared for the position because of the training and studying I have done. Husband: Yes, to preparation because of the hands-on training and the passion for ministry and people.

Question 4. The scripture 1 Samuel 15:22b reads, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (KJV) This scripture is usually the answer given concerning answering the call of God to leadership. The topic of this thesis is “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice.”

When did obedience to the call of God to lead become a sacrifice?

- Interviewees #1:
 - Wife: Obedience became a sacrifice on the day of accepting and answering the call to lead. The day that you step into ministry and pastoral ministry. Every day reminds me that it is “not my will but his will to be done.” The flesh wants to follow its will and not God’s. It is insanity to step into something that you are not called to do. Sacrifices are real because you have no sleep and may plan to go somewhere, but a call comes from the hospital, you visit the sick, pray with people, have no vacation, and make family sacrifices.
 - Husband: Answering “yes” to the Lord and surrendering is the start of obedience. Putting God first and keeping him first in all. As you step out and obey, sacrifices occur, such as self, family, and friends. Sunday mornings are a sacrifice because the church's doors must be open if no one else comes. The focus must be on what

is before you because people come and go.

- Interviewee #2:
 - Wife: The wife concurs with the husband, adding one must deny self. God trusts them to fulfill the assignment they said “yes” to. Any area they are lacking in, God will fulfill.
 - Husband: It becomes a sacrifice when the call is answered. Sacrifices such as time, relationships, and work are put to the side to walk in the calling of God. Sacrifices are going to be made.

Question 5. What do you believe makes a resilient leader?

- Interviewees #1:
 - Husband & Wife: Do not give up whatever comes one’s way. Push self out of the way. Most importantly, know one’s identity.
- Interviewee #2
 - Wife: Again, fulfill the call and assignment that God trusts you with. Face situations that arise and stay focused on the will of God. Stay in the house of God whether the members come or not, until the Holy Spirit says leave.
 - Husband: Continue to press on despite setbacks. Open the church even if the pastors are the only ones there. Understand that not every service will be packed, and do not give up when things do not go as expected.

Question 6. Do you have any questions or further comments on this topic?

- Both couples said they stay encouraged and do not let the negative side deter things. There is a negative side.

Group V: Single Leaders

Question 1a. How long have you served in ministry? 1b. What is the current or former position?

- Both interviewees met the criteria of having 10+ years in ministry.
- Interviewee #1:
 - 1a. I started ministry at 12 and served officially for 15 years.
 - 1b. Prophet/Elder and Director of Discipleship Ministry.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 1a. Has served in ministry for 25 years.
 - 1b. Founder of personal mobile ministry and pastor in a local assembly.

Question 2. Any formal training such as seminary, Bible College, or some other form of exercise?

- Interviewee #1:
 - Has three degrees: a B.S. in Finance/Education, an MA in Management Information Systems, and a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership. Attended a four-year local Bible institute.
- Interviewee #2: Possesses a degree from a local Bible Institute, a Doctorate, and a Certificate in Biblical studies.

Question 3a. Were you prepared for this position? 3b. If not, what specific area could more training be utilized?

- Interviewee #1:
 - 3a. Answered “yes” for being prepared for the current position because the mother was in ministry and helped to train. The mother allowed the interviewee to exercise their spiritual gifts.

- 3b. More training could have been utilized to balance life, work, ministry, and self-care.
- Interviewee #2:
 - 3a. Answered “yes” for being prepared for the current position they served because they learned from scratch from serving as Youth Pastor in their former home church. The interviewee was prepared for some things.
 - 3b. More training in traveling.

Question 4. The scripture 1 Samuel 15:22b reads, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (KJV) This scripture is usually the answer given concerning answering the call of God to leadership. The topic of this thesis is “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice.”

When did obedience to the call of God to lead become a sacrifice?

- Interviewee #1: They did not have an everyday life before entering formal training at an early age. The interviewee lived a life dedicated to ministry from a young age.
- Interviewee #2: Losing a family member and building a relationship before entering the ministry. After growing up in church, I still had to learn how to navigate through tragedy. Darkness set in, and they had to establish their relationship with God.

Question 5. What makes a resilient leader?

- Interviewee #1: Faith and trust in God that whatever happens works out for the good. Please do not focus on others; do it for and with the help of God. Stop looking at others and stay focused on God. Again, keep one’s eyes and focus on God.
- Interviewee #2 answered humility to God and knowing one's identity, which were

important topics to the CTCM lay leaders. It is necessary to seek God's will and find oneself. The interviewee was raised in ministry at age 15, started in church, and five years later, their heart belonged to God. Obedience to God calls for sacrifices, such as changing plans and relationships.

Question 6. Do you have any questions or further comments on this topic?

- Interviewee #1: The drive keeps you going. Again, the word "humility" comes back into view. Mentorship is important. The interviewee pointed out that the leadership development part was missing.
- Interviewee #2: Obedience comes with sacrifice, and it is true. However, before the "yes," God's plan for life is already in motion. An essential factor concerning leadership is that individuals must deny who they are. Self-denial is the most significant sacrifice because of the many plans developed, but if goals do not align with God's will, they will come to nothing. The life of a leader is a living sacrifice.

Summation

The problem presented was that the lay leaders of CTCM did not seem to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. Action research was the methodology chosen to support the claim and provide a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in the call by God to lead. The action research was performed in two parts: 1- Phase I's discussion focused on Old and New Testament leaders, with the Bible, scholarly articles, and commentaries being the primary source, and Phase II's discussion focused on experienced seasoned leaders of five distinct groups- (Group I Males with 20+ years, Group II Females with 20+ years, Group III Millennials with 10+ years, Group IV Married Couples with 10+ years, and Group V Single Leaders with 10+ years) utilizing live interviews. The groups chosen represented the evolution of

ministry leadership today. Interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Highlights from Phase I and Phase II of the study that impacted the understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead began with commonalities observed by the CTCM lay leaders. The words “living sacrifice-(Romans 12:1), self-denial-(Matthew 16:24), and humility-(Philippians 2:8) were used by the interviewees to both describe and define the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead and developing the character of a resilient leader. The interviewees believed that the lives of Jesus and the Apostle Paul encompassed all three words because they were sold out. Jesus was sold out to the will of the Father, and Paul was sold out to the will of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They depict the leaders of the Old and New Testament in Phase I and the experience gained from lessons learned by the seasoned leaders of Phase II. The openness of the interviewees concerning answering the “call,” facing hardships such as loss of family, setbacks, and dealing with disappointments in personal ministry expectations were relatable to the lay leaders. The CTCM lay leaders understood that they were not alone in what they were experiencing. The interviewees were tangible proof of the harsh realities of the ministry, the sacrifices required, and the resiliency developed. Phase I: Old and New Testament leaders and Phase II: Seasoned leaders are the examples of the words of Ruth Haley Barton’s suggestion that a “necessary transformation happens in the life of a leader as they experience personal sufferings and are changed by them in relation to the people they lead.”²¹⁰

In addition to the words influence, identity, and calling highlighted in Phase I by the lay leaders, the term “focus” was used by interviewees in Phase II to deal with the “yes” to the call and in completing given assignments. Understanding that it is the “will of the Father to be done” helped the CTCM lay leaders learn how to prioritize, balance the work/life tug-of-war, and

²¹⁰ Ruth Haley Barton *Strengthening The Soul Of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible Of Ministry Expanded Edition* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2018), 149.

conquer challenges that would occur. A significant point the lay leaders grasped from Phase I, which the interviewees repeated in Phase II, was that challenges will come. It is a part of the territory. Challenges are a part of the shaping and molding of the leader. However, the keys to becoming a resilient leader are not giving up and being steadfast during the shaking, crushing, and beating. According to author Dr. J. Robert Clinton believes that “conflicts develop character as the leader’s faith, dependency on God and valuable insights related to personal life and ministry mature.”²¹¹

A powerful but notable revelation differentiating between “being called and being chosen” (Matthew 22:14), highlighted by interviewee #2 of Group 1, shifted the perspective of the lay leaders. Being “chosen” erases the words spoken by some lay leaders concerning this is “not what I signed up for.” The wrestling match concerning God’s will and the lay leaders’ will is settled because of the understanding that being “called or chosen” is according to God’s will and plan for their lives. The real struggle with understanding the role of sacrifice in obedience to God’s call to lead is letting go of personal plans and will. The depression experienced stems from loneliness, which stems from stress, which goes back to wrestling with the “will” of God versus the “will” of man. Jacob’s “wrestling with a man” in Genesis 32:24-30 depicts the wrestling with God and self-concerning identity and the call. The prophet Elijah’s “cave experience” in 1 King 19 illustrates the stress of identity and calling. Jonah’s reaction to the assignment of God in the book of Jonah mirrors the mindset of the CTCM lay leaders. However, the interviewees stressed the importance of obeying God and the sacrifices drawn to the assignment. Discussion concerning spiritual warfare opened the CTCM lay leaders’ eyes.

The CTCM lay leaders received clarity about the interpretation of Ephesians 6:10-18

²¹¹ Dr. J. Robert Clinton *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development Second Edition Revised and Updated* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 141.

concerning as it pertains to leading from the interviewees about demonic attacks because of the oil/anointing on a leader's life and territorial demons assigned to different demographics. Stress is a byproduct of leadership. However, it can be alleviated through relationships and community, as exhibited by Jesus and Paul. Reflecting on Elijah's "cave" experience, his belief that he was the "only one left" in 1 Kings 19:14 led him to a mental break. However, from the response of the Lord to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:18, the CTCM lay leaders came to understand the importance of community. The lay leaders understood they were not to assume the Superman or Superwoman role. Still, they are to lead through community and by example, the people to stand amid obstacles through faith in the word, fasting, and prayer. Thus, Phases I and II accomplished the desired result, rekindling the fire and passion for ministry and restoring the lay leaders' conviction. Jesus's words concerning the Comforter/Holy Ghost's assignment in the believer's life in John 14:26 concerning "teaching and bringing all things to remembrance" validate Phase I of this project. Application of what is gleaned from the scriptures validates Phase II.

Many of the interviewees had some education and formal training. Although formal training is necessary, many believed, like Paul, that "knowing him (Philippians 3:8-10)" through the relationship was more important. Again, proper training was provided, but the hands-on training helped the interviewees and will help the lay leaders of CTCM become confident in their "calling" and develop resiliency. Knowing and understanding their "identity" in Christ will combat the inadequacies experienced by the lay leaders concerning their calling.

In conclusion, Phase I and II produced the desired results as the CTCM lay leaders began embracing their calling and approaching their assignments differently—the interviewees' words about what makes a resilient leader impacted the lay leaders. The interviewees' words in Phase II reflected the leaders highlighted in Phase I. After a candid discussion about the "calling" of

various leaders of the Bible, it was discovered that most of the focus and preaching was about the good part and victories achieved. For example, the four gospels depicted Jesus from differing encounters directly or indirectly with the authors. However, Isaiah 52:12-53's depiction of the reality of his obedience through sacrifice to the "will" of the Father thoroughly explains the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The CTCM lay leaders did not seem to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. CTCM is a mobile ministry under the umbrella of Committed to the Cause of Christ Ministries. Senior leaders observed spiritual anxiety, spiritual apathy, and spiritual discouragement among the lay leaders, which resulted in struggles with ministry assignments, personal issues, and problems balancing family and ministry. Some lay leaders began questioning their calling, lacking confidence in their identity, and believing their influence was waning. These lay leaders comprised those who had attended seminary and Bible college and those with some ministry experience. However, the lay leaders learned that no classroom text or test could thoroughly prepare them for the realities of ministry. Ministry leaders in other local community churches observed the same behavior in their lay leaders.

1 Samuel 15:22b, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," serves as the scriptural reference used to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. The researcher's topic, "When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice," presents a challenge to the call of leadership while addressing the subject and the role of sacrifice. Although scripture favors obedience over sacrifice, it is a familiar scripture that accepts God's call to lead and avoids being in the same predicament as Saul. Saul's disobedience caused God to reject him

as the leader of Israel. However, some answer the “call” naively because what it entails- sacrifice- is unknown. Although obedience is required by God and an integral part of leadership, it must be understood that sacrifices accompany it.

In this study, the researcher defined “leader,” obedience, “sacrifice,” “tempering,” and “sifting” and discussed their relevance. Active research was employed in two phases for the project. In Phase I, the researcher discussed Old and New Testament leaders concerning their calling, sacrifices, and resiliency. In Phase II, the researcher conducted live interviews with seasoned leaders from five distinct groups, who provided a relatable experience for the CTCM lay leaders in understanding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. As a result, the lay leaders gained a new revelation concerning the relationship between obedience and sacrifice, which is crucial in developing resilient leaders.

The problem that plagued the lay leaders of CTCM is also a growing problem plaguing other ministries, churches, and leaders across America. Prior statistics presented suggested staggering numbers of leaders are abandoning the pulpit, committing suicide, and divorcing because of the demands of ministry. However, updated figures suggest lower numbers, with “42% of pastors who contemplated leaving the ministry in 2022, a slightly higher number than the 38% of pastors who entertained quitting the ministry in November 2021, and the number of pastors leaving is higher than reported.”²¹² Another note concerning these latest statistics is the distinction between the departure of pastors, ministers, and lay leaders. A breakdown of both is provided. According to the latest poll, “53% of pastors believe seminary didn’t prepare them for ministry, the profession of pastor is at the bottom of surveys for the most-respected profession, and 54% of pastors find the role overwhelming.”²¹³ Regardless of how the pendulum swings

²¹² Pastoral Care Inc. “Statistics in the Ministry: Newly Revised Statistics.”

between the statistics, the exodus of leaders is troubling, especially when the “labourers are already few” according to Matthew 9:37. The statistics summarize the issues explored in this project. The “53% of pastors” who felt that their education did not adequately prepare them for leadership echoed the belief of Bishop Dale Bonner, a seasoned leader of a mega-church. Bonner believes that “there is no amount of formal training”²¹⁴ that can prepare a leader for the magnitude of sacrifice, pain, and suffering that accompanies becoming the leader God is molding them to be. According to Bonner, “there is a pain that builds leaders and a pain that grow leaders.”²¹⁵ However, the seasoned leaders of Phase II mentioned the importance of education but highlighted that hands-on experience makes a difference. The CTCM lay leaders learned from them that some things are taught, and others are caught along the way.

John 14:26 utters the words of Jesus concerning the work of the Comforter/Holy Ghost: “sent by the Father in Jesus's name will teach and bring all things to remembrance that he spoke.” 1 John 2:27 then references how the “anointing teacheth all things and is truth.” In retrospect of Phase I concerning the theological framework, the Old and New Testament leaders attest to the previous statements. David’s preparation for leadership was keeping his father’s sheep on the backside of the mountain. Moses’s preparation was in Pharaoh’s house. Joseph’s preparations were his brothers, the pit, Potiphar’s house, and the prison. So, the researcher stays within the perimeter set in using the scriptures to provide a deeper understanding of the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. Phase I’s discussion of the Old and New Testament leaders’ calling, choosing, suffering, and sacrificing proved to the CTCM lay leaders that

²¹³ Pastoral Care Inc. “Statistics in the Ministry: Newly Revised Statistics.”

²¹⁴ Samuel R. Chand *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 57.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

sacrifice is a part of obeying God and developing resilient leaders.

Author Bianca Juárez Olthoff explains the message conveyed through the research concerning the role of sacrifice in obedience to the call of God to lead. Olthoff summarizes the research's scope, suggesting “a cost is attached to calling, and the hurdles are part of the race.”²¹⁶ The hurdles are the sacrifices to be offered on a personal altar. Instead of animal sacrifices, which represented the Old Testament sacrificial system, the life of the lay leader is on the altar, representing the New Testament according to Jesus in Matthew 16:24/Mark 8:34/Luke 9:23. The CTCM lay leaders began to understand that daily struggles and challenges were forms of sacrifices, faith builders, and develops resilience. An essential point concerning resilience deviates from the point conveyed by most of the research literature presented. Resilience is more than the ability to overcome obstacles and experience restoration. Author Olthoff suggests that “resistance accompanies resilience”²¹⁷ and is necessary for its development. Resilience was not about forgetting the bad but employing the words of Paul in Romans 8:28 concerning “all things working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” For example, victims of natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, or wildfires return to the place of destruction to try and salvage what they can. Some use the items for memories, and others to help rebuild. This is resilience. Resilience is not just about bouncing back from trauma. Resilience is also about change. Author Amanda Sparkman’s article highlights two essential points: “1 change is a part of life, and 2 God has designed his creation to adjust, to change strategy, and to do something new.”²¹⁸ The Bible is the ruling authority and

²¹⁶ Bianca Juarez Olthoff *Grit Don't Quit: When Giving Up Isn't an Option*. (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2023) 95.

²¹⁷ Olthoff, “*Grit Don't Quit: When Giving*,” 92.

²¹⁸ Amanda Sparkman (2023) “Change, Resilience and Obedience to God’s Call.” *Westmont College Magazine Fall 2023*, September 15, 2023. <https://www.westmont.edu/change-resilience-and-obedience-gods-call>.

was chosen for this research project not for Bible study, but as Jesus said, the “word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God we should live by.” (Matthew 4:4). It teaches leadership 101. It teaches resilience through the words of Jesus in Luke 23:34: “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” while being reviled by two thieves and the crowds that once followed him. In Philippians 1:12 Paul said, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” His words apply to the CTCM lay leaders regarding the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead.

Like the four gospels, Phase II’s live interviews provided first-hand accounts of personal encounters experienced by each group of seasoned leaders. The CTCM lay leaders gleaned from the words of the interviewees concerning calling, ministry, and challenges. The seasoned leaders represent five distinct groups that reflect ministry today: (1)- men with 20+ years, (2)- women with 20+ years, (3)- millennials with 10+ years, (4)- married couples with 10+ years, and (5)- singles leaders with 10+ years) represent the evolution of ministry today. As the statistics suggest, “younger pastors view the pastoral role differently- (they vacation more, delegate more, spend time with family more, use technology more, and have less than one or more services less) than seasoned pastors.”²¹⁹ This addresses the CTCM lay leaders’ concern about balancing ministry and family.

Therefore, this research addresses the changing dynamics of the church structure. During the live interviews, one interviewee expressed concern about accepting a pastoral role because of being a newlywed, a new father, purchasing a new home, and the long commute to the new church. Some of the lay leaders were able to relate because of assignments involving relocation. This is one of the factors influencing what the survey calls the “Empty Pulpit Crisis, where there

²¹⁹ Pastoral Care Inc. “Statistics in the Ministry: Newly Revised Statistics.”

is no shortage of ministers, but a shortage of ministers to fulfill the role of pastor.”²²⁰ Overall, the interviewees' answers to the questionnaire provided the clarity and depth needed to understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. The Bible was also instrumental in providing the depth needed to help lay leaders understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead. Other research materials also used scriptural references, scratching the surface of a more profound revelation. However, using the scriptures in Phase I and the live interviews in Phase II provided the collaboration needed for the topic to be relatable to its audience.

As mentioned, much of the literature collected included instruction for leading a post-COVID-19 church through a political minefield. The “Empty Pulpit Crisis” was new to the researcher, the CTCM lay, and senior leaders. However, the latter statistic concerning a “shortage of young ministers' lack of interest in becoming pastors”²²¹ coincides with the hesitancy of the CTCM lay leaders to shift into their perspective roles as pastors over different departments within the ministry.

The statistics concerning the declining respect of pastors/leaders caused the CTCM lay leaders to believe their influence was waning. Despite updated statistics, the issues highlighted were like those of lay leaders. The problems remained static, solidifying the need for discussion and exploration. Statistics concerning “the adverse effect of ministry on family/marriage, long hours, discouragement, depression, loneliness, and inadequate training”²²² remained constant issues. Some of the statistics and issues were considered post-COVID-related. However, the problems plagued lay leaders, ministries, and churches before the COVID-19 pandemic. The

²²⁰ Pastoral Care Inc. “Statistics in the Ministry: Newly Revised Statistics.”

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

scriptures and the interviewees proved this point.

The word “sacrifice” is more than “giving up or offering up”; “receiving and developing” is also a part of it. Matthew 28:18 states that “all power was given unto Jesus in heaven and earth.” This same power is passed on to believers. The lay leaders learned that sacrifices develop and empower them to become resilient leaders. The primary source for the study was the theological foundation needed to explain the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead.

Theories concerning obedience and sacrifice dealt primarily with the scriptural reference, I Samuel 15:22b, used for this research. Most literature favors obedience over sacrifice. One of the leaders suggested dealing primarily with sacrifice, omitting obedience from the study. This could be the root of the problem presented or the missing link for the lay leaders of CTCM and others who prompted this research study. In summary, author Olthoff explains best that a “fight, struggle, and resistance ensues against an individual stepping into their calling, purpose, and potential”²²³ before and after the “yes.” Potential leaders, lay leaders, lay members, and the whole body of Christ need the truth about the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead because of the prevalent false realities and misconceptions that set in. People are told, “Everything will be alright now.” However, a target has been placed on their backs because in the words of Paul, “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). In addition, some lay leaders see the glamor presented by televangelists and social media platforms showing packed ministries/churches and expensive homes, cars, and clothing. They begin envisioning the same for their ministry and try to follow the same pattern but soon become discouraged because they do not know the work, cost, and sacrifices made initially. This is the story of some CTCM lay leaders who felt they should have been further along in ministry than

²²³ Bianca Juarez Olthoff, *Grit Don't Quit: When Giving Up Isn't an Option*. (Nashville: W Publishing, 2023), 87.

they were. Comparison and competition are dangerous spirits that will derail any ministry or church. For example, when the women in 1 Samuel 18:6-16 sang, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousand,” it caused Saul to see David differently as jealousy took him. The CTCM lay leaders spoke of seeing comparison and competition in the body of Christ. However, a solution to this issue was given in 1 Peter 4:11, “If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” When this issue arose among the disciples in Luke 22:24-26, Jesus stated, “The one who serves best will be the leader” (Living Bible).

Jesus chose, trained, and prepared his disciples to (1) continue the work he began and (2) know what to expect. Paul prepared his beloved son, Timothy, to lead and to know what to expect from the people. Looking to these Old and New Testament leaders in Phase I and seasoned leaders in Phase II taught the CTCM lay leaders that obeying God's call or assignment will have a cost.

Three articles presented in the Theoretical Foundations section related to the topic highlighted the atonement that led to the re-establishment of trust after the fall through having the right relationship with God. Relationship with God through salvation and being a servant were the foundational pillars discussed that led to becoming a resilient leader. Being a great and resilient leader begins with being a great servant. Knowing how to serve God taught the lay leaders how to lead God's people by helping them become sensitive to their needs. Faith-building and growth were also highlighted in the articles, concurring with everything addressed in the research project concerning the role of obedience in God's call to lead. Tests and trials build faith, dependency, trust, and maturity in God. For example, Abraham's relationship with God is summarized in three words: a “Friend of God” according to James 2:23, as he “believed

God” when tested to offer up Isaac, the promised seed. Jesus’s relationship with the Father is summarized in John 10:30, “I and my Father are one.” Abraham’s and Jesus’s obedience and sacrifice solidified the intertwining of obedience and sacrifice in leadership.

The literature explored for this research focused primarily on the importance of leading during and after a crisis. Most of the literature addresses the post-pandemic church's need to be resilient. After the mandatory shutdown was lifted, some churches/ministries were slow to reopen because of health concerns for an aging population. Some other churches/ministries did not survive the shutdown and merged with other churches/ministries. Social media was important as live streams from a comfortable couch replaced in-person attendance from a hard pew. Not tech-savvy leaders struggled in leadership roles while attendance waned, and financial support dwindled. The lay leaders understand a resilient leader must lead a resilient church. It takes resiliency to lead a church that considers itself “woke,” where people are shopping around for a family-friendly church or a viral church. A resilient leader understands the importance of community while leading during dark times. Building community with other leaders addressed the loneliness or isolation of pastors and lay leaders. As previously highlighted, Abraham, Jesus, and Paul exhibited community. Abraham trained his staff in Genesis 14:14; Jesus chose 12 men, and Paul traveled with others. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and Luke 10:1 provided scriptural references concerning community.

A few incidental notes were discovered during the research phase. First, author Gerald Whiteman Gillaspie’s book *The Empty Pulpit* (Moody Press, 1975), as previously mentioned, addressed the shortage of ministers fulfilling pastoral roles. The second incidental note concerned a shift because of the church's evolution in its dynamics and mission. Statistics suggest that “85% of seasoned leaders believe the church’s mission still is to seek and save the

lost.”²²⁴ (Luke 19:10). However, the state of today’s church has almost become one of “comfort and compromise.” The lay leaders understood how to avoid Saul's mistake by trying to please the people instead of God. This is another aspect of resiliency.

The information presented and observed during the research warrants further investigation. During the interpretation of the interviews, a commonality shared was that many of the interviewees started in ministry at a very young age and remained. Follow-up research could explore whether there is a correlation between the starting age in ministry and developing resiliency. These interviewees did not just attend church; they were an active part of the ministry. According to Chand's statistics, it is an exciting development because “children with parents in ministry do not attend church after reaching a certain age or leaving home.”²²⁵

A second topic of interest from one of the interviewees was about sacrifice. According to the interviewee, God does not require sacrifice. However, when being considered by God, sacrifices accompany. The interviewee alludes to Matthew 20:16 and Matthew 22:14’s “For many are called, but few are chosen,” which comes into view at this point. In other words, many will hear the general call of the gospel to salvation, but those chosen/considered for a specific work or assignment live a life of sacrifice. For example, Job and Paul were chosen. It is often preached that Job was “offered up or considered.” According to Acts 9:15, Paul was a “chosen vessel.” Both men's lives were met with tremendous resistance, challenges, warfare, and sacrifices. The difference between Job and Paul is that Job was not called to a position, ministry, or title. However, Job’s story exemplifies 2 Timothy 3:12 “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The book Job and 2 Timothy 3:12 prove this study also

²²⁴ Pastoral Care Inc. “Statistics in the Ministry: Newly Revised Statistics.”

²²⁵ Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 68.

lends itself to lay members.

This study's overall tone, context, and results were successful. One of the participants had been ministering at a local shelter. She was not ordained and hesitated to come forth in her calling. Family hardships, financial hardships, and personal attacks created fear in her. However, using the holy scriptures in Phase I and the live interviews with seasoned leaders in Phase II, the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead was thoroughly explained to the CTCM lay leaders. The individual participant gained a better view of the role of sacrifice in God's call to lead. She is taking the necessary steps to birth out what God has placed in her belly.

The lay leaders understood the following objectives:

1. Obedience comes with a price.
2. Sacrifice is an integral part of obedience. They are inseparable.
3. Sacrifice requires a personal cross and altar.
4. Sacrifice is a form of pruning for further growth, development, and faith-building.
5. Resiliency is more than getting up and bouncing back. Leaders learn how to stand in adversity because their faith has developed further.
6. Resilient leaders possess influence, know their identity, and understand their calling.
7. Resilient leaders understand spiritual warfare.
8. The anointing attracts attacks.
9. Scars authenticate the call.
10. Sifting and tempering are a part of the development of resiliency.

The problem presented in this research project was that the lay leaders of CTCM, a mobile ministry, do not seem to understand the role of sacrifice in their obeying God's call to lead. The lay leaders were experiencing struggles and interruptions in church, and some had

begun questioning their call. “When Obedience Becomes a Sacrifice” is an oxymoron to 1 Samuel 15:22b. The topic signifies what occurs. Sacrifice accompanies the “yes” to God’s will, purpose, and divine plan. However, the fight to sacrificially obey God’s call ensues when the “wills- (God’s will and the lay leader’s will)” are contrary to each other. From this project, the lay leaders learned that sacrifice and resiliency were essential for their development in the call to lead. Author Houlberg summarizes it best, suggesting that “God’s call in a pastor’s life develops and unfolds over a lifetime, superseding even the season of the pastoral assignment.”²²⁶

Houlberg’s suggestion means that what the call encompasses may not be revealed initially but will be developed and revealed throughout the leader's life. The CTCM lay leaders understood this to mean that they would answer “yes” more than once because of the call's growth and development in their lives. Quitting is not an option, as the Bible warns in Luke 9:62: “No man, having put his hand to the plough, looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

This study was necessary because many ministry leaders succumb to today's challenges while attempting to lead a church under fire. Some leaders lead while wounded, bleeding from the faith they are to contend for while not knowing how to stop the hemorrhage. Some lay leaders reached a point where the test and trials were not what they signed on for, believing they had answered the wrong call prematurely. Senior leaders ensure the men and women under their tutelage are thoroughly prepared. The researcher intends that the information obtained in this study be used to both equip and educate potential lay leaders concerning the role of sacrifice in obeying God’s call to lead. Lay leaders should be taught from both the scriptures and seasoned leaders within the ministry about the many facets of ministry. Jesus educated and equipped the disciples for ministry but also enlightened them on the harsh realities to be encountered and he

²²⁶ Loren Houlberg, *Pastoral Grit: Key Practices for Resiliency in Ministry*. (Columbia: Loren Houlberg, 2022), 18.

led by example. The disciples witnessed miracles, challenges, and fulfillment of prophecies concerning him. Senior leaders should not be afraid to be transparent with their leaders concerning sacrifices made, challenges experienced, and lessons learned.

Relationships with God, senior leadership, and co-laborers are essential in building community. The CTCM lay leaders learned that they are influencers responsible for pulling the people they lead toward the plan of God. The senior leaders should encourage lay leaders to journal experiences and meet as a group and individually to discuss progress and challenges. The Bible, along with journal articles and books, should be used as the primary source of information to keep lay leaders updated on leadership empowerment. Senior leaders should do personal interviews to assess the needs of the lay leaders. Continuing education classes and training classes can be developed from the information gathered. Leaders should not create the Elijah Cave mentality of being “the only one.” (1 Kings 19:10). No leader should feel that they are all alone in the continuous battle of shepherding a flock. In becoming resilient leaders, they instead become the “rock where Jesus can build his church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

It may be suggested that the information presented in this study could be more varied and void of any new revelation. However, the CTCM lay leaders remembered their purpose and rekindled the fire following participation in this project. They developed the resiliency necessary for elevation by delving deeper into the scriptures and the live interviews of the seasoned leaders from the different groups. However, a reference or training manual should be developed, and a course implemented as the last step in training and equipping before a lay leader’s graduation, ordination, or the initial sermon. There are a lot of charismatic leaders displaying excellent skills and talents. However, a church cannot thrive off emotionalism and hype. A resilient leader builds

a resilient church developed out of the ashes. They understand the role of sacrifice in obeying God's call to lead, breed resilient leaders, and become fireproof.

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September 1, 2021

Janet Wooten
Gary Moritz

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-880 When Obedience Becomes A Sacrifice

Dear Janet Wooten, Gary Moritz,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office