THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COLLEGE MINISTRY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

AT GRACE BIBLE CHURCH IN COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS

TO THE FORMER INTERNS' DISCERNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF

MINISTERIAL CALLING

———————————

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ABSTRACT

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COLLEGE MINISTRY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
AT GRACE BIBLE CHURCH IN COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS' DISCERNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF
MINISTERIAL CALLING

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Readers: George M. Hillman, Jr. and Andrew B. Seidel

The purpose of this research project was to evaluate the contribution made by the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas toward former interns' discernment and development of ministerial calling. The process was intended not only to evaluate the previous effectiveness of the program, but also to provide validated suggestions for future program improvement based on the research findings. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the research would provide findings that could be of significant value for other churches that intend to create and implement their own internship programs.

Data was gathered from a survey created uniquely for this research process. The survey was constructed around four hypotheses related to the concept of calling. It was expected that former interns would report that their participation in the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to the following: first, to their understanding of a biblical definition of calling; second, to their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses as a component of ministerial calling; third, to their discernment of God's ministerial calling on their lives, or that God had not called them into vocational ministry; fourth, to their development of a plan for vocational growth.

The results indicated that former interns received considerable value from the investment of their time and energy in the Internship Program. The results also revealed important areas in which the Internship Program could be improved.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rare is the person who discovers his or her calling by a direct route. For most, the process moves forward through many twists and turns, meandering through the days and years in an erratic manner, even appearing to move backward at times. Discovery of calling might be compared to a marble rolling around in a funnel. With each rotation the marble gets closer and closer to the spout, the ultimate objective. The individual is the marble; each rotation represents the experiences, ideas and people who have been formative and directive in the process. Interestingly, many times, just as the marble reaches the spout, or the point of ultimate discovery, the marble drops down into a new funnel, only to begin rotating and discovering new dimensions of the will of God. The primary shortcoming of this analogy is that funnels are far too smooth and uniform.

Unfortunately, for so many young men and women interested in vocational ministry, there are few willing and qualified guides who can help make the process of discovery more efficient and accurate. The single most important component of personal ministry calling is to serve, to the best of one's ability, as one of those guides.

**Crisis of Calling**

The concept of calling cannot claim recent origin. Both Old and New Testaments contain ample attestation of men and women wrestling with and receiving a call from God. Though it is an ancient concept, calling has remained the subject of great discussion and not just among Christians. Such consistent testimony to the reality of calling should not surprise Christians who believe there has eternally existed One who calls, and there has always existed in the heart of mankind the need to hear that call.

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Though God is calling, and men and women need to hear that call, it appears that more young people find it difficult to discern His voice. It also appears that their ability to discern His voice is developing later in life, leaving them less time for actually living out God's calling on their lives.

*Symptoms of the Crisis*

Symptoms of the crisis can be observed in a wide array of social trends. The traditional rites of passage into adulthood are being delayed further and further. Sheldon Danziger, co-director of the National Poverty Center at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy comments, "Compared to their parents, today's young people are taking longer to complete their schooling, to settle into steady employment with health insurance and to get married and have children…."[1]

Peter Steinfels, writing for the *New York Times*, summarizes the sociological concept of "emerging adulthood" as "a time between ages 18 and 30 or so, when marriage and parenthood are often delayed, formal schooling is prolonged, job switching is frequent and parental support is extended."[2] Christian Smith, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame, says,

> Half a century ago, many young people were anxious to get out of high school, marry, settle down, have children, and start a long-term career,' …Today, many young people spend more than a decade between high school and marriage

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[1] Jared Wadley, "Economic Factors, Social Norms Delay Move to Adulthood," *The University Record Online*, (February 8, 2009), http://www.ur.umich.edu/0708/Feb04_08/16.shtml (accessed 1 February 2010).

[2] Peter Steinfels, "A Challenge for Churches: Adulthood Takes Its Time" (December 8, 2007), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/08/us/08beliefs.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1 (accessed 9 November 2008).

'exploring life's many options in unprecedented freedom.' And, it should be added, in great uncertainty.[3]

The following observations validate and illustrate Christian Smith's assertion. For example, Americans are marrying later in life. According to U.S. Census data, in 1950, the average age at first marriage was 21.6; in 1970, it was 22; in 2008, it was 27.4.[4] U.S. Government data also demonstrates that the number of non-married American adults (ages 18 and over) more than doubled from 1970 to 1996, with the most dramatic increases occurring among men and women in their late twenties and early thirties, and those who do marry are having their children later in life.[5] There are other signs of this delayed transition into adulthood among the college student population in the United States. According to *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, in 1960, 70 percent of 30 year olds had moved away from home, become financially independent, gotten married, and started a family. By 2000, it was fewer than 40 percent.[6] In 2007, clinical psychiatrist Ross Campbell wrote the book *Help Your Twenty-Something Get A Life… And Get It Now* to provide parents with practical assistance for addressing this pervasive challenge.[7]

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[3] Christian Smith, "Getting a Life: The Challenge of Emerging Adulthood," *ChristianityTodayLibrary.com* (1 November 2007), http://www.ctlibrary.com/bc/2007/novdec/2.10.html (accessed 9 November 2008).

[4] Tom Edwards, "As Baby Boomers Age, Fewer Families Have Children Under 18 at Home," *U.S. Census Bureau News* (February 25, 2009), http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/families_households/013378.html (accessed 23 March 2009).

[5] Arlene F. Saluter and Terry A. Lugaila, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1996," *Census Bureau: Current Population Reports* (March 1998), http://www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/p20-496.pdf (accessed 15 December 2009); Joyce A. Martin et al., eds., "Births: Final data for 2003," *National Vital Statistics Reports,* 54, no. 2 (8 September 2005), http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf (accessed 23 March 2009).

[6] David Brooks, "The Odyssey Years," *The New York Times,* October 9, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/09/opinion/09brooks.html (accessed 15 February 2010).

[7] Ross Campbell and Rob Suggs, *Help Your Twenty-Something Get a Life... And Get It Now* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

Such delays in major transitions into adulthood translate into delayed discovery and implementation of calling. Unfortunately, the Church cannot always escape the negative influences of the surrounding culture. Symptoms of the crisis are apparent to those involved in recruiting and training a new generation for positions of spiritual leadership. Churches and para-church ministries find it increasingly difficult to find and to retain qualified personnel.[8] As Barbara Wheeler, President of Auburn Theological Seminary documented in 1993, "There are many signs that religious leadership needs such attention. The interest of the ablest college graduates in religious professions has plummeted."[9] Whereas shortly after World War II, nearly equal numbers of college graduates entered the ministry as entered the profession of medicine, by the middle of the 1980s, those numbers were 1 percent and 15 percent respectively.[10]

It appears that the trend toward declining enrollment may have abated somewhat in recent years.[11] However, according to data collected by the Association of Theological Schools through the "Entering Student Survey," for the school year 2008-2009 only 21.7 percent of entering students expected to enter full-time "parish ministry"

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[8] This has been a common theme for discussion and commiseration among the author's peers and at every church leadership conference the author has ever attended.

[9] Barbara G. Wheeler, "Critical Junctures: Theological Education Confronts Its Futures," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527 (1993): 95.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Beckie Supiano, "More Top Students Answer the Ministry's Call," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 54, no. 43 (2008): A17. "The number of students in American seminaries increased 22 percent from 1994 to 2004, according to the Association of Theological Schools, which accredits Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox theology schools." Terry Rombeck, "Youth Movement: Churches hope to draw younger adults to clergy" *Lawrence Journal-World & 6 News* (July 15, 2006), http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2006/jul/15/ youth_movement/ (accessed 9 November 2008). However, Rombeck also reported that the number of clergy under the age of 35 has consistently declined over the last 20 years, especially among the mainline denominations.

upon graduation, as compared to 28.4 percent for the school year 2001-2002.[12] For each

of these survey years, the category "undecided" ranked second to "parish ministry" as the

expected full-time occupation upon graduation. This seems to indicate that the mindset of

many seminary students is that their studies represent more of an exploration along the

pathway of self-discovery, rather than a definitive step toward the fulfillment of calling.

Furthermore, many after sensing God's calling to ministry leave within a short period of

time. Alarmingly, data reported by Richard Krejcir indicates that 80 percent of seminary

and Bible school graduates will leave vocational ministry within the first five years.[13]

### *Causes of the Crisis*

Wrestling with the concept of calling is not a new phenomenon. However, the

struggle has once again become acute in the modern world. Following are a few of the

significant societal factors and trends that have contributed to this struggle.[14]

First, the ministry setting of North America provides multiple options for

education, training and career. This breadth of choice has created fear, uncertainty and

sometimes paralysis for this generation. The relative wealth of parents also provides

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[12] The Association of Theological Schools, "Entering Student Questionnaire: 2008-2009 Profile of Participants," http://www.ats.edu/Resources/Student/Documents/Questionnaire/ESQ/2008-2009ESQ.pdf  (accessed February 1, 2010), 50; The Association of Theological Schools, "Entering Student Questionnaire: 2001-2002 Profile of Participants," http://www.ats.edu/Resources/Student/Documents/Questionnaire/ESQ/2001-2002ESQ.pdf (accessed February 1, 2010), 54.

[13] Richard J. Krejcir, "Statistics on Pastors: What is going on with pastors in America?" *Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development* (2007), http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=36562&columnid=3958 (accessed 9 March 2009).

[14] Establishing a statistically verifiable cause/effect relationship is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the following descriptive characteristics represent an obvious correlation.

room for the luxury of delayed decisions mentioned earlier.[15] The necessity of providing

for self and family has been postponed. Christian writer, lecturer, and social scientist, Os

Guinness writes, "The near-omnipotence of our means of freedom doubles back to join

hands with the near-emptiness of our ends. We do not have a purpose to match our

technique. So, ironically, we have the greatest capacity when we have the least clue what

it is for."[16] Such a condition has not been the normal experience for most people in any

generation or in any culture.

Furthermore, the degeneration of the typical family unit has undermined the

traditional source of wisdom for the major decisions of life. The proportion of children

living with two parents declined from 85.2 percent in 1970 to 69.7 percent in 2004.[17] This

was largely a result of the increase of divorce in the United States. Sociologist Andrew J.

Cherlin notes a powerful confluence of social trends in American family life. The

combination of frequent marriages and divorces, along with the high incidence of short-

term co-habiting relationships has created:

> … a great turbulence in American family life, a family flux, a coming and going
> of partners on a scale seen nowhere else. There are more partners in the personal
> lives of Americans than in the lives of people in any other Western country. The
> most distinctive characteristic of American family life… is sheer movement:
> frequent transitions, shorter relationships. Americans step on and off the carousel
> of intimate partnerships… more often. Whether an American parent is married or
> cohabiting or raising children without a partner, she or he is more likely to change

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[15] Average family income rose from $31,986 in 1953 to $78,845 in 2007, adjusted for inflation, U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Income Tables – Families," *U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division* (August 26, 2008), http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/f06AR.html (accessed 9 November 2008).

[16] Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2003), 22.

[17] U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Living Arrangements of Children: 1880 to 2004," *U.S. Census Bureau* (February 2008), http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/child/sipp2004/tab02.xls (accessed 9 November 2008).

living arrangements in the near future than are parents in the rest of the Western world.[18]

Younger generations find themselves with more options and less guidance, leaving them with a powerful sense of need for significance and direction. After interviewing hundreds of young adults, author Susan Littwin remarks, "What many of today's 20-30's have elected to do is continue the identity search while avoiding reality…hovering reluctantly in the passageway to maturity in a world for which they were unprepared."[19]

Today fewer young men and women are entering ministry. Those that do answer the call to ministry enter at an older age than ever before, and many are exiting after a relatively short period of time. The causes for this are many and varied. Nevertheless, confusion regarding the concept of calling itself exacerbates the crisis. Much has been written and spoken about calling throughout the history of the church, but so often the same words have been used with significantly different meaning. Is calling to be found in a Damascus Road experience which removes all uncertainty and risk, or is every seemingly trivial event and action a component of calling? Is God's sovereignty absolute and deterministic, leaving each individual with only one acceptable option for location, career, spouse, house, number of children, etc.? Or has God chosen to leave all decisions to the individual, God Himself discovering and growing as His creatures choose to act? Or is there in fact a balance and tension among these ideas? Should the questions permit a both/and answer rather than forcing an either/or choice? How can a person know if he or she has been called by God into ministry while so much confusion remains on these and other fundamental questions? A wealth of wisdom can be gleaned

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[18] Andrew J. Cherlin, *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 5.

[19] Susan Littwin, *The Postponed Generation: Why America's Grown-up Kids Are Growing up Later*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Morrow, 1986), 17.

from previous generations, but without a solid biblical framework the data sounds contradictory and confusing.

## The Value of Internship

Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas was not the first to discover internships. Educators in nearly every field of study have long recognized the value of internship, or experiential learning. In fact, the broad variety of approaches to this topic (e.g. leadership development, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, clergy training, field education, mentoring relationships, etc.) and the broad variety of vocational fields utilizing internships (business, education, medicine, construction, architecture, ministry, counseling, etc.) illustrate the nearly universal consensus of its value. Research in this field typically emphasizes one or both of the following: (1) Product—the future practitioner himself or herself (i.e. the objectives of the training based upon a desired profile, qualities, skills or characteristics); (2) Process—the most effective processes for developing such a person (e.g. What types of experiences does the emerging practitioner need? In what setting? With what type of feedback, evaluation and reflection?).[20]

Interns hope to become, or are exploring the possibility of becoming, spiritual leaders for the body of Christ. As in any area of leadership, secular or ecclesiastical, specific methodologies have proven effectiveness for discovery of vocational fit and development of vocational skills. Internships are among the most effective of these leadership development tools.

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[20] Aubrey Malphurs has observed, "It [the ministry] must know what it is attempting to accomplish. Without this knowledge, how will it know if or when it has accomplished its goal?" Aubrey Malphurs and William F. Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 120. Or, as St. Francis of Assisi is reported to have said, "We who are archers must know where the target is."

*Biblical Foundations for Internships*

No one has ever more effectively trained people for ministry than the Master, Jesus Christ. An examination of Jesus' training method reveals His intentionality in developing spiritual leaders to establish His Church. Jesus gave careful attention to both the product (the qualities He desired in spiritual leaders) and the process (effective training methodology). As to the product, Jesus aimed at developing *character*. The Gospels record a repeated emphasis on servanthood and humility.

After washing His disciples' feet, Jesus asked His disciples, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:12-15).[21] After one of several arguments among the disciples regarding their relative greatness, Jesus reminded His disciples,

> You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:25-28).

Jesus sought to impart to His disciples both the interpersonal skills and character qualities that would enable significant relationships. He modeled compassion for all—male, female, Jew and Gentile alike (Matt 9:36; Luke 7:11-17; 10:33; John 4) – and a deep concern for the lost. Jesus was deeply concerned with His disciples' relationship with His Father. He taught them spiritual practices that would enable them to grow in intimacy with the Father, grow in character, and fulfill their ministries (Luke 11:1-13; John 15:1-11).

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[21] All biblical texts quoted in this dissertation are from the *New American Standard Updated Edition* unless otherwise noted.

Jesus also sought to impart a *knowledge* base and a *vision* for His disciples' personal ministries that would enable them to execute their callings as His representatives. Consequently, Jesus focused His instruction on His own identity and mission in the world. Though the disciples remained slow to learn the lesson, He repeatedly taught them of the Father's intention for His own rejection by Israel, resulting in His death and burial and then ultimately His resurrection (Matt 20:17-19). Before departing physically from the earth, He made it clear that their callings would mirror His own—to carry the gospel message to all of the nations: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

Further, Jesus selected methods that demonstrated His perfect understanding of His creatures and how He had designed them to learn and to grow. In other words, Jesus understood the *process* of personal development. He *instructed* His disciples directly (private teaching sessions; Matt 13:10ff.) and indirectly (as they overheard His teaching of others; Matt 5-7). He *modeled* servant leadership in His interactions with them and with others (John 13). He *commissioned* them to imitate what they had observed Him doing (Matt 10:1), and He *evaluated* their experiences with them (Matt 17:19-20). Finally, He *entrusted* the ministry to them, empowering them to take up where He had left off (John 14:12). Perhaps the statement of Jesus' ministry strategy is found in Mark 3:14, "And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach…." In brief, Jesus Christ employed timeless principles and practices in His own Internship Program to develop those who followed Him.

Similar internship-like practices can be observed throughout the Bible, both before and after the ministry of Jesus. For example, in the Old Testament Moses kept Joshua close by his side, modeling spiritual leadership and commissioning his protégé for a specific calling (Exod 33:11; Deut 31:3). Elijah likewise modeled the pathway and then handed the ministry over to Elisha upon his departure (1 Kgs 19:19; 2 Kgs 2:14).

Subsequent to Jesus Christ's ministry, the Apostle Paul created on-the-job training experiences for his protégés, Timothy and Titus.

*The Internship Experience*

An internship is essentially "supervised practical experience."[22] It can be distinguished from other developmental processes such as "discipleship," because it aims at specific vocational ends and from "mentoring" because it tends to be fairly structured in its implementation. Most internships include instruction; however, in contradistinction to the normal perceptions of "teaching," the classroom lecture does not stand out as the primary characteristic of an internship experience. Research in the field of professional training has consistently revealed that practical experience is, and has always been, an indispensable component for effective training. George Hillman writes, "A field education internship is not busywork or cheap labor but is instead a fundamental element in the intentional development of a future ministry leader."[23] This same principle applies to nearly every profession. In outlining the theoretical foundation of the Center for Creative Leadership, Ellen Van Velsor and Cynthia McCauley write, "A training program that encourages lots of practice and helps participants examine mistakes is usually more developmental than one that provides information but no practice."[24] Who could possibly feel comfortable going under the knife of a surgeon who received his entire training through lectures and reading? Or who could in good conscience entrust the education of their children to a teacher who had never actually taught or received

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[22] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1981), 598.

[23] George M. Hillman, *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 9.

[24] Ellen Van Velsor and Cynthia D. McCauley, "Our View of Leadership Development," in *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development*, ed. Cynthia D. McCauley and Ellen Van Velsor (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 3.

supervision in teaching? Internships provide an excellent and proven forum for the types of training experiences necessary to produce quality practitioners in any vocational field.

## History of the College Ministry Internship

The elders and former college pastor, Jeff Paine, established the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas in 1995 out of a desire to expand the influence of the college ministry and to develop future leaders for the body of Christ.[25] The majority of participants began their internship immediately upon graduation from college, and all participants were graduates from Texas A&M University. Furthermore, all participants began their internship with a strong interest in exploring the possibility of a career in vocational ministry.

The program began with one intern who served from December 1995 through June 1997, working part-time in the community and part-time at the church. Financial limitations in Grace Bible Church's general fund required the program to be funded from outside donations, so the Timothy Trust was established in 1995 to receive contributions from those interested in supporting the Internship Program. Until 2002, the college pastor was the primary individual in charge of raising financial support for the program. Interns were encouraged to send support letters to family and friends but were not required to do so or intentionally trained for the task. However, as the college ministry expanded and more interns were hired, it was necessary to change the structure of support-raising for the ministry.

As the college ministry grew and the number of young men and women interested in serving as interns expanded, the internship changed from a part-time commitment (20-25 hours per week) to full-time (40-50 hours per week). This specific

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[25] The author of this dissertation was responsible for direct program oversight from 1998-2004 and has remained indirectly responsible for the program from 2004 to the present.

change began in 2002. Each intern was required to raise support for his or her own salary.

Federal taxes, social security and health insurance were still paid through the Timothy

Trust fund raised by the college pastor, but take-home pay was the responsibility of the

individual interns. Along with the new system came the necessity to train the interns for

the support-raising process, so training sessions and literature were produced to facilitate

this process.

Typically, the internship lasted just one year. However, as the internship

developed, it became more common for interns to remain for two years, and a few even

signed on for a third year. No interns have been allowed to extend their internship longer

than three years. The majority of the interns continue their training with seminary

education upon completion of the program, but some discover through the course of their

internship that God is not calling them into vocational ministry. In recent years, Grace

Bible Church has had an average of eight to ten interns serving each school year.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the contribution made by the

internship experience at Grace Bible Church to the former participants' discernment and

development of ministerial calling. When the internship began, the objectives were not

well-defined. However, as the program has matured, the objectives and structure have

become more clearly defined. There are now four governing objectives for the program:

growth in the vision, knowledge, character, and skills of each participant.

The central objective for the program is vision. In particular, participants

should finish the program with greater confidence and clarity regarding God's calling on

their lives. Though the program in its current form has four objectives, examining and

analyzing only the area of vision as it relates to ministerial calling will be the focus of

this study. Based upon this analysis, suggestions will be made for improvements to the

program. Efforts to sharpen the focus and improve the internship experience are timely for Grace Bible Church. In August 2008, the church opened an additional worship site in College Station, which has provided greater ministry training opportunities for the interns. The church's desire is not only to expand the number of interns participating in the program but also to broaden the areas of ministry in which an intern can receive experience beyond the college ministry. This will hopefully include internship opportunities in children's ministry, international student ministry, youth ministry and a variety of adult ministries.

Furthermore, to the degree that the program is effective, Grace Bible Church will be able to motivate and assist the replication of similar programs at other churches. It seems that few pastors have an ongoing Internship Program through their churches. At the same time, nearly all lament the paucity of qualified young men and women entering the ministry. It seems that a minority of pastors recognize both their ability and their responsibility to raise up the next generation of spiritual leaders for the Church.

**Research Design and Expectations**

This applied research project is in the form of a program evaluation. Surveys were used to measure the contribution of the internship experience to the former interns' discernment and development of ministerial calling.[26] The survey was developed based upon the experiences encountered by former interns during the course of the internship, and it was structured around the following four hypotheses. It was expected that former interns would report that their participation in the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to the following: (1) to their understanding of a biblical definition of calling; (2) to their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses as a

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[26] Throughout the remainder of the dissertation, the term "former intern" will be used to refer to interns who had completed the program at the time this dissertation was written.

component of ministerial calling; (3) to their discernment of God's ministerial calling on their lives, or that God had not called them into vocational ministry; (4) to their development of a plan for vocational growth.

Given that former interns invested so much time and effort in the Internship Program, they participated willingly in this project. Furthermore, it was encouraging to discover that former interns were all actively involved in both lay and vocational service. Their continued growth and service enabled them to provide an abundance of positive suggestions for program improvement. Finally, the other pastors of Grace Bible Church were enthusiastic and supportive of this project because of their own personal growth through participating as mentors, trainers and teachers of the former interns, or as interns themselves.

**Preview of Remaining Chapters**

The remaining chapters of the paper will cover the following subjects. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the biblical and theoretical basis for the concept of calling. This will include a discussion of the concept of calling itself, followed by a discussion of the discovery and development of calling. Chapter 3 will outline the research method and procedure used to gather information for analysis. In brief, a survey was created and distributed to former college ministry interns. Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the research. Chapter 5 will conclude the paper with a summary of conclusions based upon the research and a description of suggested improvements for the Internship Program at Grace Bible Church.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

**The Need for a Biblical Definition of Calling**

Rhetorically, Os Guinness asks the question, "Are you looking for purpose in life? For a purpose big enough to absorb every ounce of your attention, deep enough to plumb every mystery of your passions, and lasting enough to inspire you to your last breath?"[1] The need for significance is not an exclusively contemporary concern; however, the issue is possibly more of a crisis than ever before. The answer, according to a growing chorus of Christian voices, is to recover a biblical definition of calling and to create an intergenerational structure within the body of Christ that assists each successive generation in the discovery of God's plan for their lives.

*Calling in the Old Testament*

In the Old Testament, the concept of calling is represented primarily by the word group *qara*.[2] At the most basic level, calling is a verbal expression of desire or will. Normally, the intention to draw out a response from the one called accompanies it is. Both God and man act as "caller" and the one who is "called." God uses His voice to call

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[1] Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2003), vii.

[2] *qara* occurs 721 times in Old Testament literature. Leonard J. Coppes, contributor to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* has observed that the same root word with the same meaning existed in Old Aramaic, Canaanite as well as Ugaritic. Leonard J. Coppes, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 810.

out to create, and He most frequently calls out to the highest order of His creation, mankind. Men call out to one another, to God, and occasionally to God's creation.

In the first use of the word in the Bible, God called out over His creation in the act of naming: "God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day" (Gen 1:5; cf. 1:8, 10; Ps 147:4; Isa 40:26). Immediately following in the Genesis narrative, God commissioned Adam to call, or to name, the animals (Gen 2:19; cf. Ps 147:4; Isa 40:26). That is, just as God exercised authority over His creation, Adam was to exercise dominion or authority over the animals. Shortly thereafter, Adam called, or named, God's creation made from his side, his wife, Eve (Gen 2:23; 3:20). Calling can be an action of relative authority of the one calling over that which is called. It is an act of either recognizing or creating identity.[3] For example, Enoch built and named a city (Gen 4:17); Eve gave birth to and named her son (Gen 4:25); Seth had a son and named his son (Gen 4:26a); and God changed Abram's name to Abraham, thus signaling the future significance of his life.[4]

Additionally, calling includes the concept of setting apart or designating. For example, Jerusalem was a city called by God's Name, that is, set apart for His glory (Jer 25:29; 3:17; Dan 9:18). Within that same city, God placed a Temple, called by His name, designated for His worship (Jer 7:30; 32:34). Such setting apart also extends to

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[3] Jacob and Esau's future relationship was revealed to their parents. Therefore, they named him "one who supplants." Calling/naming can also preserve the memory of an event. For example, Jacob named a place "Bethel," that is "House of God," because there he saw a vision of a stair reaching up into the presence of God (Gen 28:19). Rachel named her son Ben-Oni ("son of my sorrow") because she knew she was dying, but Jacob changed his name to Benjamin ("son of my right hand") because he represented hope and comfort in Jacob's old age (Gen 35:18; cf. Josh 6:24).

[4] In an interesting turn of the phrase at the end of Gen 4:26, "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord." Throughout both Old and New Testaments, this phrase will subsequently be employed as a designation for worship and supplication (e.g. Judg 16:28; Job 12:4). These are frequent themes of calling in the Psalms. For example, Ps 50:15; 141:1; 18:6; Sometimes translated "cry, cry after, cry aloud." In the New Testament the prefix *epi-* is added to the verb *kaleo* to express the same idea (e.g. 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22).

individuals and nations. The Lord claimed many nations (Amos 9:12). Israel especially

was set apart for relationship with God; Israel was called by His name (2 Chron 7:14; Jer

14:9; Dan 9:19). The Israelites' redemption from slavery in Egypt corresponded to God's

calling of the nation to Himself (Exod 19:5; Deut 4:20; 14:2; Hos 11:1). They were called

to be a holy nation, a distinct nation, a nation set apart for God. The Lord spoke to Israel

through Moses, saying,

> Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you
> shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and
> you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (Exod 19:5-6, cp.
> Deut 7:6).

> But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt,
> to be a people for His own possession, as today (Deut 4:20).

God set apart Israel for relationship, for fellowship and for service. As it says

in Hosea, "I will sow her [Israel] for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on

her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people,

'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'" (Hos 2:23).

Being designated as the people of God (or singularly, as a person of God)

implies a special relationship of intimacy. The first illustration of this occurs in the

Garden of Eden. Immediately after his sin, Adam heard the voice of God calling out to

him: "Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'" (Gen

3:9). As illustrated in this passage, God's calling to men always involves some level of

accountability because of the nature of the relationship between God and His creation.

When that intimacy is broken between God and His people, He calls them

back to repentance, holiness and the restoration of fellowship. This represents a

significant theme of calling in both the Major and the Minor Prophets:

> Therefore in that day the Lord God of hosts called you to weeping, to wailing, to
> shaving the head and to wearing sackcloth (Isa 22:12; cf. Isa 65:12; Jer 35:17).

"And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the Lord of hosts (Zech 7:13).

Having heard God's reproving voice, the prophets urged the people to call themselves together for the purpose of humble repentance (Joel 1:14; cf. John 3:5). More often than not, the words of the prophets went unheeded, and the people experienced the discipline of the Lord. While under God's discipline of exile for her sin, Israel was called to return to the land, which represented a return to fellowship with the Lord:

> You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, "You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you" (Isa 41:9).

> But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!" (Isa 43:1; cf. Isa 62:1-4, 12).

In every great era of Old Testament biblical history, God called individuals for specific roles of service for His kingdom program on the earth. In early biblical history, God called Noah to rescue his family and repopulate the earth after His judgment (Gen 6:13; 7:1). In the era of the Patriarchs, God called Abram out of Ur to raise up a chosen people through whom God would bless all of the nations (Gen 12:1-3; Isa 51:2; cf. Gen 22:11, 15).[5] When God chose to redeem His people from slavery in Egypt, He called Moses out of a burning bush (Exod 3:4; cf. 19:3, 20; 24:16-18; 34:31-32). Moses transferred the mantle of leadership for the conquest of the Promised Land to Joshua, a man equally, though not as dramatically, called by God (Josh 1:1-9). In the era of the Judges, Samuel received his calling through an audible voice, which came to him as a child (1 Sam 3:1-14). In the era of the Kings, both Saul and David received their calling

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[5] The callings of Noah, Abraham and Joshua were all recorded using the verb *amar* which means "to say or speak." That this verb can be used synonymously with *qara* is demonstrated in Isa 51:2. Furthermore, in the New Testament, the same event of Abraham's calling is remembered using the typical Greek word for calling, *kaleo* (Heb 11:8).

through God's representative, Samuel (Saul – 1 Sam 9:26; David – 1 Sam 16:1-13).[6] The

prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the throne room of God (Isa 6:1-8; cp. Ezek 1-2); Jeremiah

received a word from the Lord, appointing him as a prophet (Jer 1:4-10; cf. 15:16; Amos

7:15).[7]

In the final era of history recorded in the Old Testament, to facilitate the

return of Israel from exile, the reconstruction of the Temple, the rebuilding of

Jerusalem's walls, and the re-establishment of the nation in the land, God raised up

several leaders, including Joshua, the son of Jehozadak; Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel;

Haggai the prophet; Ezra; and Nehemiah. Their work prospered because, as Nehemiah

observed, "the good hand of my God was on me" (Neh 2:8). Finally, it should not be

overlooked that God's ultimate "Anointed One," or Messiah, was called to this position

along with the roles and responsibilities it entailed:

> I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the
> hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As
> a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the
> dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison (Isa 42:6-7; cf. 49:1-
> 7).

Callings in the Old Testament were occasionally dramatic and supernatural,

being influenced by the urgency of the crisis or need. However, the first mention of

"filling of the Spirit" as it related to a specific task for God's purposes pertained to an

artisan, not a priest or Levite, a judge, prophet or king. Bezalel the son of Uri was set

apart for a unique task based upon a set of natural abilities under the direction and

empowerment of God's Spirit (Exod 35:30-35; 36:2). His work was physical in nature

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[6] For these kings, their calling, their choice by God (*bahar*) was made clear through anointing
(*masah*; from which we get the word Messiah, or Anointed One).

[7] Typical terminology for the calling of a prophet includes a variety of words translated
"appoint" or "consecrate." The word for "consecrate" is derived from the same root as the word "holy" or
"set apart" (*qadash*; Jer 1:5, 10).

but for a spiritual purpose: to facilitate God's own worship through his craftsmanship. What is particularly significant about these passages is the interchange between God's sovereign design of an individual, His calling of that individual for a specific task, and the response of that person. Calling to service seems to be based upon God's unique design of each person (Ps 139:13-16; Job 10:8-12) and each person's value as a commissioned co-laborer with God on earth (Gen 1:26-28).[8]

The Old Testament lays a solid and broad foundation for the concept of calling. This includes calling to relationship, to fellowship, and to service. For some, that calling to service was specific and dramatic, but for all of God's people, His calling was and is authoritative and includes accountability to Him as Creator and Redeemer.

### *Calling in the New Testament*

Like the Old Testament, calling in the New Testament can refer to the act of naming,[9] or to something as simple as expressing a request or an invitation (Matt 13:55; Luke 1:55; 14:8). However, there are three distinct and theologically significant facets of calling represented in New Testament literature. All three can be found in the word group *kaleo*.[10]

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[8] Moses, slow of speech (Exod 4:10), Gideon, the youngest son of an insignificant family (Judg 6:15), and Amos, a shepherd not a prophet (Amos 1:1) might represent possible exceptions. On the other hand, they may have been making excuses. Nevertheless, they each eventually answered the call with the result that God was glorified through their obedience.

[9] Cf. Matt 1:23; 5:19; Luke 1:32, 35; 2:21; John 1:42. Thus, calling continues to carry the nuance of exercising authority, or of attributing/ascribing present or future characteristics to a person or group.

[10] The verb *kaleo* is used 148 times in the New Testament. The related nouns, *klesis* (calling) and *kletos* (called), are used eleven and ten times respectively. Other compound verbs based on the same root include *epikaleo* (to call upon, or ask for help), *parakaleo* (to encourage) and *sygkaleo* (to call together, or summon). From among these compounds verbs, only a few references carry any relevance for the current discussion.

**Called to Salvation through Christ**

First, God gives a universal, unconditional, free calling to eternal life. In the Gospels, Jesus explained that His primary mission was to make available the way to eternal life: "And hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Mark 2:17). In Peter's first sermon, which inaugurated the Church age, he informed his listeners, "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" (Acts 2:39). This same theme continues in the Epistles:

> But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:23-24; cf. 1 Cor 1:2, 9).

> And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Rom 8:28-30; cf. Eph 1:18-19).

Though our Lord does not use the word "call" in His final recorded invitation, He insinuated the concept of calling: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Rev 22:17).

Calling is so powerful that for those who choose to hear and respond to God's call, their identities are changed. No longer are they identified with the world. They are now the Church, brothers and sisters of Christ (Heb 2:11), children of God (1 John 3:1), God's own people (Rom 9:25-26).[11] Just as in the Old Testament, calling could represent

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[11] "The English word *church* is related to the Scottish word *kirk* and the German designation *kirche*, and all of these terms are derived from the Greek word *kuriakon*, the neuter adjective of *kurios* ("Lord"), meaning "belonging to the Lord." Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972), 11.

a sovereign act of creation (cf. Rom 4:17), so also in the New Testament God's calling represents a sovereign act of recreation, moving people from the dominion of darkness and death to the reign of Jesus Christ and His life in the moment they place their faith in Him (1 Pet 2:9).

**Called to Sanctification in Christ**

The free offer of eternal life finds natural and logical application in a call to surrender and submission. Having received the greatest of all possible gifts, believers should expect to lead different lives under the authority of a different Master. The Apostle Paul stated this principle succinctly, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

Because calling demands God's authority over all of life, the first and second facets of calling are frequently joined together.[12] For example, Paul wrote, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (Eph 4:1; cf. 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:11). The truth of believers' position "in Christ" that Paul expounded upon in chapters 1-3 of Ephesians anticipates and expects the corresponding transformation of character and practice outlined in chapters 4-6.[13] That is, believers' calling to eternal life, through God's election

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[12] Seeing these two aspects of calling joined closely together should not tempt believers to fail to distinguish the free offer of eternal life (Rev 22:17) from the absolute cost of discipleship (Matt 16:24). This point has been widely debated and will certainly not be resolved in these pages, but it has bearing on the topic of calling. The call to eternal life is freely given and freely received. The call to imitation, or discipleship, is only received at great personal cost—death to self—along with great personal reward— abundant life and eternal reward.

[13] The word "worthy" (*axios*; used in Eph 4:1) connotes the idea of "balancing the scales." Kenneth Wuest writes, "The adjective form means, 'having the weight of (weighing as much as) another thing.' Thus, Paul exhorts the Ephesian saints to see to it that their Christian experience, the Christian life they live, should weigh as much as the profession of Christianity which they make." In this case, the two sides of the scale would be position (chapters 1-3) and practice (chapters 4-6). Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997, c1984), Eph 4:1.

and through faith should lead to believers' transformation and imitation of His character in every role and every relationship: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph 5:1).

Further, believers imitate God through personal holiness. The Apostle Peter exhorted his readers, "But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15; cf. 2 Tim 1:8-9). Similarly, Paul wrote, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours" (1 Cor 1:2; cf. Rom 1:7; Gal 1:6; 1 Tim 1:9). Though the term "saint" can place particular emphasis on "position" (i.e. one who is "set apart" for God by the Holy Spirit), ethical connotations remain inherent in the word (i.e. a "saint" at least *should be* holy, whether or not that is in reality true at any point in time). For example, the church in Corinth was a relatively "unholy" group of believers. Nevertheless, the believers in Corinth were both declared to be "saints," or "holy ones," and exhorted to grow in holiness (cf. 1 Cor 1:9-10ff).

Calling pertains to all of life—all roles, all responsibilities: "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Col 3:23). The first aspect of calling precedes the second in time; however, the first is incomplete without the second. Christians are called, not simply to avoid the horrors of hell, but to display His glory in all of life. Abraham Kuyper, Dutch theologian, statesman and former Prime Minister of the Netherlands observes, "Oh, no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'"[14]

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[14] James D. Bratt, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

**Called to Service for Christ**

Every person created is called or invited to partake of eternal life, and every person who accepts this offer is called to a life of imitating God's holiness. Further, every believer is called to discover and fulfill God's unique creation and design for him or her through service to God. In his discussion of the Church, the body of Christ, Paul remarked, "From whom [i.e. from the head of the body, Jesus Christ] the whole body, being fitted and held together by what *every* joint supplies, according to the proper working of *each* individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Eph 4:16; emphasis mine).

Paul tied this aspect of calling to his great theme of grace.[15] God's grace, His favor toward sinners that is not deserved includes "graces," or powerful manifestations of His Spirit enabling men and women to serve Him.[16] And the manifestation of these "graces" is different for each person: "Since we have gifts [*charismata*, or 'graces'] that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly" (Rom 12:6). As each person effectively displays the character of Christ, each will be able to serve Him by fulfilling the calling to make Christ's personality and work known in the world (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Matt 28:18-20).

These various callings to service relate in some way to the kingdom of God. There is no explicit reference in the Bible of God calling a person to an intrinsically unspiritual activity. That is, based upon a biblical text, someone is not specifically called

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[15] Other Greek words employed by New Testament writers to affirm the concept of calling include "appointed" (*tithemi*; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; 1 Cor 12:28 ) and "set apart" (*aphorizo*; Rom 1:1; Gal 1:15). For example, in Acts 13:2 Luke records, "While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

[16] Paul uses two Greek words for spiritual gifts – *charismata* ("graces" or "gifts") and *pneumatikoi* ("spiritual things" which are manifestations in believers' lives of God's Spirit).

to be an engineer, lawyer, or doctor. However, each person is uniquely made with God-ordained talents, skills, intelligence, and even limitations: "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor 12:21). This unique nature of each person's personality results in certain careers or jobs being more natural and preferable to others; in certain jobs, and not in others, every person will more naturally be able to fulfill the calling to imitate God. Paul illustrates this principle in 1 Corinthians 7:20 which literally reads, "Each one in the calling in which he was called, in this [calling] let him remain."[17] Here Paul applied calling to particular social spheres: married versus unmarried, circumcision versus uncircumcision, and later slave versus free. In other words, each man and woman is called in the midst of a variety of social spheres and relationships that God has uniquely ordained.

Based upon 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 4-6 and 1 Peter 2, along with "the larger theological pattern of the Bible," theologian Douglas Schuurman argues, "It is reasonable to conclude that all defining spheres of social life are by implication 'callings' assigned by the providence of God…This larger theological perspective, in which God's purpose includes the redemption of human life in its entirety, including institutions, and even the cosmos, encourages Christians to sense God's purpose and call in all of life."[18] The researcher agrees with Schuurman that calling extends into all spheres of life, but in the second sense of calling, not the third. That is, believers are called to a life of holiness *within* every social and relational sphere, rather than being called *to* a specific job or

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[17] Author's translation. Calling maintains an obviously important place in Paul's argument in this chapter. He uses the word nine times in just ten verses.

[18] Douglas James Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 35, 33, 36.

career.[19] The concept of calling infuses all jobs, tasks, and roles with transcendent significance, even if they are not labeled as callings.

**Called to Specific Roles for Christ**

The emphasis in both Testaments abides on the first and second aspects of calling—called into relationship with God and called on to a life of imitating God in holiness. The New Testament strongly emphasizes God's unique design for each individual, providing each with the background, experiences, skills, gifts and resources to honor and serve Christ in all of the duties and relationships of life.[20]

However, both Testaments give illustrations of a fourth aspect of calling— men and women marked out by God for specific purposes pertaining to His kingdom program here on earth. All are called to ministry in the sense of "service" but apparently not all are called to specific roles.[21]

Paul argued strongly that within the church, "All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?" (1 Cor 12:29). Every individual is not called to certain specific roles for the body of Christ. Instead, God has chosen to place some individuals in particular roles of equipping and service for the body of Christ[22]: "And He gave some as apostles,

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[19] For a similar argument, see Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life: A Theology of Christian Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 6-10. It must be conceded that this is an argument from silence. It is certainly possible that God would affirm that all jobs and all tasks could be considered callings even though the Bible does not explicitly make such a declaration.

[20] This concept is supported in the Old Testament but not emphasized (e.g. Ps 139).

[21] The Greek word *diakonia* is translated as both "service" and "ministry" in the New Testament. The emphasis of this word is decidedly not on specific roles or positions other than the office of "deacon."

[22] At times the terms "set apart" or "appointed" are roughly synonymous with calling (Jer 1:5; Acts 13:2; 22:14; Luke 10:1; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). Every believer in every era of history has been "set apart" or "appointed" by God in the broadest senses of salvation and holiness (Acts 13:48), but only some have been appointed to particular roles.

and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12).

The Apostle Paul provided an illustration of this aspect of calling. He understood his apostleship as a calling from God as he described himself at the outset of his greatest theological work, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1; cf. Titus 1:1). Paul consistently attributed his calling to apostleship to the outworking of the will of God (Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1). He humbly wrote of himself to the Corinthian believers, "And last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Cor 15:8-10).

This "grace" directed him to focus his life's work specifically on preaching the gospel among Gentiles who had never heard the message from anyone else (Rom 15:15-21). Paul understood that his unique background—born into Hellenistic Judaism, trained in Jerusalem by a renowned rabbi and committed to life as a Pharisee—and his innate capacities—a sharp mind and an able communicator—worked together in God's purposes to qualify him for a special role in God's kingdom program.[23]

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[23] Os Guinness claims "there is not a single instance in the New Testament of God's special call to anyone into a paid occupation or into the role of a religious professional." Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, 49. However, the Apostle Paul clearly discerned God's calling into a specific role for the church, and he clearly believed that this calling deserved financial remuneration (1 Cor 9:13-14). It could be argued that Apostles represented a unique position in the New Testament era. However, Paul based his argument on the role and rights of priests and Levites in the Old Testament who facilitated the worship of God's people.

Paul used his own experience as a basis for exhorting his disciple, Timothy, to fulfill his unique calling by God: "For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim 1:6). Though unique roles exist for believers within the body of Christ (Eph 4:16), those roles may or may not involve positions of authority or financial remuneration, and the roles will in some way be unique to each individual.[24]

*Summary of the Biblical Definition of Calling*

When considering the biblical definition of calling, it is better to speak of "callings" (plural) rather than "calling" (singular). Among these callings are: (1) the call to salvation through Christ, (2) the call to sanctification in Christ, (3) the call to service for Christ and (4) the call to specific roles in ministry to Christ's Church, or ministerial calling. The first component of calling applies to all of mankind; the second and third to all believers; the fourth to some believers for at least some portion of their lives.

God is sovereign in humanity's design and in the experiences and opportunities of people's lives. Biblical calling represents a wonderful invitation to live with God and for His glory. This should fill every believer with joy and gratitude. The subject of calling should be approached with godly fear. It is possible to turn a deaf ear to His voice: "Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts'" (Heb 3:7-8a). To resist God's calling in any sense of the word is at the least to miss out on His best and at the worst to experience terrible consequences.[25]

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[24] Here again Paul serves as an informative case study. At times his job, his activity by which he supported himself financially, corresponded to the fourth facet of calling (apostleship) and at other times it corresponded to the second aspect of calling (making tents to the glory of God).

[25] Jonah (Jon 1:17), Barak (Judg 4:9) and Demas (2 Tim 4:10) provide just a few illustrations of the consequences of resisting God's call.

**The Need for a Historical Understanding of Calling**

The understanding of calling must begin with a biblical definition; however, it would be unwise to ignore the wisdom available from a long discussion among Christians of all ages. Just as the concept of calling received different emphases during different periods of biblical history, so calling continues to change and transform throughout the history of the Church. The Church did not ignore the biblical teaching on calling; however, societal factors have influenced her understanding and application of calling significantly.[26]

*Calling in the Early Church (100-500 AD)*

In the early Church, calling began as a summons to martyrdom. The Apostle Paul wrote to the young church in Philippi, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil 1:29). Christianity was a minority religion in a hostile environment. Having grown out of Judaism, so to speak, early Christians experienced the anger of zealous Jews. By proclaiming a morality that stood in opposition to the culture of the Roman Empire and refusing to worship the Emperor as a god, early Christians also experienced the distrust and at times, persecution of neighbors and governing authorities. Consequently, those who considered responding to the call to faith in Jesus Christ asked themselves the questions, "Should I become a Christian? And second, [assuming a positive response to the first question] how public should I be about my Christian faith?"[27]

Ignatius of Antioch regarded his faith in Christ as central to his identity. It was not something that could be hidden no matter the consequences. When faced with the

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[26] William C. Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). The following historical discussion follows the framework developed by Placher.

[27] Ibid., 6.

likelihood of a brutal martyrdom for his faith and with the possibility of rescue from this fate, he adamantly chose the former. Writing to his followers from a Roman prison, he urged them not to attempt to secure his release. Ignatius boldly declared, "May nothing seen or unseen begrudge me making my way to Jesus Christ. Come fire, cross, battling with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, mangling of limbs, crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil – only let me get to Jesus Christ!"[28]

The religious environment of the Roman Empire changed completely under the rule of Constantine (306-337). Reversing the policies and practices of persecution that had been established by Diocletian, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313, thus establishing religious toleration. Shortly thereafter he converted to Christianity. Though he did not officially declare Christianity the religion of the Empire,[29] his conversion marked the beginning of "Christendom," and a radical change of perspective among Christians regarding their place in the world.

The earliest of Christian saints expected life on this earth to be hard, but in the absence of persecution, what did it mean to be called? With the removal of the social and physical cost to becoming a Christian, how could followers of Jesus Christ remain a distinct, holy people? Within a generation, Christianity went from suffering to social advantage. Such a historical setting helps to explain the emergence of asceticism. The cost of following Christ became self-imposed. Those with a calling heard a voice beckoning them to the deserts of Egypt and Syria.

Leaving behind comfort, wealth, family and friends, these disciples of Christ placed upon themselves the rigors of self-denial in harsh settings. One of the most

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[28] Cyril Charles Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, The Library of Christian Classics (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1970), 105.

[29] Emperor Theodosius would establish Christianity as the official religion of the Empire in AD 380.

notable among the "desert fathers" was Antony, an Egyptian born into substantial wealth. The story of his life as conveyed by Athanasius inspired many men and women to forsake all to find Christ.

Others, such as Augustine of Hippo, did not retreat to the desert, but nevertheless answered God's call by serving and leading His people. Like the saints of the desert, he echoed a familiar refrain from his era that genuine communion with Christ could not be found through the enjoyment of worldly desires. In his autobiography, Augustine writes, "I aspired to honours, money, marriage, and you laughed at me. In those ambitions I suffered the bitterest difficulties; that was by your mercy—so much the greater in that you gave me the less occasion to find sweet pleasure in what was not you."[30]

*Calling in the Middle Ages (500-1500 AD)*

Those living in the Middle Ages did not wonder whether or not they should become a Christian. Christianity was assumed. Rather, the question of calling pertained to what "kind of Christian" a person should be—a regular Christian who worked a job, married and raised children, or one who answered the call to religious life, serving God as priest, monk or nun. Calling, or "vocation," came to mean almost entirely participation in a religious order.[31] Social status was largely pre-determined by birth during this era, but for those who heard the call to religious life, there were opportunities for education, advancement within church hierarchy, and even political influence.

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[30] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 97.

[31] The English word "vocation" comes from the Latin word *vocatio*, which means "calling." The use of Latin in the Church of the Middle Ages introduced this word into the vocabulary of the Church.

It was a logical progression from solitary life in the desert to a "separated" life in community with like-minded Christians. Desert communities formed, followed by similar communities in the West. Monasteries and convents required discipline but not isolation. Christians could answer God's call to live in the world and yet apart from the world by uttering vows of self-denial in the company of other serious-minded Christians. The order and simplicity of life within a monastery or convent enabled monks and nuns the opportunity to live a relatively undistracted life on this earth in preparation for the life to come.[32]

*The Rule of St. Benedict* established a model for the monks who gathered around Benedict of Nursia and also a model for similar orders that would later form throughout the western world.[33] Benedict created a rhythm of prayer, work and study to guide his fellow pilgrims in a life of holiness. His *Rule* was compassionate and reasonable, yet it demanded obedience. Benedict writes, "These disciples must obediently step lively to the commanding voice – giving up their possessions and their own will, and even leaving their chores unfinished. Thus the order of the master and the finished work of the disciple are fused, with the swiftness of the fear of God – by those who deeply desire to walk in the path of the Lord."[34]

In his book *Courage and Calling*, Gordon T. Smith affirms this historical understanding in the early church and the Middle Ages:

> For the early church, which was deeply influenced by Hellenistic thought, any work that was 'in the world' or involved active engagement with society was viewed as secular and probably evil. Thus the spiritual ideal was to leave the world, to be separate from it and to live a life of prayer and study as much as

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[32] Placher, *Callings*, 107-114.

[33] Ibid., 108.

[34] Benedict of Nursia, excerpt from *The Rule of St. Benedict*, in *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, ed. William C. Placher (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 129.

possible. A belief became deeply imbedded in the psyche of the church: that if you had a vocation you were called to leave 'secular' employment and to accept the responsibility of service in and through the church. For centuries it was assumed that one who had a 'vocation' was called to the life of ministry in the church, as either a priest or a nun.[35]

*Calling During the Reformation (1500-1800 AD)*

In the early Church and the Middle Ages, there was relatively little choice of career.[36] Consequently, early Christians never thought to consider calling in terms of their jobs. However, as Europe came out of the Middle Ages, cities grew. People could leave the countryside to pursue a new life and a new career in the city or possibly even leave Europe altogether and sail to the Americas. Thus, people of nearly every socio-economic strata found themselves face to face with more choices than ever before.

These societal changes worked together with the theological changes of the era. During this period, the Reformers abolished the distinction between the religious and the secular. A pillar of their theological insight was the priesthood of all believers. Calling could be lived out as priest or parent, friar or farmer. Martin Luther, and other Reformers, upset not only the doctrinal status quo of their day but also the ecclesial structures that had created an unhealthy hierarchy among the people of God.

Many scholars have observed that in Luther's German translation of the Bible, he translated the Greek word *klesis* in 1 Cor 7:20 as *Beruf*, which is the everyday word for a job or occupation. For Luther, all of life—job, marriage, parenthood, daily tasks—

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[35] Gordon T. Smith, *Courage & Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 23.

[36] "A peasant's son became a peasant; a goldsmith's son joined the goldsmiths' guild. Daughters had even fewer choices. Even at the top of society, in the Middle Ages the king's eldest son became king, the next perhaps a bishop, the third likely joined the army, and the kings daughters were married off to strengthen key alliances." Placher, *Callings*, 5.

was included in the Christian's calling.[37] Every man and woman could experience a sense of dignity before God in man, even in the ordinary tasks of life on this earth. Such an attitude toward calling did not mark the end of the monastic movement, but it did represent a significant ideological change. Though Luther began his religious career by answering a call to the monastery, later in life he argued strongly and consistently that calling covers all roles and occupations in this life because calling, in its most fundamental sense, is simply a station in life through which a person can show love for others on behalf of Christ.[38]

The great English protestant theologian William Perkins shared Luther's conviction that calling extended to all of life. Perkins added to the discussion of calling by distinguishing between a "general" calling to salvation and "particular" callings to a wide variety of roles in responsibilities. Perkins writes, "The general calling is the calling of Christianity, which is common to all that live in the Church of God. The particular is that special calling that belongs to some particular men: as the calling of a Magistrate, the calling of a Minister, the calling of a Master, of a father, of a child, of a servant, of a subject, or any other calling that is common to all."[39]

While acknowledging that any task could, theoretically, be considered a calling, English Puritan Richard Baxter was careful to give instructions on the selection

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[37] Comparing the second and third periods of the Church's understanding of calling, Os Guinness describes a "Catholic distortion" (only religious activities are a part of calling) and a "Protestant distortion" (regarding job, work or employment alone as calling; calling without a Caller). Guinness, *The Call*, 31-35, 38-42. Although differing in emphases, among the great reformers, both Luther and Calvin shared the conviction that calling pertained to all of life. Donald R. Heiges, *The Christian's Calling*, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 45-61.

[38] Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 37-39.

[39] William Perkins, excerpt from *A Treatise of the Vocations*, 1631, in *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, ed. William C. Placher (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 264-265.

and outworking of particular callings. His advice sounds remarkably modern, or perhaps timeless in its wisdom. Baxter instructs,

> Direction 7: When two callings equally conduce to the public good, and one of them hath the advantage of riches, and the other is more advantageous to your soul, the latter must be preferred, and next to the public good, the soul's advantage must guide your choice… Direction 10: It is not enough that you consider what calling and labor is most desirable, but you must also consider what you or your children are fittest for, both in mind and body… Direction 11: Choose no calling (especially if it be of public consequence) without the advice of some judicious, faithful persons of that calling.[40]

### *Calling in the Post-Christian World (1800-present)*

The Reformers were so successful at reshaping the concept of calling in their own day that today the term "vocation" is often associated exclusively with one's job. Vocational schools focus on learning a trade that can immediately be used for gainful employment upon graduation. Thus, "vocation" has moved from referring exclusively to religious orders in the Middle Ages to nearly exclusively the work of one's hands. This trivializes the concept of calling and creates distress for those who are bored with or who dislike their jobs. They are left asking, "Can this be all there is to my calling in life?"

This world has more options than ever for career and also more options than ever for the structure of family. People are more mobile. They have more information. They have more religious choices at our doorstep—Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and even innumerable "Christian" options. They possess, or are possessed by, a disorienting array of choices.

People also live in a culture that increasingly rejects—overtly and subtly—the values of Christ's followers. For many, job is not just calling; it is god. Family and

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[40] Richard Baxter, excerpt from *Directions about Our Labor and Callings*, in *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, ed. William C. Placher (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 283, 284, 285.

friends worship sacrificially at its altar. Materialism and sensuality reign. The result is

that the second biblical aspect of calling, imitating Christ, is extremely important for

believers in this age. However, as Placher observes, there is a lack of consensus among

Christians regarding the concept of calling. Rather, "Some contemporary theologians

have grown suspicious of the very idea of 'vocation.'"[41]

During any given historical period, including the present, the Church did not

necessarily affirm one aspect of calling and reject all others. Rather, historical exigencies

allowed, or compelled, the Church to emphasize one or more aspect of calling above the

others. Christians from every era have contributed to the understanding of calling.

However, some have also added to the present day confusion. In 1956, H. Richard

Niebuhr observes, "Modern vagueness in thought about the ministry appears in the

uncertainty of the churches, the ministers themselves, of boards and schools about the

nature of the call."[42]

There is a tendency to oversimplify, reducing the concept of calling to a

manageable number of categories. In other words, confusion has resulted, at least in part,

because of the attempt to apply a narrow definition to a complex subject.[43] This error may

be the result of inadequate biblical exegesis, or it may be the result of inadequate

historical perspective. Humans are naturally inclined to view "calling" only through the

lens of the constraints or freedoms of current circumstances, and consequently only

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[41] Placher, *Callings*, 9.

[42] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Harper, 1956), 65.

[43] Niebuhr further divides the call to ministry into "four elements: (1) the call to be a Christian…; (2) the secret call, namely, that inner persuasion…; (3) the providential call [which includes the necessary skills and circumstances]…; (4) the ecclesiastical call, that is, the summons and invitation extended to a man by some community or institution of the Church to engage in the work of the ministry." Ibid., 64.

through the lens of the current use of terminology. Confusion results when definitions from another era are not thoughtfully applied to the present time.

Most modern writers, including Guinness, tend toward the Protestant distortion—*everything* is calling. He writes, "Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service."[44] Guinness goes on to make a distinction based upon his personal understanding of the biblical definition of calling and confirmed by historical usage that there is both a primary calling and a secondary calling:

> Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia). Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him.[45]

Such a distinction between a primary and secondary calling is useful. However, Guinness reduces the number and nuance of the categories of calling, while at the same time sweeping in every role and responsibility given to the believer.

Several other contemporary authors display the same tendency to oversimplify the concept of calling. In his book, *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*, Gene Edward Veith writes,

> Our vocation is not one single occupation…we have callings in different realms— the workplace, yes, but also the family, the society, and the church. Someone who is retired may no longer be in the workplace. But he may still pursue his callings

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[44] Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, 4.

[45] Ibid., 31.

as a grandfather, a concerned citizen, and perhaps as an elder in his church…These are all holy callings and gifts of God.[46]

William Placher also appears to have reached a similar conclusion. He comments, "We do not have to limit 'vocation' or 'calling' to one meaning and then vote it, in that sense, up or down. We can draw on the range of options the tradition offers us, or add some new ones. I think job as vocation should stay on the list, but not as the only possibility."[47] Gary Badcock is also of the opinion that, "The Christian calling refers to the reorientation of human life to God through repentance, faith, and obedience; to participation in God's saving purpose in history; and to the heavenly goal. . . . The Christian calling is nothing less than to love God and one's neighbor."[48] Badcock does distinguish a unique calling to ministry, but its uniqueness is lost in his overall understanding of the concept

Gordon T. Smith provides a necessary corrective for this tendency:

In thinking about *vocation* [i.e. calling] in this sense, it is important that we not confuse *vocation* with *career*, *job* or *occupation*. Rather it is helpful, if not essential, to maintain a clear distinction…I can lose my job; I might be released from a position. My career can come to an end when I retire. But my vocation comes from God; it remains. It is not something that I choose or that someone else can give me or take away from me. It comes from God; it reflects my fundamental identity.[49]

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[46] Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*, Focal Point Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 47-48.

[47] Placher, *Callings*, 329-330.

[48] Gary Badcock, *The Way of Life: A Theology of Christian Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 9-10. Other contemporary writers who seem to share this perspective include Douglas Schuurman and Donald Heiges. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life*, 29-37. Heiges, *The Christian's Calling*, 22.

[49] Smith, *Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential*, 34-35. Smith does not speak specifically about calling to ministry. However, he makes a distinction between what I describe as the second and third aspects of calling. We all have daily duties in which we are called to imitate Christ, and there are unique ways we can serve Christ according to our God-created design. Unfortunately, Smith also confuses the matter and appears to contradict himself when he declares in his first chapter, "God is calling people into education, the arts, public office, business, engineering, medicine, the service

Few can report witnessing flaming shrubbery. Fewer still can claim a glimpse into the throne room of God. As a result, some claim that there is no such thing as a calling to ministry, or what the researcher has described as a fourth aspect of calling to specific roles within the body of Christ such as those described in Ephesians 4:11-12. However, there is a biblically valid and experientially confirmed specific type of calling that pertains to ministry. H. Richard Niebuhr labels this the "ecclesiastical call" in order to emphasize the fact that it is a call to engage in specific types of work within the structures of the Church.[50]

This aspect of calling must remain set apart if it is to be discerned and answered. It is not better or more spiritual than other jobs or careers, but it is distinct. It does not come to all, but it does come to some. If a believer denies this or confuses the matter by including calling to ministry into a broader category, the body of Christ will suffer. Those attempting to discern such a calling will not know what to listen for, if anything. Those in the midst of living out such a calling will have nothing to turn back to when the inevitable hardships of ministry come upon them.

*Calling in Modern Times from a Secular Perspective*

Strictly speaking, the concept of calling must forever remain the domain of people of faith in God. As Os Guinness notes, "There is no calling unless there is a Caller."[51] Increasingly however, even writers directed toward non-Christian audiences recognize this specific sense of calling to a unique role in the world. This represents a

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professions – quite literally into every area and sector of human life" (Smith, *Courage and Calling,* 25). These jobs can and should be consistent with an individual's unique divine design. However, these jobs are not callings. Rather, they represent opportunities to live out our calling to reflect the character of God in the midst of a broken world. There seems to be a fear among religious professionals that we be accused of exalting ourselves and denigrating others when we maintain that calling refers to innately spiritual matters.

[50] Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry*, 64.

[51] Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, 20.

rather unusual development given the historical attitude of Americans toward personal and national destiny. For generations, the typical mindset has been that every individual authors his or her own destiny. Humans value equality, self-determination, self-reliance, and hard work. In fact, the basic rule of life has always been, "If you want something bad enough, and if you are willing to try hard enough, you can accomplish or become anything in this world." In the most recent Presidential election, Barak Obama opened his victory speech with these words, "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer."[52]

However, there is a growing consensus among management and leadership experts that individuals are just that—individual and unique. Based upon decades of research, Tom Rath, author of *Strengths Finder 2.0*, states emphatically, "You cannot be anything you want to be—but you can be a lot more of who you already are." [53] In an earlier book based on the same research, Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton remark, "To excel in your chosen field and to find lasting satisfaction in doing so, you will need to understand your unique patterns. You will need to become an expert at finding and describing and applying and practicing and refining your strengths."[54] Rather than a person wasting effort, energy, emotion and time trying to become something he or she is not, they argue that each person is better off discovering his or her unique strengths and developing those same strengths. As a result, the world will be better off as well.

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[52] Barak Obama, presidential election victory speech given at Grant Park in Chicago, Illinois, on November 4, 2008, http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/04/obama.transcript/ (accessed 7 October 2009).

[53] Tom Rath, *Strengths Finder 2.0* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), 9.

[54] Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton, *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2001), 3.

Secular authors struggle to identify proper terminology for calling, not believing in One Who Calls or The Master Designer. However, they have contributed to the concept of calling by confirming through reliable research that people are in fact unique and by confirming the relative inefficiencies of trying to grow in areas of innate limitation—what a person does should flow from who he or she is. They have also contributed by helping to identify patterns of strengths and by creating tools for self-discovery.

## The Need for Discernment

All of life, not just the matter of calling, requires the Christian to listen for the voice of God and choose to follow. As theologian Gordon T. Smith observes, "Discernment relates to the whole of our Christian experience, not just to an isolated segment—a time of decision…Discernment is the word within the Word of God—the specific word to us as individuals, but as individuals who seek to know and live by the Word."[55] This means that discernment applies specifically to a person's understanding of whether or not he or she has been called by God into a specific role for the body of Christ which also will provide his or her livelihood (the fourth component of the researcher's understanding of a biblical definition of calling; that is, ministerial calling). It also means that discernment applies to decisions outside of ministerial calling – education, career, spouse, children, etc. For every believer who desires to walk in obedience to God, discernment is a continual process.

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[55] Gordon T. Smith, *Listening to God in Times of Choice: The Art of Discerning God's Will* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 21.

*Discernment in General*

In his book *Listening to God in Times of Choice*, Smith describes two approaches to discerning the will of God. The first he labels the "Blueprint school."[56] According to such an approach, there is just one perfect will of God for each person: a mystery that must be discovered (or possibly missed!). He writes, "When it comes to marriage, vocation, the school you will attend, when you will go and when you will stay, you need to determine whether it is God's will or pattern for your life before you act."[57] This approach seems to leave young people paralyzed by the fear of "missing" God's will. Smith's second approach is called the "Wisdom school." According to proponents of this approach, there is not just one will of God for each individual.[58] Rather, as believers' minds are renewed through Scripture, they become wise people, making good choices among several equally viable options. Smith argues for a third way which he describes as a "model of friendship with God." In this model there are "two wills and two freedoms, God's and mine, in continual interconnection."[59] Smith objects to both the Blueprint school and the Wisdom school on the basis that, "…in both models God is distant from the decision-making process."[60] However, in practice, Smith's model is similar to the Wisdom school. He improves on the vocabulary of the Wisdom school by framing his approach in the context of a dynamic relationship with God. The Wisdom

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[56] Ibid., 15.

[57] Ibid., 99.

[58] Garry Friesen and J. Robin Maxson, *Decision Making and the Will of God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004). Friesen is an influential modern proponent of this model. Curiously, Friesen denies having received a calling to ministry, and yet his model for decision-making includes most of the historically employed means of validating just such a call.

[59] Smith, *Listening to God in Times of Choice: The Art of Discerning God's Will*, 22.

[60] Ibid., 16.

school, along with the improvements offered by Smith appear biblically valid to the researcher and resonate with him personally.

Unfortunately, when studying theories of discernment, advocates of any particular model often create false dichotomies. Many of the great issues of life are not either/or but both/and. There are elements of applicable truth in each model at different points of decision. Some decisions present one right option and one wrong option. At other times, several valid options stand, and God gives a person the freedom to choose between equally honoring alternatives. God always desires and expects His people to walk closely with Him. He is sovereign, and He has created humans as responsible moral agents, choosing and acting within His sovereign realm. Discernment is a dynamic process that illustrates this antinomy in each life nearly every day.

Nevertheless, God has revealed through His Word some principles for discernment in general that have been historically validated by believers of all ages. Primary among these is the objective standard of the written Word of God. Believers who wish to become wise and discerning must have their minds continually changed and renewed by God's Word: "Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect" (Rom 12:2 NET). A more subjective, but still biblically affirmed, principle for discernment is prayer, both speaking to and listening for God's guidance. Smith affirms, "We can be discerners only if we are pray-ers. We discern the voice of God within the context of a relationship."[61]

Both of these sources of input presuppose abiding fellowship with the God who speaks. As Jesus made clear to disciples, His self-disclosure depends upon growing intimacy with Him: "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who

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[61] Ibid., 40.

loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him" (John 14:21). These principles also presuppose a commitment to obey whatever word of discernment received from the Lord (Jas 1:5-8; cf. John 7:17). God longs to reveal Himself and His will. He is not eager to hide from the creatures made in His image and created for His glory. However, He is not inclined to reveal His will to those who are merely curious. Smith states this point clearly, "Our only hope for effective discernment is clarity in our allegiance."[62] The objective standard of God's Word is available to all for the discernment of His will. When His written Word is joined with sincere prayer and patience, many of life's decisions become clear.

A third biblically emphasized principle for discernment is input from wise counselors: "For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory" (Prov 24:6). Douglas Schuurman notes, "There are profoundly personal and individual dimensions to making pivotal decisions…But there are also important communal elements in the process of discerning God's callings."[63]

Each of these principles for discernment—the word, prayer and wise counsel—is valid and necessary. However, because of humanity's fallen nature, people are prone to misinterpret even the clearest of divine messages. For this reason, other factors should be weighed appropriately in decision-making. Most Christians consider an assortment of factors as contributing to discernment. Some of these factors are external and fixed, such as past experiences and heritage; others are external and changing, such as geography and opportunities; some are internal and changing, such as personal values; still others are internal and relatively fixed, such as temperament and learning style.[64]

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[62] Ibid., 43.

[63] Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life,* 149.

[64] George Hillman describes 11 factors that contribute to each individual's divine design. God is the source of an individual's design. As God urges, draws and prompts the individual, living in a

Some decisions are simple and obvious. Others are complex and difficult. Douglas Schuurman observes, "Uncertainty and anxiety cause people to want to avoid the struggles involved in discerning God's will by latching onto a 'five steps' method for making pivotal decisions."[65] Nevertheless, most simply stated, discernment of God's will is found at the intersection of God's plan, men's needs and an individual's divine design. Or as Frederick Buechner so beautifully observes, "The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."[66]

Among the factors involved in the process of discernment, two deserve special attention. Each can be readily experienced in an internship to aid in the process of discerning whether or not a person has been called into ministry as a profession. And if so, whether or not he or she has been called to a particular assignment. These factors are self-awareness and input from a biblical community.

*Self-Awareness and Discernment*

To recognize the intersection between man's need and an individual's unique design by God requires a high level of self-awareness. In a recently published book, *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*, Nelson J. Grimm, theologian and field educator writes, "Vocational discernment requires a clear understanding of who the student is and how God has gifted the student. God uses a student's interests and abilities, joys and desires to invite that student into his service to

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community of faith, to respond to various opportunities, His callings are discovered. George M. Hillman, "SL 335: Personal Assessment and Ministry Vision" (class lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX, 2008).

[65] Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life,* 140.

[66] Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973), 95.

the world. We are not all the same."[67] Giftedness, along with all of the components of

each individual's unique design, when combined with accurate self-awareness, provides a

powerful component for discernment of the will of God. Because of the unique nature of

some of the tasks and demands of work in ministry, the need for self-awareness in

discerning a call to ministry is extremely important. For example, some positions within

ministry require a blend of creativity and administrative competence, leadership drive and

genuine empathy.

Even from a secular perspective, self-awareness ranks as a highly important

aptitude for success at work.[68] An effective worker, in a spiritual or secular setting, is

aware of his or her strengths and limitations. Accordingly, a wide variety of tools have

been created to assist in self-assessment. Some focus on personality and the

interrelationship between various personalities on a team. Others focus on natural talents

and skills.[69] Among the most helpful that have been employed by the Internship Program

at Grace Bible Church are Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Strengths-Finder.[70]

Another excellent, but time-consuming, tool can be found in *The Power of

Uniqueness*. Miller labels his approach as the "System for Identifying Motivated

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[67] Nelson J. Grimm, "Field Education and Vocational Discernment," in *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*, ed. George M. Hillman, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 18.

[68] Ellen VanVelsor, Russ S. Moxley, and Kerry A. Bunker, "The Leader Development Process," in *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development*, ed. Cynthia D. McCauley and Ellen Van Velsor (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 204-33. When discussing self-awareness, the authors develop the related concepts of intrapersonal intelligence ("the ability to form an accurate model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in everyday life." 214) and metacognition ("the awareness of and the ability to regulate one's own cognitive processes." 214).

[69] For an overview of several of the most effective self-assessment tools, see Grimm, "Field Education and Vocational Discernment," 22-23. Also, for an evaluation and comparison of two natural talent inventories, see Phillip Sell, "Comparing Natural Talent Inventories for Use in Field Education," in *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*, ed. George M. Hillman, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008): 311-36.

[70] Rath, *Strengths Finder 2.0*.

Abilities" (SIMA). He is looking for life patterns that emerge by asking a person to chronicle his or her life, recording what he or she has enjoyed doing (motivation) and done well (abilities). Based upon these patterns, a completely unique profile can be discerned for each and every person.[71]

*Biblical Community and Discernment*

Biblical community is more than just wise counsel: "He who walks with wise men will be wise" (Prov 13:20).[72] Wise counsel can come from a stranger. Biblical community means living closely and laboring together for a common purpose. The Apostle Paul penned his heartfelt thank you letter to the Philippians because of their shared experience of God's grace, their shared identity in Christ, and their shared love of and labor for the gospel (Phil 1:6-8). Such is biblical κοινωνια – fellowship, participation together, or "community." Relationships like this are indispensible for discerning if one is called to ministry. Indeed, such relationships are indispensible if a person hopes to faithfully live out God's callings and grow in insight and understanding of what really matters (Phil 1:9-10).

As Paul responded to God's callings, he experienced the power of biblical community. Schuurman writes, "Though Saul's encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus was intensely private, it was Ananias who laid hands on him…the community

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[71] Arthur F. Miller, Jr. and William Hendricks, *The Power of Uniqueness: How to Become Who You Really Are* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 31. This tool can be used independently; however, it is much more useful if a trained person, discerning mentor, or friend assists in the evaluation process. Miller and Hendricks have little confidence in the value of most, if not all, personality tests. "Personality tests and interest inventories do not, contrary to popular belief, yield answers to questions about individual makeup and behavior. At best they provide comparative data about more or less pronounced traits, sometimes gathered into types. But traits and types have little meaning in and of themselves. Unless tied into motivation and competence, they are essentially meaningless in predicting individual behavior and makeup." The author's feel so strongly about this point that they wrote a short appendix entitled, "Why Psychological Testing Doesn't Work," 189-192.

[72] The translation note attached to this passage in the NET Bible reads, "The active participle of הָלַךְ ("to walk") stresses continual, durative action."

baptized him…[and] he set his gospel before Peter and other church leaders in Jerusalem…."[73]

One of Paul's most vivid analogies for the Church was a body. By this image, he emphasized interdependence. Humans cannot live independently; they cannot discern independently. Gordon T. Smith states emphatically, "We never discern in isolation; we discern in community. Every significant choice we make reflects the fact that we are profoundly interconnected with the lives of others."[74]

Community helps discern areas of strength and weakness. Community provides accountability for decisions and protection when being led astray. Community gives affirmation when a person grows discouraged. Grimm observes,

> The Christian community plays a vital role in developing vocational clarity within a person's life…While it is possible for the community to complicate the process of self-discovery, as individuals from time to time may impose their own expectations on students; healthy communities provide an invaluable source of wisdom and support for vocational exploration."[75]

In this same chapter, Nelson Grimm provides some of the most helpful and practical advice for the specific task of discerning God's calling to ministry in the context of biblical community.

The consistent testimony of the Christian community has been that for a person to confidently enter ministry and for the community to confidently receive his or her work, there must be both an intense, private sense of compulsion along with the affirmation of the community. As mentioned above, H. Richard Niebuhr labels this

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[73] Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life*, 38.

[74] Smith, *Listening to God in Times of Choice: The Art of Discerning God's Will*, 128. Earlier in the book he writes, "It is arrogance to assume that we can somehow discern on our own whether the impressions we have are God's word to us. We need the check and balance of the community as well as the encouragement that comes from the household of faith." (48-49)

[75] Grimm, "Field Education and Vocational Discernment," 25.

aspect of calling as the "ecclesiastical call" because of the importance of community

input in the process of discernment. Niebuhr summarizes the process of discernment of

calling as follows:

> The Church everywhere and always has expected its ministers to have a personal
> sense of vocation, forged in the solitariness of encounter with ultimate claims
> made upon them. It has also generally required that they show evidence of the fact
> that they have been chosen for the task by the divine bestowal upon them, through
> birth and experience, of the intellectual, moral, physical and psychological gifts
> necessary for the work of the ministry. Finally, in one form or another, it has
> required that they be summoned or invited or at least accepted by that part of the
> church in which they undertake to serve.[76]

*Summary of Principles of Discernment of Calling*

God can and does speak today. Some are called to specific roles within the

body of Christ; all are led to opportunities for service, growth in holiness and witness for

Christ within their various stations in life. Douglas Schuurman rightly declares, "Though

some Christians have encounters of a miraculous nature, God's callings and leading are

for the most part quietly and gently received…Though miracles can attend these

processes, they usually do not."[77] Burning bushes in the desert will forever be the

exception.

Instead, discernment is found at the intersection of need, opportunity and self-

knowledge, and it is guided by God's Word, prayer, and the wise counsel found in

community with God's people. Still, there must be awareness, a healthy skepticism that

even Christian communities are filled with sinful people and that the flesh limits self-

knowledge, particularly the capacity for self-deceit. David's prayer holds perennial

relevance, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious

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[76] Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education,* 64-65.

[77] Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life,* 127.

thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way" (Ps 139:23-24). For this reason, discernment is best viewed as a matrix with different elements holding greater weight at different points in time. Which elements at which times? This is a learned skill, a capacity that grows through time and testing.

Some believers may receive a specific calling to vocational ministry. Others will not. However, the principles of discernment apply equally to all. Whether a person is being called by God to be, for example, a pastor or a church-planter, or whether a person is being called by God to live a life of holiness and bold witness for Christ in a non-ministerial career, the elements of need, opportunity and self-knowledge, God's Word, prayer, and wise counsel are always useful in discerning the will of God. Though a particular job outside of vocational ministry would not be described as a "calling," discernment of God's will is nevertheless enjoined upon every believer.

## The Need for Development

Discernment is far from a static exercise.[78] Life callings will almost certainly change. If believers are not continually listening to the voice of God and re-evaluating their callings, they will miss His signals, standing when they should move, or moving when they should be at rest. As discernment grows and callings change, believers must continually develop in their areas of strength and overcome destructive limitations. In other words, they must grow not only in their discernment, but also in the execution of their callings.

Interns hope to serve God by becoming spiritual influencers, leaders for the body of Christ. As emerging spiritual leaders, they must become lifelong learners,

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[78] Reflecting on his own experience, Douglas Schuurman observes, "Vocation encourages periodic revision of priorities. The positive side of avoiding the danger of idolatry of a given sphere is the freedom to reassess one's manner of life. The goal of this reassessment is to discern which needs should be emphasized at a given time, or for a given period of time." Ibid., 155.

growing in self-understanding and in the development of the character and skills required to fulfill their callings.[79] Each person must individually take responsibility to manage this process.

At the same time, churches and para-church organizations providing internships for emerging leaders must implement an environment for personal growth and discovery. Such an environment includes structure and guidance, especially for those just beginning their journey as spiritual leaders. The organization that intentionally facilitates growth and discovery will incorporate at least three critical elements: (1) a model or paradigm for spiritual leadership; (2) a learning covenant, or personal development covenant; (3) proven leadership development processes.[80]

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[79] There is both a biblical imperative and secular confirmation of the need for lifelong development among leaders, spiritual or otherwise. Paul exhorted his young protégé, "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress [not your *perfection*] will be evident to all." (1 Tim 4:14-15; cp. 1 Thess 4:1, 10; 2 Pet 3:18) In their classic book *Leaders*, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus record the findings of their research on the most effective leaders in our society. They write, "When we asked our ninety leaders about the personal qualities they needed to run their organizations… they talked about persistence and self-knowledge; about willingness to take risks and accept losses; about commitment, consistency and challenge. But, above all, they talked about learning. Leaders are perpetual learners….Nearly all leaders are highly proficient in learning from experience…. And all of them regard themselves as 'stretching,' 'growing' and 'breaking new ground'….Learning is the essential fuel for the leader….Very simply, those who do not learn do not long survive as leaders." Warren G. Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2003), 175-76. John P. Kotter reports identical findings from his research: "The importance of lifelong learning…was demonstrated rather dramatically in a twenty-year study of 115 students from the Harvard Business School class of 1974. In attempting to explain why most were doing well in their careers despite the challenging economic climate that took shape at about the time they graduated, I found that two elements stood out: competitive drive and lifelong learning." John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 178. See also Ellen VanVelsor and Wilfred H. Drath, "A Lifelong Developmental Perspective on Leader Development," in *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development*, ed. Cynthia D. McCauley and Ellen Van Velsor (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 383-414.

[80] The necessity of lifelong learning applies not just to individuals, but to entire organizations as well. Edmondson argues this has never been more true than today because we live in the information age, with the result that many people work for knowledge-based organizations. This certainly applies to churches and para-church ministries which have always been internally knowledge-based (our theologies) and externally knowledge-based (our ministries to ever-changing cultures). Amy C. Edmondson, "The Competitive Imperative of Learning," *Harvard Business Review* (July-August 2008): 62. The best organizations are not the ones that have the best answers today, but those that are filled with individuals who know how to continually uncover the right questions and create good solutions.

*A Model*

Each organization must determine what type of intern, or emerging spiritual leader, it hopes to create or equip. It has been said that if you aim at nothing, you are sure to hit it every time. Models, or profiles, of leadership abound, and their variety is nearly endless. Kouzes and Posner build their model around "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership."[81] J. Oswald Sanders' modern classic, *Spiritual Leadership*, discusses eight "Essential Qualities of Leadership," and then an additional nine "More Essential Qualities of Leadership," followed by a variety of skills and practices.[82] Leighton Ford, in his excellent treatment entitled *Transforming Leadership*, speaks of the ten roles of a leader.[83] Andrew B. Seidel uses a model based on four qualities—character, relationship, vision and skills—that are developed through a personal pilgrimage.[84] John Maxwell lists *The 21 Indispensible Qualities of a Leader*.[85] Randy Frazee evaluates leaders on the basis of Core Beliefs, Core Practices and Core Virtues that are expressed through 30 Core Competencies.[86] The list could go on and on, both secular and Christian. However, any of these models could be synthesized into five categories—vision, knowledge, character, skills and relationships—which form the basis of internship objectives.

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[81] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

[82] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, Commitment to Spiritual Growth Series (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994).

[83] Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values and Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

[84] Andrew Seidel, *Charting a Bold Course: Training Leaders for 21st Century Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003).

[85] John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: Becoming the Person Others Will Want to Follow* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999).

[86] Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

*A Covenant*

The leadership model structures learning covenants.[87] For example, Dallas Theological Seminary provides interns and mentors with a covenant based on four of the six core competencies emphasized by the Seminary's degree programs.[88] Interns and mentors agree on goals related to each competency as well as the processes or experiences necessary to reach these goals. This covenant can and should be tailored to the needs of the intern. A written mutual commitment focuses the attention and energy of the intern, while creating accountability for both intern and mentor.[89]

*Proven Developmental Processes*

Leadership development processes base their objectives on a leadership model and the personal needs or goals of the participants and the organization. These processes will include teaching, observing, practice, feedback (or coaching) and reflection. As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, internships have a long and proven history of providing an excellent forum for the implementation of these developmental processes.

The Center for Creative Leadership, located in Greensboro, North Carolina, recently published a landmark work in the field of leadership development. The authors note several shifts in perspective regarding the types of training experiences necessary to produce quality leaders:

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[87] Covenants such as I am describing are known by a variety of names. For example, Byrne and Rees speak of an "Individual Learning Plan." Jo-Ann C. Byrne and Richard T. Rees, *The Successful Leadership Development Program: How to Build It and How to Keep It Going*, Pfeiffer Essential Resources for Training and Hr Professionals (San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer, 2006), 23.

[88] These four core competencies include (1) Christian Spirituality, (2) Servant Leadership, (3) Communication, and (4) Cultural Engagement. The additional two core competencies emphasized by other departments within Dallas Theological Seminary are (5) Biblical Interpretation and (6) Theology.

[89] Katherine Kyte provides some useful guidelines for creation of internship covenants. Katherine Kyte, "Covenant and Goal Development," in *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*, ed. George M. Hillman, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 127-138.

The second shift in perspective centers on the basic question of what kinds of experience are developmental. For some time, many organizations have believed that classroom-based training was the stuff of development and that the organization's role was to provide it. Organizations are now viewing training as but one component of the development process. They have expanded their portfolios to include targeted stretch assignments, developmental relationships, and 360-degree feedback—in short, the full range of developmental experiences.[90]

Interns must be provided with experiences that build within them the tools to listen, discern, learn, and grow toward a clear model of spiritual leadership for a lifetime.

## Summary and Research Definition of Calling

There are four biblically valid aspects of calling. These are (1) the call to salvation through Christ, (2) the call to sanctification in Christ, (3) the call to service for Christ and (4) the call to specific roles in ministry to Christ's Church, or ministerial calling. Though calling does not apply to every job or role in life (such as lawyer or carpenter, father or friend), the principles of discernment are still applicable to these stations. The sensitive believer can discern God's best (or at times, the better of multiple valid options) regarding the manifold decisions encountered by every human being, including choice of spouse, career, geographic location, etc.

The College Ministry Internship attempts to help participants understand calling in the broadest biblical sense of the word and specifically to discern their personal calling in the fourth sense—are they called to ministry, to particular roles of spiritual

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[90] VanVelsor, Moxley, and Bunker, "The Leader Development Process," 205-06. Resources coming from CCL are the most well-researched in the field. Other helpful resources for creating a culture that assists in the discovery and development of calling include the following: Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church*. Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004). Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, 24. Leadership development seminars can be a helpful supplement in the process of personal growth, discovery and discernment. However, most seminars excel primarily in the impartation of a model of leadership, but because they lack the inherent accountability of community (learning and applying together) their long-term effectiveness is minimal. Internships, on the other hand, provide a potentially ideal environment for growth and discernment.

influence for the kingdom of God? Whether the answer is yes or no, the internship attempts to equip them to confidently and wisely move forward as disciples of Jesus Christ. For them to do so, the following building blocks must be in place: (1) understanding and commitment to God's kingdom program through the Church; (2) biblically based understanding of calling, along with familiarity with the history of Christian thought on calling; (3) knowledge and practice of the biblical principles of discernment; (4) increasing level of self-understanding; (5) commitment to remain in and receive input from a godly community of faith; (6) commitment to lifelong development of the vision, knowledge, character, and skills that correspond to their callings; and (7) relationships necessary to fulfill their callings. Os Guinness' words provide a stirring appeal, "Rather than a place to sit or a pillow on which to rest, human identity is neither fixed nor final in this life. It is incomplete. As such we may refuse the call and remain stunted – unresponsive and irresponsible. Or we may respond to the call and rise to become the magnificent creatures only one Caller can call us to be."[91]

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[91] Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life,* 24.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE AND RESEARCH METHOD

This study was designed to assess the contribution of the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas to former interns' discernment and development of ministerial calling. The following four hypotheses were examined. First, participation contributed to former interns' understanding of a biblical definition of calling. Second, participation contributed to former interns' understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses as a component of ministerial calling. Third, participation contributed to discernment of God's ministerial calling on former interns' lives, or that God had not called them into vocational ministry. Fourth, participation contributed to former interns' development of a plan for vocational growth.

The ultimate goal toward which the Internship Program hoped to contribute is expressed in the fourth hypothesis. Former interns should have completed the program with a well-developed plan for further development of their personal callings, and this plan should have been based upon a valid understanding of calling. In other words, what I attempted to measure in the first three hypotheses built toward the fourth—a well-developed plan for personal development of calling informed by a biblical definition of calling, a strong understanding of strengths and weaknesses, and an accurate understanding of the biblical tools for discerning the will of God.

**Research Method**

A survey was used to collect data from former interns. Before the creation of the survey, focus groups were considered the sole means for obtaining data. However, during examination of focus groups as a research method, the greatest benefit from such a

methodology was derived from open-ended questions that allow the respondents to shape the direction of interaction between researcher and participant.[1] As questions began to be developed for the focus groups, the project required the collection of a great deal of objective data because of the narrow and specific emphasis of the project on calling. Therefore, the use of a survey was chosen over focus groups. More subjective, open-ended questions were also included in the survey because of their potential value for overall program improvement.

The use of a survey rather than focus groups also overcame one significant obstacle—data collection. Because many of the former interns either lived overseas or frequently traveled overseas, their participation in focus groups would be difficult if not impossible. The use of a survey enabled almost complete participation by former interns in the research project. Finally, a survey was created specifically for this project so that the researcher could ask questions uniquely related to the internship experience at Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas.

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**Research Procedure**

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The survey was created in a Microsoft Word document.[2] Form fields were inserted for questions that required yes/no answers or rankings. Text fields allowed unlimited space for respondents to answer narrative questions. The entire survey was protected, allowing the entry of responses, but the survey itself could not be manipulated.

The survey was then sent to potential respondents via email with a cover letter.[3] Respondents were instructed to return the completed survey electronically if at all

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[1] Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2009).

[2] The entire survey can be found in appendix A.

[3] See appendix B for a copy of the cover letter.

possible, rather than printing and returning the survey in paper form. All respondents returned their surveys electronically. The returned surveys were printed and the data entered into a Microsoft Access database constructed specifically for this survey on June 6, 2009. After determining that the software Mini-Tabs would be used for data analysis, the data was transferred into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for ease of manipulation and transfer into Mini-Tabs.

Multiple regression analysis was chosen to analyze the data collected from the survey for the following reasons.[4] First, multiple regression helped separate and estimate the impacts of several variables on a response or endogenous variable, as well as estimate cause-effect relationships where such relationships could be inferred. The survey contained as many as twenty-five possible explanatory variables for at least one of the response, or endogenous, variables. Further, multiple regression analysis allowed for discreet, dichotomous and continuous variables. The survey contained each of these types of variables within the sets of explanatory and response variables.

The researcher used the particular technique of step-wise regression with backward elimination. This technique executes regressions for each particular equation, progressively eliminating explanatory variables that have little or no statistical significance according to the parameters set by the project. That is, a particular explanatory variable is removed if it drops below a pre-established level of statistical significance. This study used an alpha value to remove of 0.1. Ordinary least squares were used to estimate parameter values. It was assumed that error terms are normally distributed without autocorrelation in the error terms. Statistical tests (Durbin-Watson) confirm this assumption:

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[4] Multiple regression is commonly used as an econometric tool to estimate the impact of a number of exogenous variables on a single endogenous variable. While most commonly used to estimate market behavior, its flexibility and power can be applied in a number of social science settings.

The general form of each equation is as follows:
$$Y = \alpha + \sum \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon, \ \ i = 1 \text{ to } n$$

where:

$Y$ = Endogenous variable to be explained
$\alpha$ = Constant term or Y intercept
$i$ = 1 to n
$X_i$ = Explanatory variable i
$\beta_i$ = Parameter for explanatory variable i.
$\varepsilon$ = Error term[5]

The following tests were used to verify the statistical validity of each equation and of the variables within each equation. The parameter for each explanatory variable was evaluated against a t-test. Each equation was evaluated by the coefficient of determination, or R-squared ($R^2$) and the F statistic.

## Development of the Survey

The first draft of the survey was created in January 2009. The researcher built the structure of the survey and created an initial set of questions around the four hypotheses. Fellow staff members who had participated in the Internship Program, either as interns or as mentors for the interns, were invited to contribute questions regarding any information they would like to learn from former interns. Some of the questions received from staff members pertained to the four hypotheses and were retained for the survey. Fellow staff members were also asked to list the most common and most significant experiences that have been included in the College Ministry Internship Program. I synthesized these lists with my own list. From this process, a second draft of the survey was created, which included a demographics section.

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[5] Because the sample includes almost the whole population, the error term measures primarily the variability in the population and very little sampling error.

Fellow Grace Bible Church staff members were asked to review and comment on the second draft of the survey. Based upon this feedback, a third draft of the survey was created and submitted to the author's advisor George Hillman and Dallas Theological Seminary faculty member Jerry Wofford. Each offered suggestions and improvements to the survey in February and March 2009. The survey was then modified and given to two current interns in late March 2009 who were serving in the Internship Program. These two interns were asked to complete the survey and also comment on the survey. They were asked to record the time required for completion, questions that were ambiguous or difficult to understand, and questions they thought might have been overlooked. Further edits were made to the survey after which it was submitted to Hillman. Upon receiving approval of the survey from Hillman, the survey was distributed by email to thirty-eight former interns.

## Population of the Study

Since the inception of the Internship Program in 1995, through the time of distributing the survey in 2009, a total of forty interns had graduated from the Internship Program. The project's goal was to gather data from as many of the former interns who had served during that time as possible. The survey was distributed to nearly the entire population regardless of whether or not a former intern was practicing or pursuing vocational ministry. The survey was not given to the two earliest interns who participated during the years 1996-1998 because the researcher had no knowledge of the structure or content of the program at the time of their participation, leaving a total of thirty-eight former interns who participated during the years of fall 1998 through spring 2008 to whom the researcher distributed the survey. Interns who participated during the 2008/2009 school year were not included because they had not completed the internship at the time the survey was distributed. Eighty-two percent (thirty-one out of thirty-eight)

of the former interns who received the survey returned the survey to the researcher. Data from two of the thirty-one respondents (6 percent) was not included because the surveys were filled out incompletely. As a result, data was included in this study from twenty-nine out of thirty-eight former interns (76%) who participated during the years of the researcher's direct or indirect oversight of the Internship Program. The researcher had hoped for 100 percent participation from former interns, but responses were not received from 8 percent of the population because of poor communication due to former interns travelling internationally during, or shortly after, the time the survey was distributed. Data from 76 percent of the former interns is more than adequate for the research project.

**Description of the Survey**

*Section 1 – Demographics*

The survey was constructed with five distinct sections. Section 1 of the survey covered basic demographics and ministry experiences before participation in the internship. It also included background questions related to the duration of participation in the internship, the year that each participant began his or her internship, and experiences subsequent to the internship. It was expected that some of this data would not be used directly in the study but might be of help in other ways such as recruiting future interns. For example, the demographic data revealed that only 34.5 percent of the former interns were female. This indicated that greater efforts should be directed toward the recruitment of female interns.

The background section of the survey was designed primarily to help distinguish between the influence of internship experiences (Internship Program variables) and the influence of pre-existing character, experiences and skills. I was aware that the students in the college ministry, from which the internship recruits, come to Texas A&M University already possessing great leadership potential. Many come from

excellent families and strong churches around the country. If the Internship Program had only identified and recruited strong candidates for vocational ministry, that alone would have been a useful service for the Church. However, I intended to discover the value added from the Internship Program to each intern's discovery and development of personal calling.

For example, the age of each participant was asked to determine the influence of greater life experiences and maturity. Would a former intern have a greater sense of personal strengths and weaknesses simply as a result of maturity? The survey also asked the gender of each participant. Would a former intern have greater discernment of personal calling simply because of his or her gender?

Family background (Christian, non-Christian, mixed family) was expected to have a significant influence on a former intern's discernment and development of personal calling, as might educational experience (Christian, public, home school). Both of these settings (family and education) profoundly affect a person's character and worldview. Presumably, former interns coming from Christian families would be more likely to think of the concept of calling from a biblical perspective.

Former interns were asked the duration of their involvement in ministry experiences before the internship. They were also asked about their present occupation, specifically whether they were working in vocational ministry at the time of the survey, preparing to work in vocational ministry, or working in a job outside of vocational ministry.

*Section 2 – Hypothesis 1*

Each of the subsequent four sections was based on one of the four hypotheses. Section 2 was based on the first hypothesis that former interns would report that their

participation in the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their understanding of a biblical definition of calling.

At the beginning of section 2, former interns were asked, "What is your understanding of a biblical definition of calling? Are there any statements in scripture or stories that illustrate your definition?" Their responses were graded according to the following criteria.[6] Twenty-five points were awarded for each of the primary biblical categories of meaning—salvation, sanctification and service. Because the question asked for a biblical definition, an additional ten points were added for biblical references or allusions. Ten points were given if an intern demonstrated awareness that some individuals in biblical history had been called to specific roles, and five points were given if an intern recognized that not all people were called to specific roles, or that there were multiple aspects to calling, not all of which applied to every individual. The relative weight assigned to each of these areas was based on the researcher's own conclusions from the study of the biblical words and concepts related to calling, as well as the literature surveyed for this research project. As will be discussed below, the first regression equation was based upon this survey question. The second question in section 2 of the survey asked former interns to estimate a scale of 0 percent to 100 percent the extent to which they discovered their biblical definition of calling during the Internship Program.

The final major question within each section followed the same basic format throughout the survey. Former interns were asked to assign a rank to a series of possible sources of input toward their biblical definition of calling on a scale of 0 to 4. The format

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[6] See appendix C for the grading key for all narrative questions included in the survey that were graded by the researcher.

of this question, and similar questions placed in sections 3 through 5 of the survey, can be seen in table 3.1.

**Table 3.1. Survey Section 2 – Rankings of Internship Experiences.**

What internship experiences helped you the most in developing your understanding of a biblical definition of calling? Please rate each of the following on a scale of zero to four (0-4).

      0 = no value
      1 = little value
      2 = moderate contribution
      3 = significant contribution
      4 = great contribution
            Teaching, counsel or advice I received from staff
            Input and evaluation from other mentors
            Self-assessment tools (e.g. DISC)
            Personal study (Bible and/or other Christian literature)
            Ministry experiences
                  Small group leadership opportunities
                  Teaching opportunities
                  Discipling or counseling a student
                  Participating in a missions trip
                  Leading a ministry team
                  Sharing your faith
                  Planning an event
             Input and evaluation from peers
             Input and evaluation from students I was leading and serving
            Participation in the college ministry staff team
            Trials or difficulties you experienced during your internship, whether personal or professional
            Other (please describe

Sections 2 through 5 of the survey each ended with a narrative question, "What experiences before or after the Internship Program contributed to your understanding of a biblical definition of calling?" This question was adapted to each of the four hypotheses to allow former interns an opportunity to provide additional information not drawn out by the previous questions.

*Section 3 – Hypothesis 2*

Section 3 was based on the second hypothesis that former interns would report that their participation in the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses as a component of ministerial calling. This section began by asking former interns to rank on a scale of 0 percent to 100 percent their confidence in knowing both their strengths and weaknesses as they relate to ministry. The third question asked former interns to estimate the extent to which they discovered their strengths and weaknesses during the Internship Program.

As stated above, the final major question of this section asked former interns to assign a rank to a series of possible sources of input toward their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses on a scale of 0 to 4, followed by an opportunity to freely describe any experiences before or after the internship that contributed to this understanding.[7]

*Section 4 – Hypothesis 3*

Section 4 of the survey was based on the third hypothesis that former interns would report that their participation in the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their discernment of God's ministerial calling on their lives or that God had not called them into vocational ministry.

This section began by instructing former interns, "List at least 3 of the most important components for discernment of the will of God in general? If you would prefer, you may list more than 3." Their responses were graded according to the following criteria. Thirty-five points were awarded for mentioning the Word of God. This was the most heavily weighted response because of the emphasis on the objective character of God's Word for providing guidance in life. Twenty-five points each were awarded for

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[7] See table 4.5.

mentioning prayer and the input of godly counsel, as these too are strongly emphasized throughout Scripture. Finally, five points were awarded for mentioning obedience, submission, or similar concepts; five points were awarded for mentioning self-awareness, gifts, talents, desires, need, reason, or similar concepts; and five points were awarded for mentioning personal history, background, circumstances or similar concepts. The grading criteria was based upon the researcher's personal study and teaching on the topic of discernment, as well as the consensus observed during the literature review.

The survey then asked a series of questions relating to career path and calling—intended career path before the internship, change in career path as a result of the Internship Program, and current perception of God's calling. Former interns were again asked to rank on a scale of 0 percent to 100 percent the extent to which they discovered their callings during the Internship Program. The final major question followed the same format as previous sections, asking the former interns to assign a rank to a series of possible sources of input that contributed to their discernment of personal calling on a scale of 0 to 4.[8] This was followed by an opportunity to freely describe any experiences before or after the internship that contributed to their discernment of calling.

*Section 5 – Hypothesis 4*

Section 5 was based on the fourth hypothesis that former interns would report that their participation in the College Ministry Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their development of a plan for vocational growth. Section 5 began by asking former interns, "What is your personal developmental plan? In other words, how do you plan to continue to develop the necessary vision, knowledge, character, skills and relationships to fulfill God's calling on your life?" Their responses were graded

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[8] See table 4.10.

according to the following criteria. Thirty points were awarded if a former intern demonstrated that he or she had some plan in place, regardless of the quality of that plan. The reason significant weight was given to the mere existence of a plan was based on personal observation. When people leave an environment in which they are consciously aware that they are being personally developed toward specific ends, they often fail to have any plan for future growth. Thirty points were also awarded if the plan was specific and appropriate to the personal calling and/or vocation mentioned by each intern in the previous section of the survey. Thirty points were awarded if the intern was making progress in that plan, and ten points were awarded if the plan contained multiple developmental categories (e.g. spiritual, social, physical, vocational, etc.). Former interns were then asked to rank on a scale of 0 to 100 percent the extent to which they developed their plan during the Internship Program.

The final major question of this section followed the same format as previous sections, asking the former interns to assign a rank to a series of possible sources of input that contributed to their creation of a personal developmental plan on a scale of 0 to 4. [9] The survey concluded with another opportunity for former interns to freely describe any experiences before or after the internship that contributed to their personal developmental plans.

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[9] See table 4.14.

## Description of the Research Model

A total of nine regression equations were analyzed based upon the survey. Each of the nine response variables are specified in table 3.2. Two response variables were used to help determine the validity of the first hypothesis. The first was the grade assigned to the former intern's written description of a biblical definition of calling (Grade Definition). The second response variable related to the first hypothesis was the percent to which an intern believed that he or she discovered his or her definition of biblical calling through participation in the Internship Program (Def Discovery).

Three response variables were used to help determine the validity of the second hypothesis. The first of these was the percent to which an intern felt confident that he or she knew his or her strengths as they related to ministry (Know Strength). The second response variable was the percent to which an intern felt confident that he or she knew his or her weaknesses as they related to ministry (Know Weakness). The third response variable was the percent to which an intern believed that he or she discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses during the Internship Program (SW Discovery).

Two response variables were used to help determine the validity of the third hypothesis. The first response variable was the grade assigned to the former intern's listing of the most important components for discernment of the will of God in general (Grade Discern). The second response variable was the percent to which an intern believed that he or she discovered his or her calling during the Internship Program (PC Discovery).

Two response variables were used to help determine the validity of the fourth hypothesis. The first of these was the grade assigned to the former intern's description of his or her plan for personal vocational development (Grade PDP). The second response

variable was the percent to which an intern believed that he or she discovered this plan

during the Internship Program (PDP Discovery).

**Table 3.2. Response Variable Specification.**

| Abbreviation | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Grade Definition | Hypothesis 1: Grade on a former intern's written explanation of a biblical definition of calling. 0 to 100 |
| Def Discovery | Hypothesis 1: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered a biblical definition of calling through Internship Program. 0 to 100 |
| Know Strength | Hypothesis 2: Percent to which a former intern felt confident that he or she knew his or her strengths. 0 to 100 |
| Know Weakness | Hypothesis 2: Percent to which a former intern felt confident that he or she knew his or her weaknesses. 0 to 100 |
| SW Discovery | Hypothesis 2: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program. 0 to 100 |
| Grade Discern | Hypothesis 3: Grade on a former intern's listing of the important components of discernment of the will of God. 0 to 100 |
| PC Discovery | Hypothesis 3: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered his or her personal calling through the Internship Program. 0 to 100 |
| Grade PDP | Hypothesis 4: Grade on a former intern's written description of his or her plan for personal vocational development. 0 to 100 |
| PDP Discovery | Hypothesis 4: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered his or her plan for personal vocational development through the Internship Program. 0 to 100 |

The most critical of the nine equations for the research model was the Grade

on Personal Developmental Plan (Grade PDP). A high grade on the Personal

Developmental Plan would indicate that former interns completed the program with a

strong sense of God's callings on their lives as evidenced by their clear direction for the

future.

Four of the other equations were used to measure the influence of the Internship Program on key components of a valid personal development plan. These included the former interns' Grade on a Biblical Definition of Calling, Knowledge of Strengths, Knowledge of Weaknesses and Grade on the Components of Discernment of the Will of God. The researcher was not arguing a progression in these components. Each of these components could theoretically stand alone. However, these four components were considered foundational for a valid Personal Developmental Plan.

Four additional equations were used to measure the former interns' perception of which variables influenced their discovery of (1) a Biblical Definition of Calling; (2) their Personal Strengths and Weaknesses; (3) their Personal Calling; and (4) their Personal Developmental Plan. Included in each of these nine equations were both internship and non-internship variables, which will be explained below.

## Specification of Explanatory Variables Used in Survey

The project used two basic categories of explanatory variables.[10] The first category included variables upon which the Internship Program had no influence. These included background variables and other life situations experienced by former interns. See table 3.3 for a complete list and explanation of background variables and variables related to experiences outside of the Internship Program. Most of these variables related to former interns' lives before the internship, such as gender, family's spiritual background, pre-college schooling, and ministry experiences. However, two (input from mentors and trials) occurred during the internship, and another (whether or not a former intern was preparing for or working in vocational ministry at the time of the survey) related to life after participation in the Internship Program. Certain variables were

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[10] A table explaining all of the variables used in the survey can be found in appendix D.

"excluded" to avoid a singular matrix. For example, "Public School" was excluded and variables representing "Christian School" and "Home School" were retained.

**Table 3.3. Explanatory Variables for Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences.**

| Abbreviation | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Male | 1=Male; 0=Female |
| Age Current | Age of former intern at the time the survey was taken |
| Age Saved | Age at which the former intern experienced salvation |
| Education | |
| Public School | *Excluded variable*: Number of years attending public school |
| Christian School | Number of years attending a private Christian school |
| Home School | Number of years attending home school |
| College Experience | Pre-internship ministry experience within the GBC college ministry program (sum of months of experience) |
| Non-college Experience | Pre-internship ministry experience outside of the GBC college ministry program (sum of months of experience) |
| In Ministry | Former interns who were working in ministry at the time of the survey. 1=yes; 0=no |
| Preparing | Former interns who were preparing for vocational ministry at the time of the survey; all were in seminary. 1=yes; 0=no |
| Non-Vocational Ministry | *Excluded variable*: Defines those with jobs outside of vocational ministry at the time of the survey. 1=yes; 0=no |
| Mentors | Perceived benefit received from mentors other than church staff. 0 to 4 |
| Trials | Perceived benefit received from trials experienced during the internship. 0 to 4 |

The second category of variables included items that were directly related to the Internship Program at Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas. This category of variables contained information regarding the length of internship (one to three years); input from staff, peers, and students; participation in the ministry team; and personal study during the Internship Program, ministry experiences and self-assessment tools.[11]

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[11] DISC is the only assessment tool that has been consistently used by the Internship Program. Other tools such as *Strengths Finder 2.0* were added subsequent to the collection of data for this project.

See table 3.4 for a complete list and explanation of background variables and variables related to experiences outside of the Internship Program.

Certain variables were "excluded" to avoid a singular matrix. For example, "One Year" of internship was excluded and dummy variables representing "Two Years" and "Three Years" were retained. Other variables pertaining to Internship Program experiences were "unused" in the regression equations. See table 3.5 for a list and explanation of "unused" variables. To include the effects of "unused" variables, a composite variable was created to incorporate the "unused" variables. Specifically, "Min Exp" represented an average of the ranking for all ministry experiences during the internship for each individual respondent (e.g. small group leadership, participating in a mission's trip, planning an event, etc.).

**Table 3.4. Explanatory Variables for Internship Program Experiences.**

| Abbreviation | Explanation |
|---|---|
| One Year | *Excluded variable*: Former interns who participated in one year of the internship. 1 = yes, 0 = no |
| Two Years | Former interns who participated in two years of the internship. 1 = yes, 0 = no |
| Three Years | Former interns who participated in three years of the internship. 1 = yes, 0 = no |
| Staff | Perceived benefit received from the teaching, counsel and advice of staff. 0 to 4 |
| Assessment | Perceived benefit received from self-assessment tools such as DISC. 0 to 4 |
| Personal Study | Perceived benefit received from personal study. 0 to 4 |
| Min Exp | Perceived benefit received from internship ministry experiences. 0 to 4 |
| Peer Input | Perceived benefit received from the input and evaluation of peers. 0 to 4 |
| Student Input | Perceived benefit received from the input and evaluation of students led by the intern. 0 to 4 |
| Ministry Team | Perceived benefit received from participation in the college ministry team. 0 to 4 |

**Table 3.5. Explanatory Variables for Internship Program Experiences (Unused Variables).**

| Abbreviation | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Small Group Leadership | Perceived benefit received from leading a small group such as Doulos, Growth Groups or a discipleship group during the internship. 0 to 4 |
| Participating in a Missions Trip | Perceived benefit received from going on or leading a short-term missions trip during the internship. 0 to 4 |
| Leading a Ministry Team | Perceived benefit received benefit received from leading a ministry team (leading a single team or leading the entire Servant Team) . 0 to 4 |
| Discipling or Counseling a Student | Perceived benefit received from the experience of personally discipling or counseling a student. 0 to 4 |
| Teaching Opportunities | Perceived benefit received from teaching opportunities during the internship. 0 to 4 |
| Sharing the Gospel | Perceived benefit received from sharing the gospel during the internship. 0 to 4 |
| Planning an Event | Perceived benefit received from planning and leading a ministry event. 0 to 4 |

Non-internship variables and demographic variables were included in each regression equation to ascertain the relative value of the contribution of the internship experience when compared to variables over which the internship had no influence. In other words, I was aware that I had received interns into the program who came from strong Christian families and from spiritually dynamic youth ministries. Much credit for the spiritual maturity and vision for God's kingdom should be given to these sources. This project sought to discern the value added through the Internship Program to this strong foundation.

## Limitations

During the course of this study, several limitations arose. I attempted to overcome these limitations; however, the structure of the survey, the method of analysis and the scope of the project created the following challenges.

First, there are certain types of errors associated with ordinal scales such as those used in the researcher's survey. For example, the survey asked former interns to rank a series of sources of input on a scale of 0 to 4. This scale forces linearity, assuming the same amount of impact from 0 to 1, as from 1 to 2, and so on. The data set was too small to allow for changing these scales to a series of dichotomous variables.

Second, my hypotheses suggested the direction of causation, whereas parameter estimates measured only correlation. Establishing causation depended upon the soundness of the hypotheses. This made the task of fitting the model statistically much easier than analyzing the model and establishing causal relationships. Where causal relationships were unclear, appropriate indication has been provided.

Third, it would have been preferable to identify the quantity and quality of each source of input rather than, or at least in addition to, the former interns' subjective assessment of the value of these same sources of input. However, former interns would not have been capable of supplying this information because they were not required to keep quantitative records of hours spent in various activities (e.g. the number of hours being mentored by a staff member). Collecting such data would be cost prohibitive but also disruptive to the internship process.

I hoped to uncover trends or patterns that may have occurred during the history of the Internship Program. However, without the collection of quantitative measurements, this proved impossible. The parameter, which recorded the year a former intern began the program (Year Entered), was a proxy for age, and Current Age served as an imprecise estimate of maturity. The high level of correlation between these two variables precluded using them both in the equations. Consequently, the survey data did not allow for discernment of qualitative improvement, or failure to improve, within the program based upon any particular parameters.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Internships have proven effectiveness as a component of vocational discovery

and development. After nearly fifteen years, the College Ministry Internship Program at

Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas called for some form of evaluation. This

research focused on a central objective of the Internship Program—ministerial calling,

and the contribution made by the program to former interns' discernment and

development of their personal callings. The data gathered from a survey specifically

created for the Internship Program indicated that the program has made a definite,

positive contribution toward former interns' discovery and development of personal

callings.

**Hypothesis #1: Biblical Understanding of Calling**

*Findings Based on Former Interns' Perceptions*

The first hypothesis stated that former interns would report that their

participation in the Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their

understanding of a biblical definition of calling. On the whole, former interns'

perceptions of the contribution of the Internship Program toward their biblical definition

of calling were positive but generally fairly low. These findings are reported in table 4.1.

Only six program variables were ranked above 2.5 on a scale of 0 to 4. These included

ministry experiences (3.0), teaching, counsel or advice from staff (2.9), small group

leadership (2.7), participating in a mission's trip (2.7), leading a ministry team (2.7), and

discipling or counseling a student (2.6). Two variables that were not directly or

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intentionally tied to the Internship Program received rankings as high as most of these program variables—personal study (2.7) and trials encountered during the Internship Program (2.6).

Program variables that were ranked below 2.5 on average included college ministry staff team participation (2.4), teaching opportunities (2.3), input and evaluation from peers (2.3), sharing the gospel (2.2), input and evaluation from students (1.8) and self-assessment tools (1.5). Input and evaluation from other mentors outside of the Internship Program was also ranked relatively low (2.3).

Former interns' perceived that direct ministry experience was the most valuable component of the internship experience (3.0 on a scale of 0 to 4). This observation was in line with private conversations between former interns and me throughout the history of the program. Former interns have consistently stated that their single most positive impression of the Internship Program resulted from the opportunities to participate in significant ministry responsibilities. Former interns ranked teaching, counsel and advice from staff as second only to the general category of ministry experiences (2.9). The specific ministry experiences of leading a small group (2.7), leading a ministry team (2.7), participating in a mission trip (2.7) and discipling or counseling a student (2.6) were considered as the most valuable ministry opportunities in regard to their contribution to understanding a biblical definition of calling. However, the low ranking received by participation in the College Ministry Staff (2.4) and by input and evaluation from peers (2.3) was surprising. These findings are reported in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Ranking of Perceived Value for Each Source of Input Toward Formation of a Biblical Definition of Calling.**

| Hypothesis 1: Biblical Definition of Calling (Sorted by Rank) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| **Each Source of Input Ranked (0-4)** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Count** |
| | | | |
| Ministry Experiences in General | 3.0 | 0.964 | 29 |
| Teaching, Counsel or Advice from Staff | 2.9 | 0.961 | 29 |
| Small Group Leadership | 2.7 | 0.960 | 29 |
| Participating in a Missions Trip | 2.7 | 1.370 | 29 |
| Leading a Ministry Team | 2.7 | 1.233 | 29 |
| Personal Study | 2.7 | 1.045 | 29 |
| Discipling or Counseling a Student | 2.6 | 1.208 | 29 |
| Trials or Difficulties | 2.6 | 1.147 | 29 |
| College Ministry Staff Team Participation | 2.4 | 1.083 | 29 |
| Teaching Opportunities | 2.3 | 1.192 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Peers | 2.3 | 1.198 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Other Mentors | 2.3 | 1.391 | 29 |
| Sharing the Gospel | 2.2 | 1.146 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Students | 1.8 | 1.136 | 29 |
| Self-assessment Tools | 1.5 | 1.056 | 29 |
| Planning an Event | 1.4 | 1.178 | 29 |

The average grade on biblical definition of calling was much lower than the researcher would have hoped (64.5%). This low average score was not a surprise because prior to the final year of the Internship Program included in the survey (2008-2009), the program provided no explicit teaching on the biblical definition of calling. Because of this deficiency, former interns perceived that they discovered only 54.5 percent of their biblical definition of calling through their internship experience. These findings are reported in table 4.2.

**Table 4.2. Grade on Biblical Definition of Calling and Discovery of Definition Percentage.**

|  | Mean | Standard Deviation | Count |
|---|---|---|---|
| Grade on Biblical Definition of Calling on a scale of 0% to 100% | 64.5 | 19.746 | 29 |
| Discovery of Biblical Definition of Calling on a scale of 0% to 100% | 54.5 | 21.312 | 29 |

*Regression Analysis: Grade on Biblical Definition of Calling*

The regression equation for the Grade on Biblical Definition of Calling analyzed the grade assigned for responses given by former interns to the following survey questions, "What is your understanding of a biblical definition of calling? Are there any statements in scripture or stories that illustrate your definition?" If the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' definition of calling, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for this equation.

Step-wise regression ran through nineteen steps, eliminating seven variables as statistically insignificant and retaining thirteen variables as statistically significant. The resulting equation produced a high $R^2$ (84.2%), indicating that the equation explained nearly 85 percent of the variability in the data. The equation also produced a solid F-statistic of 6.14. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 1.84. These findings are reported in table 4.3.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

Generally speaking, the regression coefficients for Internship Program experiences were strong and positive for this equation; however, the influence of the Internship Program variables was not uniformly positive. As expected, ministry

experiences (Def MinExp)[1] had a positive coefficient (5.607) for the former interns'

grade on a biblical definition of calling. With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.)

of perceived value from ministry experiences, a former intern scored a grade nearly five

points higher on his or her definition.

The second year of internship experience (Two Years) also had a strong

positive impact on interns' understanding and ability to articulate a biblical view of

calling (coefficient of 14.791). On average, those who completed a second year scored a

grade nearly 15 percent higher on their biblical definition of calling than those who

completed just one year of internship. Those who completed a third year of internship

(Three Years) scored a grade nearly 45 percent higher (coefficient of 44.577) than those

who completed just one year of internship. Therefore, the marginal improvement in grade

between two years of internship and three years of internship was nearly 30 percent.

Teaching, counsel and advice from staff (Def Staff), as well as counsel from

other mentors (Def Mentors), had negative regression coefficients for former interns'

biblical definition of calling (-6.686 and -4.539 respectively). This means that with each

increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value for input from staff, a former

intern scored a grade nearly seven points lower on his or her definition. With each

increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value for input from other mentors, a

former intern scored a grade nearly five points lower on his or her definition.

Furthermore, peer input (Def Peer Input) had a negative regression coefficient

(-7.375) for former interns' grades on a biblical definition of calling, whereas input from

students led by the interns (Def Student Input) had a positive regression coefficient

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[1] Abbreviations used in tables have been placed in parentheses. A complete list and explanation of abbreviations used for variables can be found in appendix D.

(5.367). It was expected that input from more mature peers would have provided greater value than input from interactions with students.

Two other Internship Program variables were noteworthy. First, participation in the college ministry team (Def Ministry Team) demonstrated no statistical significance. The absence of statistical significance for this variable was surprising, but consistent with the negative coefficient attributed to peer input. Second, assessment tools used during the Internship Program (Def Assessment), though not designed to directly teach a biblical definition of calling, nevertheless had a strong positive regression coefficient for this equation (9.825).

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

Relative to other interns, those preparing for ministry (Preparing; i.e. former interns attending seminary full-time or part-time when they filled out the survey) scored the worst on biblical definition of calling. On average, they scored nearly 20 percent lower than those who were in ministry and those who were working in jobs outside of vocational ministry (coefficient of -19.675). It was possible that this was a mark of maturity given that former interns attending seminary tended to be among the youngest of population surveyed. Furthermore, three of the four highest grades were awarded to former interns who were not working in vocational ministry or planning on doing so in the future at that time (90%, 95% and 100% respectively), and each of these three was older than the average age of the population surveyed.

Ministry experiences before beginning the Internship Program, both within the college ministry (College Experience) and outside of the college ministry (Non-college experience) had small but negative regression coefficients (-0.6678 and -0.3616 respectively). In other words, the more ministry experience a former intern had before

beginning the Internship Program, he or she scored slightly lower on his or her biblical definition of calling.

The only other non-Internship Program variable to demonstrate statistical significance was Christian schooling (Christian Schooling; 2.3870). For each additional year of Christian school experienced by an intern, he or she scored approximately 2.4 percent higher on his or her biblical definition of calling. No other form of schooling demonstrated statistical significance, either positive or negative. If Christian schooling produced a statistically significant and positive regression coefficient, it would seem that home schooling would have as well.

**Table 4.3. Regression Analysis for Grade on Biblical Definition of Calling.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 106.32 | 14.13 | 7.52 | 0.000 |
| Christian School | 2.3870 | 0.6335 | 3.77 | 0.002 |
| College Experience | -0.6678 | 0.1913 | -3.49 | 0.003 |
| Non-College Experience | -0.3616 | 0.1333 | -2.71 | 0.016 |
| Preparing | -19.675 | 6.084 | -3.23 | 0.006 |
| Def Trials | -8.738 | 2.473 | -3.53 | 0.003 |
| Def Mentors | -4.539 | 1.810 | -2.51 | 0.024 |
| | | | | |
| Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
| Two Years | 14.791 | 5.661 | 2.61 | 0.020 |
| Three Years | 44.577 | 7.752 | 5.75 | 0.000 |
| Def Staff | -6.686 | 3.083 | -2.17 | 0.047 |
| Def Assessment | 9.825 | 2.469 | 3.98 | 0.001 |
| Def MinExp | 5.607 | 3.172 | 1.77 | 0.097 |
| Def Peer Input | -7.375 | 2.656 | -2.78 | 0.014 |
| Def Student Input | 5.367 | 2.537 | 2.12 | 0.052 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 84.2% | | | | |
| F = 6.14 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 1.84 | | | | |

*Regression Analysis: Discovery of Biblical Definition of Calling*

The regression equation for Discovery of a Biblical Definition of Calling analyzed the level of the former interns' confidence that they had discovered their biblical definition of calling through the Internship Program. The data was based on responses to the following survey question, "To what extent did you discover this definition during your Internship Program?" Respondents were asked to pick a percentage from 0 percent to 100 percent. If the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' discernment of calling, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for the discovery of a biblical definition of calling.

Furthermore, an intern's grade on biblical definition of calling would have a positive regression coefficient relative to his or her discovery of that definition through the Internship Program. In other words, a higher percentage of discoveries through the Internship Program would be directly correlated to a better, more biblically based definition of calling. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between the grade on biblical definition of calling and the discovery of a biblical definition of calling.

Step-wise regression ran through nineteen steps, eliminating eighteen variables as statistically insignificant and retaining just two variables as statistically significant. The resulting regression equation produced an $R^2$ value of just 36.6 percent, indicating that the equation explained less than 40 percent of the variability in the data. However, a solid F-statistic of 7.51 indicated that the somewhat small proportion that was explained by the equation was in fact a good fit. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 2.13. These findings are reported in table 4.4.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

Several program variables, such as peer input, participation in the ministry team, longer tenure in the program and ministry experiences were expected to demonstrate strong positive regression coefficients. However, the only program variable with statistical significance came from the teaching, counsel and advice received from staff (Def Staff). With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value for input from staff, a former intern recorded 7.6 percent higher indication that he or she had discovered his or her definition of calling through the internship experience (coefficient of 7.638).

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

No other program variables were statistically significant for discovery of a biblical definition of calling through the internship experience. Just one additional variable, which was not an Internship Program variable, had statistical significance – input and evaluation from other mentors (Def Mentors). With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value for input from non-staff mentors, a former intern recorded 6.4 percent higher indication that he or she had discovered his or her definition of calling through the internship experience (coefficient of 6.386).

Both of these sources of input were considered appropriate for the discovery process, and both illustrated the maxim in ministry that there is no substitute for a personal touch. Everyone learns best when given personalized attention. Therefore, the Internship Program contributed to former interns' perception that they had discovered a biblical definition of calling through the program but that contribution was not nearly as high as anticipated.

**Table 4.4. Regression Analysis for Discovery of Biblical Definition of Calling.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 17.34 | 11.08 | 1.57 | 0.130 |
| Def Mentors | 6.386 | 2.474 | 2.58 | 0.016 |
| | | | | |
| **Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences** | **Coefficient** | **SE Coefficient** | **t-value** | **P-value** |
| Def Staff | 7.638 | 3.582 | 2.13 | 0.043 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 36.6% | | | | |
| F = 7.51 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 2.13 | | | | |

## Hypothesis #2: Personal Strengths and Weaknesses

*Findings Based on Former Interns' Perceptions*

The second hypothesis stated that former interns would report that their participation in the Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses as a component of ministerial calling. Former interns' perceptions of the contribution of the Internship Program toward their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses were overall positive. Eleven out of thirteen program variables were on average ranked at or above 2.5 on a scale of 0 to 4. These included ministry experiences (3.7), discipling or counseling a student (3.4), small group leadership (3.2), leading a ministry team (3.2), teaching opportunities (3.2), participating in a mission trip (3.1), teaching, counsel or advice from staff (3.0), college ministry staff team participation (2.9), sharing the gospel (2.7), planning an event (2.7), and input and evaluation from peers (2.5). These findings are reported in table 4.5.

Just as with the first hypothesis, ministry experiences in general received the highest average ranking of 3.7. Seven specific ministry experiences received a range of average rankings from 2.7 to 3.4. These included discipling or counseling a student (3.4), small group leadership (3.2), leading a ministry team (3.2), teaching opportunities (3.2), participating in a mission's trip (3.1), sharing the gospel (2.7), and planning an event (2.7). Also consistent with the first hypothesis, teaching, counsel and advice from staff received a solid ranking (3.1).

Two Internship Program variables received a low average ranking. The first was input and evaluation from students (2.2 on a scale of 0 to 4). Former interns were not expected to place a high value on the input received from the students they served and led. Nor was there a formal means through which students could offer constructive feedback to former interns. The second program variable that received a low ranking was self-assessment tools (2.1 on a scale of 0 to 4). Such tools were used inconsistently in the early years of the program. Furthermore, the tools used most consistently throughout the program were not specifically designed to uncover strengths and weaknesses in the context of ministry.[2] Variables that were not related directly to the Internship Program were all ranked at or below 2.7 (trials or difficulties experienced during the Internship Program – 2.7; input and evaluation from other mentors – 2.3; personal study – 2.2). These findings are reported in table 4.5.

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[2] The Internship Program has used the DISC personality test, along with the spiritual gifts inventory *Uniquely You*. Mels Carbonell, *Uniquely You: Understanding Personalities from a Biblical Perspective* (Fayetteville, GA: Personality Wise Ministries, 1993). More recently the Program has begun to use *Strengths Finder 2.0*.

**Table 4.5. Ranking of Perceived Value for Each Source of Input Toward Understanding of Strengths and Weaknesses.**

| Hypothesis 2: Strengths and Weaknesses (Sorted by Rank) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| **Each Source of Input (Ranked 0-4)** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Count** |
| Ministry Experiences in General | 3.7 | 0.541 | 29 |
| Discipling or Counseling a Student | 3.4 | 0.862 | 29 |
| Small Group Leadership | 3.2 | 0.912 | 29 |
| Leading a Ministry Team | 3.2 | 1.154 | 29 |
| Teaching Opportunities | 3.2 | 0.951 | 29 |
| Participating in a Missions Trip | 3.1 | 1.423 | 29 |
| Teaching, Counsel or Advice from Staff | 3.1 | 0.923 | 29 |
| College Ministry Staff Team Participation | 2.9 | 0.915 | 29 |
| Sharing the Gospel | 2.7 | 1.078 | 29 |
| Trials or Difficulties | 2.7 | 1.105 | 29 |
| Planning an Event | 2.7 | 1.228 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Peers | 2.5 | 0.986 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Other Mentors | 2.3 | 1.312 | 29 |
| Personal Study | 2.2 | 0.912 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Students | 2.2 | 0.978 | 29 |
| Self-assessment Tools | 2.1 | 1.125 | 29 |

Former interns had a strong sense that they knew both their strengths and weaknesses as they relate to ministry (79.3% and 74.5% out of 100% respectively). This variation of nearly 5 percent could simply be a result of the fact that people feel much more comfortable thinking about and talking about their strengths as opposed to their weaknesses. On average, former interns perceived that they discovered nearly 70 percent of their strengths and weaknesses through their internship experiences (69.3%). Overall, this spoke positively for the value of the internship in regard to the discernment of strengths and weaknesses as a component of calling. These findings are reported in table 4.6.

**Table 4.6. Perceived Knowledge and Discovery of Strengths and Weaknesses.**

|  | Mean | Standard Deviation | Count |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge of Strengths** | 79.3 | 12.227 | 29 |
| **Knowledge of Weaknesses** | 74.5 | 15.021 | 29 |
| **Discovery of Strengths and Weaknesses** | 69.3 | 12.516 | 29 |

*Regression Analysis: Knowledge of Strengths*

The regression equation for Knowledge of Strengths analyzed former interns' perceived awareness of strengths. The data was based on responses to the following survey question, "How confident are you that you know your strengths as they relate to ministry?" Respondents were asked to pick a percentage from 0 percent to 100 percent. This question was designed to discover former interns' confidence in their knowledge of their strengths. It was not a measure of whether or not they had accurately assessed their strengths.

If the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' understanding of personal strengths, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for that equation. Furthermore, the greater the level of discovery of strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program, the higher the perceived level of understanding of those strengths as they related to ministry would be.

Step-wise regression ran through eighteen steps, eliminating seventeen variables as statistically insignificant and retaining seven variables as statistically significant. The resulting equation produced an $R^2$ of 67.4 percent, indicating that the equation explained nearly 70 percent of the variability in the data. The equation also produced a solid F-statistic of 6.20. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 1.51. These findings are reported in table 4.7.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

Overall, Internship Program variables made a positive contribution toward the knowledge of strengths as they related to knowledge of strengths as a component of personal calling, but the value was not overwhelming or uniformly positive. Fewer Internship Program variables demonstrated statistical significance than expected, and the regression coefficients were strong for just one of the variables (SW MinExp; coefficient of 13.033).

Ministry experiences in general (MinExp) once again had the strongest influence on the former interns' confidence in their knowledge of personal strengths through the Internship Program, with a regression coefficient of 13.033. With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from ministry experiences, a former intern rated his or her confidence in knowing his or her strengths just over 13 percent higher. Curiously, participation in the college ministry team (SW Ministry Team) had a negative regression coefficient (coefficient of -5.229). This indicated that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from being a part of the ministry team, a former intern rated his or her confidence in knowing his or her strengths about 5 percent lower.

Though teaching, counsel and advice from staff (SW Staff) was ranked highly by former interns for their discovery of strengths and weaknesses (3.1 on a scale of 0 to 4), this variable showed no statistical significance in the regression equation for knowledge of strengths. Further, both the second year (Two Years) and third year (Three Years) of internship experience showed no statistical significance for knowledge of strengths. In other words, interns who participated in a second or third year of internship were no more confident that they knew their strengths than those who completed just a single year of internship. However, as can be seen in the subsequent regression equation, knowledge of weaknesses (Know Weakness) was positively correlated to a second year

of internship, and the regression coefficient was fairly high (coefficient of 8.286). The following observations explain these results. All people are more eager to discover strengths than weaknesses. Thus, strengths came out more strongly in the first year, and weaknesses came out more strongly in the second year. Furthermore, once major areas of strengths have been discovered, they remain fairly fixed for the rest of one's life. In other words, generally speaking, people do not continually discover major areas of strengths—strengths are discovered and then developed.

The percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses during the Internship Program (endogenous variable SW Discovery) had a positive regression coefficient relative to his or her knowledge of personal strengths, but the coefficient was not particularly strong (coefficient of 0.35). This means that with each 1 percent increase in a former intern's perception that he or she discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program, there was a corresponding increase of just .35 percent confidence in his or her knowledge of personal strengths. Similarly, a former intern's grade for his or her personal development plan (endogenous variable Grade PDP) had a positive but small regression coefficient (coefficient of 0.14325). This means that with each 1 percent improvement in grade on a personal development plan, there was a corresponding increase of just .14 percent confidence in his or her knowledge of personal strengths.

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

Though input from staff (SW Staff) showed no statistical significance, input from mentors (SW Mentors) increased former interns' confidence in knowing their strengths (coefficient of 4.935). The age of a former intern (Age Current) had only a small effect on confidence in knowing strengths (coefficient of 1.395). This meant that with each year of age, a former intern's confidence in knowing his or her strengths grew

only 1.4 percent. A positive correlation for this variable was to be expected, and a small

coefficient was consistent with the thought that people do not continuously discover

strengths throughout their lives. The only other non-Internship Program variable of

statistical significance was ministry experience outside of the Internship Program before

actually beginning the internship experience (Non-College Experience; coefficient of

0.36403). A positive but small number for this coefficient was not surprising. However,

since ministry experiences outside of the college ministry showed statistical significance,

I would also have expected to see ministry experiences within the college ministry

program (College Experience) show a positive correlation.

**Table 4.7. Regression Analysis for Knowledge of Strengths.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | -47.58 | 24.76 | -1.92 | 0.068 |
| Age Current | 1.3950 | 0.6264 | 2.23 | 0.037 |
| Non-College Experience | 0.36403 | 0.09964 | 3.65 | 0.001 |
| SW Mentors | 4.935 | 1.594 | 3.10 | 0.005 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
| SW MinExp | 13.033 | 3.060 | 4.26 | 0.000 |
| SW Ministry Team | -5.229 | 2.222 | -2.35 | 0.028 |
| SW Discovery | 0.3493 | 0.1483 | 2.36 | 0.028 |
| Grade PDP | 0.14325 | 0.06172 | 2.32 | 0.030 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| R-Sq = 67.4% |  |  |  |  |
| F = 6.20 |  |  |  |  |
| Durbin-Watson = 1.51 |  |  |  |  |

*Regression Analysis: Knowledge of Weaknesses*

The regression equation for Knowledge of Weaknesses analyzed former interns' perceived awareness of weaknesses. The data was based on responses to the following survey question, "How confident are you that you know your weaknesses as they relate to ministry?" Respondents were asked to pick a percentage from 0 to 100 percent. This question was designed to discover former interns' confidence in their knowledge of their weaknesses. It was not a measure of whether or not they had accurately assessed their weaknesses.

If the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' understanding of personal weaknesses, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for that equation. Also, the greater the level of discovery of strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program, the higher would be the perceived level of understanding of those weaknesses as they relate to ministry.

Step-wise regression ran through nineteen steps, eliminating eighteen variables as statistically insignificant and retaining six variables as statistically significant. The resulting equation produced an $R^2$ of 73.0 percent, indicating that the equation explained 73 percent of the variability in the data. The equation also produced a strong F-statistic of 9.93. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 2.31. These findings are reported in table 4.8.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

There was no correlation between the knowledge of weaknesses and the discovery of strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program. However, former interns who completed a second year of internship (Two Years) reported 8.3 percent greater confidence in their knowledge of weaknesses as they related to ministry

(coefficient of 8.286). The regression coefficient for peer input (SW Peer Input) was also positive and strong (coefficient of 7.2). In other words, with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from peer input, a former intern rated his or her confidence in knowing his or her weaknesses 7.2 percent higher.

Surprisingly, the above two variables (Two Years and SW Peer Input) were the only two Internship Program variables that demonstrated statistical significance. Several more program variables were expected to have emerged with strong, positive regression coefficients, such as completion of a third year of internship, teaching, counsel or advice received from staff, participation in the ministry team, or ministry experiences during the Internship Program.

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

Consistent with former interns' confidence in their knowledge of personal strengths, other mentors (SW Mentors) had the strongest positive influence on former interns' confidence in knowledge of personal weaknesses. With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from other mentors, a former intern had nearly 4.6 percent greater confidence in the knowledge of his or her weaknesses (coefficient of 4.567).

Also consistent with former interns' confidence in their knowledge of personal strengths, the age of a former intern (Age Current) had a positive regression coefficient for knowledge of weaknesses but the coefficient was fairly weak (coefficient of 2.5926 for knowledge of weaknesses—Know Weakness; and coefficient of 1.3950 for knowledge of strengths—Know Strength). The implication is that it takes time for a person to confidently assess his or her strengths and weaknesses, and such confidence grew gradually on average for former interns.

Pre-internship ministry experience demonstrated statistical significance both positively and negatively. Disappointingly, ministry experiences outside of the college ministry (Non-College Experience) had a positive, albeit small, regression coefficient (coefficient of 0.39009), whereas ministry experiences within the college ministry (College Experience) had a negative regression coefficient (coefficient of -0.3609). In other words, the more experience a former intern had within the college ministry before beginning his or her internship, he or she had a slightly lower confidence in the knowledge of personal weaknesses.

Finally, trials (SW Trials) showed no statistical significance as a source of input for confidence in knowing either personal strengths or personal weaknesses even though it seems that strengths and weaknesses become apparent through the course of challenging circumstances.

**Table 4.8. Regression Analysis for Knowledge of Weaknesses.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | -28.41 | 23.13 | -1.23 | 0.232 |
| Age Current | 2.5926 | 0.7177 | 3.61 | 0.002 |
| College Experience | -0.3609 | 0.1266 | -2.85 | 0.009 |
| Non-College Experience | 0.39009 | 0.09371 | 4.16 | 0.000 |
| SW Mentors | 4.567 | 1.639 | 2.79 | 0.011 |
| | | | | |
| **Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences** | **Coefficient** | **SE Coefficient** | **t-value** | **P-value** |
| Two Years | 8.286 | 3.569 | 2.32 | 0.030 |
| SW Peer Input | 7.208 | 1.865 | 3.87 | 0.001 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 73% | | | | |
| F = 9.93 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 2.31 | | | | |

*Regression Analysis: Discovery of Strengths and Weaknesses*

The regression equation for Discovery of Strengths and Weaknesses analyzed the level of the former interns' confidence that they had discovered their strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program. The data was based on responses to the following survey question, "To what extent did you discover your strengths and weaknesses during your Internship Program?" Respondents were asked to pick a percentage from 0 percent to 100 percent. It seemed that if the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' discovery of strengths and weaknesses, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for that equation.

Step-wise regression ran through eleven steps, eliminating ten variables as statistically insignificant and retaining twelve variables as statistically significant. The equation returned a high $R^2$ of 81.9 percent and a strong F-statistic of 6.04. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 2.22. These findings are reported in table 4.9.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

Overall, as with former interns' confidence in knowing their strengths and weaknesses, the Internship Program made a positive contribution to their discovery of strengths and weaknesses. Once again, however, the results were not uniformly positive.

Both a second year (Two Years) and a third year (Three Years) of internship experience had strong, positive regression coefficients (coefficients of 12.159 and 14.792 respectively). In other words, an intern who remained in the program for a second year reported nearly 12.2 percent greater confidence that he or she had discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program than an intern who completed just one year of the Internship Program; an intern who remained for a third year reported 14.8 percent greater confidence that he or she had discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program than an intern who completed just one year

of the Internship Program. These coefficients seem to demonstrate the value of a second year of internship experience. However, the marginal value of the third year of internship experience (2.6%) for discovering strengths and weaknesses would be doubtful.

Input and evaluation from peers (SW Peer Input) had a strong, positive regression coefficient (coefficient of 8.161). This meant that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from peer input, a former intern rated his or her perception that he or she had discovered strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program 8.2 percent higher. Similarly, with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from participation in the college ministry team (SW Ministry Team), a former intern rated his or her perception that he or she had discovered strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program nearly 9.2 percent higher (coefficient of 9.184).

The only Internship Program variable with a negative regression coefficient was ministry experience (SW MinExp; coefficient of -14.193). This meant that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from ministry experiences, a former intern rated his or her discovery of strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program almost 14.2 percent lower. Such a number was both surprisingly negative and disturbingly large. This project did not explain why ministry experiences would have a negative impact on former interns' discovery of strengths and weaknesses. It would seem that the program was not adequately helping former interns' assess ministry experiences in light of their own strengths and weaknesses. Consistent with such analysis was the fact that teaching, counsel and advice from staff (SW Staff) demonstrated no statistical significance for this particular regression equation. The program has always been committed to the philosophy that interns are not hired for their potential contribution to the college ministry. Rather, the church hires them to be developed and trained. However, the data would suggest that former interns were too

busy doing the work of ministry to take full advantage of the developmental opportunities. In this case, it would appear, less is more—less work, more leadership development.

The endogenous variable knowledge of strengths (Know Strength) had a small but positive regression coefficient (coefficient of 0.9428), meaning that those who reported higher confidence in knowing their strengths also reported that they were 0.94 percent more likely to have discovered those strengths through their internship experiences. However, the endogenous variable knowledge of weaknesses (Know Weakness) had a small, negative regression coefficient (-0.5686), meaning that those who reported higher confidence in knowing their weaknesses were 0.57 percent less likely to have discovered those weaknesses through their internship experiences.

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

The age of a former intern at the time of taking the survey (Age Current) had a positive regression coefficient (coefficient of 3.4165), indicating that with each year subsequent to completion of their Internship Program, former interns were 3.4 percent more likely to credit their discovery of strengths and weaknesses to their participation in the Internship Program.

However, subsequent to completion of the Internship Program, former interns working in vocational ministry at the time of taking the survey (In Ministry) registered a regression coefficient of -10.8. That is, those working in vocational ministry rated their discovery of strengths and weaknesses through their internship experience nearly 11 percent lower than both those preparing for ministry and those working jobs outside of vocational ministry. Apparently, those working in vocational ministry had encountered additional valuable sources for discovering strengths and weaknesses as they journeyed further down the vocational ministry pathway.

Former interns' personal study (SW Personal Study) also had a negative regression coefficient (coefficient of -6.329). This meant that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from personal study, a former intern was 6.3 percent less likely to consider that he or she had discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program.

The regression coefficient for male former interns (Male) was negative and fairly strong (coefficient of -10.894). This was the only regression equation for which gender demonstrated any statistical significance. This coefficient meant that male former interns were nearly 11 percent less likely to indicate that they discovered their strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program than were female interns. The cause of this difference between male and female interns was impossible to determine with certainty. Possible solutions include the following: (1) Female interns had a significantly different internship experience as it related to discovering strengths and weaknesses; (2) Female interns were more receptive to input during the Internship Program; (3) Female interns were simply more self-aware during their internship experience; (4) Male interns came into the program with more leadership experiences and consequently more opportunities to discover their strengths and weaknesses prior to participation in the Internship Program.

Finally, one other background variable proved interesting, though not of great significance for the purpose of this study. The age at which a former intern trusted Christ (Age Saved) had a small but positive regression coefficient (coefficient of 1.4807). This meant that former interns who were saved later were also more likely to indicate that they had discovered their strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program. Presumably those saved at an earlier age had more time to listen to the Lord and to discern strengths and weaknesses through sources other than the internship experience.

Overall, the Internship Program made a positive contribution to former interns' discovery of their strengths and weaknesses and in their confidence in knowing their strengths and weaknesses. However, the small number of statistically significant Internship Program variables for the previous three regression equations, as well as the two variables that actually had negative regression coefficients—SW Min Exp for Discovery of Strengths and Weaknesses (coefficient of -14.193); SW Ministry Team for Knowledge of Strengths (coefficient of -5.229) – indicate that the program needs to make improvements in this area. More direct guidance toward the discovery of strengths and weaknesses should be emphasized. For example, the program has begun to use *Strengths Finder 2.0* with encouraging results. The staff needs to begin offering more guidance for relating these discoveries to tasks, responsibilities and opportunities within vocational ministry careers.

**Table 4.9. Regression Analysis for Discovery of Strengths and Weaknesses.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | -48.72 | 29.22 | -1.67 | 0.115 |
| Male | -10.894 | 4.292 | -2.54 | 0.022 |
| Age Current | 3.4165 | 3.46 | 3.46 | 0.003 |
| Age Saved | 1.4807 | 0.3994 | 3.71 | 0.002 |
| SW Personal Study | -6.329 | 2.683 | -2.36 | 0.031 |
| In Ministry | -10.804 | 3.989 | -2.71 | 0.016 |
| | | | | |
| Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
| Two Years | 12.159 | 3.746 | 3.25 | 0.005 |
| Three Years | 14.792 | 4.653 | 3.18 | 0.006 |
| SW MinExp | -14.193 | 3.491 | -4.07 | 0.001 |
| SW Peer Input | 8.161 | 2.597 | 3.14 | 0.006 |
| SW Ministry Team | 9.184 | 2.235 | 4.11 | 0.001 |
| Know Strength | 0.9428 | 0.1994 | 4.73 | 0.000 |
| Know Weakness | -0.5686 | 0.1742 | -3.26 | 0.005 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 81.9% | | | | |
| F = 6.04 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 2.22 | | | | |

## Hypothesis #3: Discernment of Personal Calling

The third hypothesis stated that former interns would report that their participation in the Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their discernment of God's ministerial calling on their lives. It seems that if the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to former interns' discernment of personal callings, then former interns would have a thorough and biblical understanding of the resources and processes given by God for discerning His will. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the discovery of those callings would have occurred during the internship experience.

*Findings Based on Former Interns' Perceptions*

Generally speaking, former interns' perceptions of the contribution of the Internship Program toward their discernment of personal callings were positive. Seven of the top eight sources through which former interns discerned their personal callings were Internship Program variables. However, the rankings for these variables were not exceptionally high. These included ministry experiences (3.1), teaching, counsel or advice from staff (3.1), small group leadership (2.9), discipling or counseling a student (2.9), participating in a mission's trip (2.7), teaching opportunities (2.6), and leading a ministry team (2.5).

As with the first two hypotheses, ministry experiences and teaching, counsel and advice from staff received the highest overall rankings (3.1 out of 4 for each). These were followed by five more specific ministry experiences that were ranked on average from 2.9 to 2.5 out of 4. This set of experiences included small group leadership (2.9), discipling or counseling a student (2.9), participating in a mission trip (2.7), teaching opportunities (2.6), and leading a ministry team (2.5). Throughout the first three hypotheses, there was a strong, consistent perception among former interns that direct ministry experience, along with guidance from the staff, were the most valuable components of the internship experience.

Program variables that were ranked below 2.5 on average included sharing the gospel (2.4), college ministry staff team participation (2.3), input and evaluation from peers (2.2), input and evaluation from students (1.8), planning an event (1.8) and self-assessment tools (1.7). Former interns' perceptions of the value of self-assessment tools were consistently ranked at or near the bottom of the list.

Among non-Internship Program sources of input and evaluation from other mentors was the only one to be ranked above 2.5 (ranked 2.6). Personal study and trials

or difficulties were each ranked below 2.5 (2.4 and 2.3 respectively). These findings are

reported in table 4.10.

Table 4.10. Ranking of Perceived Value for Each Source of Input Toward Discernment of Personal
       Calling.

| Hypothesis 3: Discernment of Personal Calling (Sorted by Rank) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| **Sources of Input (Ranked 0-4)** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Count** |
| Ministry Experiences in General | 3.1 | 1.093 | 29 |
| Teaching, Counsel or Advice from Staff | 3.1 | 0.900 | 29 |
| Small Group Leadership | 2.9 | 1.145 | 29 |
| Discipling or Counseling a Student | 2.9 | 1.291 | 29 |
| Participating in a Missions Trip | 2.7 | 1.495 | 29 |
| Teaching Opportunities | 2.6 | 1.115 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Other Mentors | 2.6 | 1.208 | 29 |
| Leading a Ministry Team | 2.5 | 1.353 | 29 |
| Sharing the Gospel | 2.4 | 1.152 | 29 |
| Personal Study | 2.4 | 1.053 | 29 |
| College Ministry Staff Team Participation | 2.3 | 1.198 | 29 |
| Trials or Difficulties | 2.3 | 1.285 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Peers | 2.2 | 1.167 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Students | 1.8 | 0.966 | 29 |
| Planning an Event | 1.8 | 1.292 | 29 |
| Self-assessment Tools | 1.7 | 1.099 | 29 |

Former interns scored an average grade of 86.2 percent on their knowledge of

the tools of discernment, which was encouraging. When instructed to list at least three of

the most important components for discernment of the will of God, nearly every former

intern included the objective standard of the Word of God, prayer and godly counsel. It

was also encouraging that a significant percentage of this understanding of the

components of discernment was discovered through participation in the Internship

Program (61.4 percent). These findings are reported in table 4.11.

**Table 4.11. Grade on Components of Discernment and Discovery of Personal Calling Percentage.**

|                                         | Mean | Standard Deviation | Count |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-------|
| **Grade on Components of Discernment**   | 86.2 | 14.433             | 29    |
| **Discovery of Personal Calling**        | 61.4 | 26.148             | 29    |

According to the gross rankings by former interns of each possible source of input, as well as the average grades on the components of discernment, the Internship Program had a strong, positive effect on their understanding of the biblical tools of discernment of the will of God. The Internship Program also positively influenced former interns' actual discovery of their personal callings. Analysis of the regression equations, however, yielded somewhat mixed results.

*Regression Analysis: Grade on Components of Discernment*

The regression equation for the Grade on Components of Discernment analyzed the grade assigned for responses given by former interns to the following survey question, "List at least 3 of the most important components for discernment of the will of God in general? If you would prefer, you may list more than 3." It seems that that if the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' definition of calling, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for this equation.

Furthermore, it seems that an intern's grade on the components of discernment of the will of God would have a positive regression coefficient relative to his or her discovery of personal calling through the Internship Program. In other words, a higher percentage of discovery through the Internship Program would be positively correlated to a better, more biblically-based understanding of the components of discernment. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between the grade on components of calling and the discovery of personal calling among respondents.

Step-wise regression ran through seventeen steps, eliminating sixteen variables as statistically insignificant and retaining six variables as statistically significant. The equation produced an $R^2$ of 59.2 percent and an F-statistic of 5.31. Relative to the other equations used, this particular equation produced a low $R^2$. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 1.87. These findings are reported in table 4.12.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

It was encouraging to discover that the personal interaction provided through the Internship Program had a strong and positive effect on former interns' knowledge of the components of discernment. Teaching, counsel and advice from staff (PC Staff) had a regression coefficient of 6.313. With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of value from staff input, a former intern scored a grade over 6 percent higher on his or her description of the components of discernment.

The personal interaction provided by participation in the college ministry team (PC Ministry Team) also had a positive effect on former interns' knowledge of the components of discernment. Ministry team participation had a regression coefficient of 4.3. With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from ministry team participation a former intern scored a grade over 4 percent higher on his or her description of the components of discernment.

However, these were the only two Internship Program variables that produced positive regression coefficients for this equation, and one important program variable actually produced a negative impact on the former interns' grades on the components of discernment. Former interns who completed a second year of internship experience (Two Years) scored on average a grade 7 percent lower (coefficient of -7.046) than former interns who completed just one year of internship experience, or former interns who completed a third year of internship experience. I did not know how to explain this

apparent decrease in knowledge between former interns with one year or three years of internship experience. This gave rise to the following questions, "From where was the confusion introduced?" And, "Why wasn't the regression coefficient for staff input stronger?"

One other program variable also produced a negative regression coefficient. Input and evaluation from students led and served by former interns (PC Student Input) produced a coefficient of -7.889. This meant that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from student input, a former intern scored a grade nearly 8 percent lower on the Components of Discernment. Input from students was not expected to have any statistical significance for this regression equation. Consequently, a negative coefficient, which was even stronger than the coefficient for staff input (PC Staff; coefficient of 6.313), was somewhat surprising.

Furthermore, the grade on Biblical Definition of Calling did not produce a statistically significant regression coefficient for the grade on the Components of Discernment. If former interns had been able to move their understanding of calling from biblical/theological to practical, then a strong positive coefficient would have occurred. The net impact of the Internship Program on former interns' knowledge of the components of discernment was positive but lower than expected. This analysis revealed an area of training that will require attention.

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

One other variable that was not related directly to the Internship Program yielded perplexing results. Former interns who were working in vocational ministry at the time they took the survey (In Ministry) scored on average a grade nearly 13 percent lower than former interns who were still preparing for ministry and former interns who were working in jobs outside of vocational ministry. Further, current age showed no statistical

significance, which seemed to indicate that former interns' knowledge regarding the components of discernment was not increasing with age and experience.

The only other non-Internship Program variable to produce statistical significance was pre-internship ministry experience outside of the college ministry (Non-College Experience). This variable produced a small negative regression coefficient (coefficient of -0.3464). This meant that with each month of additional ministry experience, a former intern scored 0.35 percent lower on his or her Grade on Components of Discernment.

Table 4.12. Regression Analysis for Grade on Components of Discernment.

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 83.957 | 7.420 | 11.32 | 0.000 |
| Non-College Experience | -0.3464 | 0.1119 | -3.10 | 0.005 |
| In Ministry | -12.650 | 4.604 | -2.75 | 0.012 |
| | | | | |
| **Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences** | **Coefficient** | **SE Coefficient** | **t-value** | **P-value** |
| Two Years | -7.046 | 4.086 | -1.72 | 0.099 |
| PC Staff | 6.313 | 2.743 | 2.30 | 0.031 |
| PC Student Input | -7.889 | 2.505 | -3.15 | 0.005 |
| PC Ministry Team | 4.281 | 2.010 | 2.13 | 0.045 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 59.2% | | | | |
| F = 5.31 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 1.87 | | | | |

*Regression Analysis: Discovery of Personal Calling*

The regression equation for Discovery of Personal Calling analyzed the level of the former interns' confidence that they had discovered their personal callings through the Internship Program. The data was based on responses to the following survey

question, "To what extent did you discover your calling during your Internship Program?" Respondents were asked to pick a percentage from 0 to 100 percent. It seemed that if the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' discernment of calling, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for the discovery of a personal calling.

Step-wise regression ran through eleven steps, eliminating ten variables as statistically insignificant and retaining ten variables as statistically significant. The resulting regression equation produced an $R^2$ of 76.7 percent, indicating that the equation explained nearly 80 percent of the variability in the data. The equation also had a strong F-statistic (5.93). These findings are reported in table 4.13. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at .86.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

First, both a second year (Two Years) and a third year (Three Years) of internship experience had strong, positive regression coefficients (21.914 and 29.33 respectively). In other words, an intern who remained in the program for a second year reported 21.9 percent higher perception that he or she had discovered his or her calling through the Internship Program; an intern who remained for a third year reported 29.3 percent higher perception that he or she had discovered his or her calling through the Internship Program than an intern who completed just one year of the Internship Program. The marginal increase in discovery of calling through the Internship Program between years two and three was nearly 8 percent.

The second year of internship experience (Two Years) had a negative regression coefficient for the Grade on Components of Discernment (coefficient of -7.046), and the third year of internship experience (Three Years) showed no statistical significance for that same equation. However, both the second and third year of

internship experience had strong, positive regression coefficients for the Discovery of Personal Calling. This seemed to indicate that in general the experience of a second and/or third year of internship helped former interns discover their personal callings, but the second and third years of experience did not necessarily compel interns to make an explicit connection between the most appropriate components of discernment such as prayer, God's Word, or godly counsel and their personal discovery of calling. Nevertheless, since the average grade on the components of discernment was fairly high overall, interns were basing their discernment on appropriate components.

Teaching, counsel and advice from staff (PC Staff) had a strong, positive regression coefficient (coefficient of 9.199). This meant that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from staff input, a former intern rated his or her perception that he or she had discovered personal calling through the Internship Program 9.2 percent higher. Similarly, with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from Internship Program ministry experiences (PC MinExp), a former intern rated his or her perception that he or she had discovered personal calling through the Internship Program 10.1 percent higher (coefficient of 10.091). Regression analysis therefore confirmed former interns' rankings of the most valuable sources of input for the discovery of personal callings.

The only Internship Program variable with a negative regression coefficient was participation in the college ministry staff team (PC Ministry Team; coefficient of -10.513). This meant that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from participation in the ministry team, a former intern rated his or her discovery of personal calling through the Internship Program 10.5 percent lower.

Finally, of those who recorded 100 percent discovery of calling through the internship, two were not in vocational ministry at the time of the survey. The internship was successful in helping them discern that God was not calling them to a specific role

for which they would be paid within the Church. Whether a former intern was in ministry, preparing for ministry, or working outside of ministry had no effect on the level to which he or she discovered personal calling through the internship experience. Overall, the Internship Program made a strong, positive contribution to former interns' discovery of personal calling, and the longer an intern remained in the program, the greater the contribution to that discovery.

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

Five variables related to former interns' backgrounds, or to experiences that were not tied to the Internship Program, demonstrated statistical significance for the Discovery of Personal Calling. Overall, former interns' background had a greater impact on this regression equation (Discovery of Personal Calling) than any of the other equations, with four positive regression coefficients and just one, small negative regression coefficient.

First, the age of a former intern at the time of taking the survey produced a positive regression coefficient (Age Current; coefficient of 4.441). This meant that with each year of age, a former intern reported that he or she discovered 4.4 percent more of his or her personal calling through the Internship Program. Second, the age at which a former intern was saved also produced a positive regression coefficient (Age Saved; coefficient of 2.457). This meant that former interns who were saved later were also more likely to indicate that they had discovered their personal callings through the Internship Program. Presumably, those saved at an earlier age had more time to listen to the Lord and to discern personal callings through sources other than the internship experience.

For just the second time, a particular form of pre-university schooling demonstrated statistical significance.[3] For each additional year of home schooling (Home School) experienced by a former intern, he or she also reported 3.9 percent higher perception of discovering personal calling through the Internship Program (coefficient of 3.891).

Pre-internship ministry experiences also demonstrated statistical significance, though the regression coefficients were small. Experience within the college ministry (College Experience) produced a positive coefficient of 0.6477; experience outside of the college ministry produced a negative coefficient of -0.4595. In other words, for each additional month of ministry experience within the college ministry, a former intern reported 0.65 percent higher perception that he or she had discovered personal calling through the Internship Program; for each additional month of ministry experience outside of the college ministry, a former intern reported 0.46 percent lower perception that he or she had discovered personal calling through the Internship Program.

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[3] The only other regression equation for which schooling demonstrated statistical significance was Grade on Biblical Definition of Calling, the first equation considered. In that equation Christian schooling produced a positive regression coefficient of 2.387.

**Table 4.13. Regression Analysis for Discovery of Personal Calling.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | -144.32 | 54.77 | -2.63 | 0.017 |
| Age Current | 4.441 | 1.774 | 2.50 | 0.022 |
| Age Saved | 2.457 | 1.016 | 2.42 | 0.026 |
| Home School | 3.891 | 1.589 | 2.45 | 0.025 |
| College Experience | 0.6477 | 0.2071 | 3.13 | 0.006 |
| Non-College Experience | -0.4595 | 0.2176 | -2.11 | 0.049 |
| | | | | |
| **Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences** | **Coefficient** | **SE Coefficient** | **t-value** | **P-value** |
| Two Years | 21.914 | 7.282 | 3.01 | 0.008 |
| Three Years | 29.33 | 10.22 | 2.87 | 0.010 |
| PC Staff | 9.199 | 3.985 | 2.31 | 0.033 |
| PC MinExp | 10.091 | 3.722 | 2.71 | 0.014 |
| PC Ministry Team | -10.513 | 4.188 | -2.51 | 0.022 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 76.7% | | | | |
| F = 5.93 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 0.86 | | | | |

## Hypothesis #4: Personal Developmental Plan

### *Findings Based on Former Interns' Perceptions*

The fourth hypothesis stated that former interns would report that their participation in the Internship Program at Grace Bible Church contributed to their discernment of calling through the understanding of the need for a lifelong commitment to continual discernment and personal development. Generally, former interns' perceptions of the contribution of the Internship Program toward their personal development plan were positive but fairly low. Only three program variables were ranked above 2.5 on a scale of 0 to 4. These included teaching, counsel or advice from staff (3.2), ministry experiences (2.7), and discipling or counseling a student (2.6).

As with each of the previous three hypotheses, former interns ranked teaching, counsel and advice from staff and ministry experiences as the top two sources of input toward a personal development plan (3.2 and 2.7 respectively). Of the four hypotheses, this was the only one for which teaching, counsel and advice from staff was ranked more highly than ministry experiences.

The remaining twelve possible sources of input from which former interns could select on the survey all were ranked at or below 2.4 on a scale of 0 to 4. The three Internship Program ministry experiences of small group leadership, leading a ministry team and participation in the college ministry staff team were each ranked 2.4 on average. Trials or difficulties experienced during the Internship Program were also ranked 2.4. Input and evaluation from other mentors, teaching opportunities and participation in a mission trip were each ranked 2.2. The remaining sources of input were ranked as follows—input and evaluation from peers (2.1), the ministry experience of sharing the gospel (1.9), input and evaluation from students led or served by the former interns (1.7), and planning an event (1.4). As in the case of the previous two hypotheses, former interns ranked self-assessment tools last (1.3). These findings are reported in table 4.14.

**Table 4.14. Ranking of Perceived Value for Each Source of Input Toward Formation of a Personal Development Plan.**

| Hypothesis 4: Personal Development Plan (Sorted by Rank) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| **Sources of Input (Ranked 0-4)** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Count** |
| Teaching, Counsel or Advice from Staff | 3.2 | 0.889 | 29 |
| Ministry Experiences in General | 2.7 | 0.850 | 29 |
| Discipling or Counseling a Student | 2.6 | 1.296 | 29 |
| Personal Study | 2.6 | 0.686 | 29 |
| Small Group Leadership | 2.4 | 1.211 | 29 |
| Leading a Ministry Team | 2.4 | 1.268 | 29 |
| College Ministry Staff Team Participation | 2.4 | 1.088 | 29 |
| Trials or Difficulties | 2.4 | 1.213 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Other Mentors | 2.2 | 1.272 | 29 |
| Teaching Opportunities | 2.2 | 1.207 | 29 |
| Participating in a Missions Trip | 2.2 | 1.502 | 27 |
| Input and Evaluation from Peers | 2.1 | 1.100 | 29 |
| Sharing the Gospel | 1.9 | 1.081 | 29 |
| Input and Evaluation from Students | 1.7 | 1.173 | 29 |
| Planning an Event | 1.4 | 1.293 | 29 |
| Self-Assessment Tools | 1.3 | 0.974 | 29 |

The average grade for former interns' personal development plan was strong (84.1%). The average extent to which former interns perceived that they discovered their development plans through the Internship Program was 57.6 percent. These findings are reported in table 4.15.

**Table 4.15. Grade on Personal Development Plan and Discovery of Personal Development Plan Percentage.**

| | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Count** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade on Personal Development Plan** | 84.1 | 27.777 | 29 |
| **Discovery of Personal Development Plan** | 57.6 | 20.642 | 29 |

*Regression Analysis: Grade on Personal Development Plan*

The regression equation for the Grade on Personal Development Plan analyzed the grade assigned for responses given by former interns to the following survey questions, "What is your personal developmental plan? In other words, how do you plan to continue to develop the necessary vision, knowledge, character, skills and relationships necessary to fulfill God's calling on your life?" It seems that if the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the interns' definition of calling, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for this equation.

Step-wise regression ran through fifteen steps, eliminating fourteen variables as statistically insignificant and retaining nine variables as statistically significant. The equation produced and $R^2$ of 66.9 percent and an F-statistic of 4.28. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 1.54. These findings are reported in table 4.16.

This seems to be the most important regression equation of the entire set of equations. The grade on personal development plan represented the logical culmination of the other equations. A good personal development plan should put all the pieces together, beginning with the foundation of a solid, biblical definition of calling. It should also incorporate confident and accurate self-awareness of both strengths and weaknesses, filtered through the knowledge and skills of biblical, godly discernment.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

On average, those who completed a third year of internship (Three Years) scored a grade 47.2 percent higher on their personal development plan than those who completed one or two years of internship. A third year of internship experience was the single strongest variable in this equation, which could be viewed in either a positive or a negative light. Positively, the third year added greatly to the personal development plan. On the other hand, it could be argued that the same value could and should have been

received during the second year, or even the first year of the internship. Perhaps such forward thinking cannot be attained during the first year. As mentioned above, first year interns are just trying to learn how to do their jobs and survive a ministry lifestyle. They are consumed with the present. After mastering the basic ebb and flow of ministry life, other lessons can be learned in the second and third years. Knowing as they begin the third year that it will be their final year, third year interns are the most likely group to be thinking about development beyond their internship experience.[4]

Another possible explanation is that the staff has not provided adequate guidance on the personal development plan. Teaching, counsel and advice from staff (PDP Staff) demonstrated no statistical significance for this equation, whereas personal study (PDP Personal Study) had a regression coefficient of 23.6. In other words, with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from personal study, a former intern scored a grade nearly 24 percent higher on his or her personal development plan. What the Internship Program failed to provide, former interns made up for through their own personal study. Given the fact that no other Internship Program variables demonstrated positive regression coefficients, it appeared that the benefit derived by interns toward their personal development plans was more accidental than intentional. If a former intern stayed around long enough, a good plan for personal development eventually evolved.

The following observations supported such a conclusion. Peer input (PDP Peer Input) and participation in the college ministry staff team (PDP Ministry Team) both had negative regression coefficients (coefficients of -18.7 and -8.2 respectively) for this equation. This indicated that with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value of input from peers, a former intern scored nearly 19 percent lower on his

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[4] No interns are allowed to continue beyond three years in the program.

or her personal development plan. Also, with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from participation in the college ministry team, a former intern scored 8.2 percent lower on his or her personal development plan. These negative coefficients have one of two possible explanations. First, the interns may have been negatively influencing one another; or second, they have been giving one another good advice, but they may have not understood or applied what they were learning from one another. If the staff had laid a solid foundation for creating and executing a personal development plan, then these variables would have had positive regression coefficients for this equation. The negative regression coefficients, along with the fact that staff teaching, counsel and advice was dropped as a statistically significant variable, indicates that the staff needed to do a much better job training the interns in the skill of creating and executing their own plans for personal development.

Furthermore, the regression coefficient for the endogenous variable for Grade on Biblical Definition of Calling (Grade Definition) was small but negative (-0.8789). The negative direction of this number would seem to indicate that former interns had not connected the elements of a biblical concept of calling to practical life application. In the regression equation for Knowledge of Strengths (Know Strength), the regression coefficient for grade on personal development plan was positive, but small (0.1). In the regression equation for Knowledge of Weaknesses (Know Weakness), the regression coefficient for Grade on Personal Development Plan (Grade PDP) had no statistical significance. It appeared that the Internship Program had not significantly helped former interns incorporate a biblical definition of calling, or accurate, confident self-understanding, into their development plans.

There was small encouragement in the observation that the endogenous variable for Discovery of a Personal Development Plan (PDP Discovery) had a positive regression coefficient (coefficient of 0.7034). This indicated that with each 1 percent

increase in a former intern's perception that he or she discovered his or her personal development plan through the Internship Program, there was a corresponding improvement of just 0.70 percent in his or her grade on the personal development plan.

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

Further emphasizing the observation that the Internship Program has not adequately helped interns put all of the pieces together, input received from trials (PDP Trials) had a strong, negative regression coefficient (coefficient of -15.379). The direction of this coefficient is counter-intuitive. Experiencing and responding to trials should make a strong, positive contribution to self-awareness, which should in turn inform a former intern about areas of needed development relative to calling.

The age of former interns at the time they took the survey (Age Current) showed no statistical significance. In other words, it would appear that in general, former interns have not been improving in their articulation of a personal development plan as they grow older. Among all respondents, former interns who were working in ministry jobs at the time they completed the survey (In Ministry) scored a grade nearly 16 percent higher than those preparing for careers in ministry and those working jobs outside of vocational ministry (coefficient of 15.772). Former interns who in seminary were expected to have demonstrated a positive regression coefficient for the grade on personal development plan. It could be speculated that once in seminary, which is such a consuming experience, the focus rested on classroom study almost to the exclusion of all other areas of necessary development.

The only other pre-internship variable of statistical significance was ministry experience within the college ministry (College Experience). This variable produced a negative regression coefficient of -1.5548 for the equation. In other words, for each

additional month of ministry experience, a former intern scored 1.6 percent lower on his

or her personal development plan.

**Table 4.16. Regression Analysis for Grade on Personal Development Plan.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 164.89 | 26.85 | 6.14 | 0.000 |
| College Experience | -1.5548 | 0.3803 | -4.09 | 0.001 |
| In Ministry | 15.772 | 8.973 | 1.76 | 0.095 |
| PDP Personal Study | 23.639 | 7.570 | 3.12 | 0.006 |
| PDP Trials | -15.379 | 4.532 | -3.39 | 0.003 |
| | | | | |
| Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
| Three Years | 47.23 | 14.66 | 3.22 | 0.005 |
| PDP Peer Input | -18.710 | 5.641 | -3.32 | 0.004 |
| PDP Ministry Team | -8.213 | 4.257 | -1.93 | 0.069 |
| PDP Discovery | 0.7034 | 0.2559 | 2.75 | 0.013 |
| Grade Definition | -0.8789 | 0.2892 | -3.04 | 0.007 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 66.9% | | | | |
| F = 4.28 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 1.54 | | | | |

*Regression Analysis: Discovery of Personal Developmental Plan*

The regression equation for Discovery of Personal Developmental Plan

analyzed the level of the former interns' confidence that they had discovered their

developmental plan through the Internship Program. The data was based on responses to

the following survey question, "To what extent did you develop your plan during your

Internship Program?" Respondents were asked to pick a percentage from 0 to 100

percent. It seemed that if the Internship Program had made a positive contribution to the

interns' discovery of a personal development plan, then at least some Internship Program variables would have positive and strong regression coefficients for this equation.

Step-wise regression ran through seventeen steps, eliminating sixteen variables as statistically insignificant and retaining four variables as statistically significant. This final equation had the fewest statistically significant explanatory variables and the lowest $R^2$ of all nine equations. The equation explained just 52.5 percent of the variance in the data, though an F-statistic of 6.64 indicated that the remaining variables produced a good fit. The Durbin-Watson statistic was acceptable at 1.78. These findings are reported in table 4.17.

**Findings Based on Internship Program Experiences**

Consistent with former interns' perceptions, teaching, counsel and advice from staff (PDP Staff), along with ministry experiences (PDP MinExp) each had reasonably strong, positive regression coefficients (coefficients of 6.853 and 10.892 respectively). With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value for input from staff, a former intern recorded 6.9 percent higher indication that he or she had discovered his or her personal development plan through the internship experience; with each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value from ministry experiences, a former intern recorded 10.9 percent higher indication that he or she had discovered his or her personal development plan through the internship experience.

Input from peers (PDP Peer Input) also had a strong, positive regression coefficient (coefficient of 11.314). With each increase in ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value for input from peers, a former intern recorded 11.3 percent higher indication that he or she had discovered his or her personal development plan through the internship experience. Conversely, input from students that were led or served by former interns had a negative regression coefficient (coefficient of -9.671). With each increase in

ranking (0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc.) of perceived value for input from students, a former intern

recorded 9.7 percent lower indication that he or she had discovered his or her personal

development plan through the internship experience. In general, the influence of the

Internship Program on former interns' discovery of their personal development plans was

satisfactory.

**Findings Based on Non-Internship Program Experiences**

All explanatory variables related to the backgrounds of the respondents or

non-internship experiences were statistically insignificant, as can be seen in table 4.17.

**Table 4.17. Regression Analysis for Discovery of Personal Development Plan.**

| Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Experiences | Coefficient | SE Coefficient | t-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | -0.85 | 14.39 | -0.06 | 0.953 |
| | | | | |
| **Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences** | **Coefficient** | **SE Coefficient** | **t-value** | **P-value** |
| PDP Staff | 6.853 | 3.504 | 1.96 | 0.062 |
| PDP MinExp | 10.892 | 4.424 | 2.46 | 0.021 |
| PDP Peer Input | 11.314 | 3.595 | 3.15 | 0.004 |
| PDP Student Input | -9.671 | 3.699 | -2.61 | 0.015 |
| | | | | |
| R-Sq = 52.5% | | | | |
| F = 6.64 | | | | |
| Durbin-Watson = 1.78 | | | | |

**Summary and Synthesis**

Table 4.18 provides a summary of the regression coefficients for each variable

for all nine-regression equations. A blank cell indicates a statistically insignificant

coefficient. An asterisk indicates that the variable was not used in the equation. Each

regression coefficient has been discussed in this chapter under the relevant regression

equation. The summary chart was included to give a sense of the overall direction and scope of impact from the Internship Program on former interns' discernment and development of personal calling.

By observing the size and direction of the coefficients related to program variables, the Internship Program made a positive contribution to former interns' discernment and development of calling. Each of the seven program variables produced a positive regression coefficient for at least one of the regression equations, and four of the seven program variables (Two Years, Three Years, Staff Input and Ministry Experience) produced positive regression coefficients for at least four of the equations. Further, the seven program variables produced a total of thirty statistically significant coefficients for the nine regression equations. Of these thirty significant coefficients, 73.3 percent (22 out of 30) were positive.

Input from the Internship Program was certainly not the only source providing insight and direction for the discernment and development of calling among former interns, as can be seen by observing the background and non-program variables in table 4.18. Nevertheless, background and non-program variables overall had a relatively lower positive impact as compared to the set of program variables. Thirteen background and non-program variables produced just thirty-three statistically significant regression coefficients for the nine regression equations combined. Of those thirty-three statistically significant coefficients, just seventeen were positive (52 percent).

Finally, three significant patterns emerged from the data. First, discernment and development of calling did not occur in isolation. Personal attention and interpersonal interaction were required. Teaching, counsel or advice from staff (Staff Input) produced statistically significant, positive regression coefficients for four of the nine regression equations, and input from peers (Peer Input) produced statistically significant, positive regression coefficients for three of the nine regression equations.

Input from mentors outside of the Internship Program (Mentors) also produced statistically significant, positive regression coefficients for three of the nine regression equations.

Second, direct, hands-on ministry experience was essential for former interns' discernment and development of calling. Calling is active; it requires the energetic engagement of both mind and body, of both character and skills. Thus, it cannot be discovered or developed merely through passive learning experiences. For this reason, ministry experience produced statistically significant, positive regression coefficients for four of the nine regression equations.

Third, the discernment and development of personal calling cannot be rushed. Time was required for interns to understand the concept of calling, to know themselves, and to apply such understanding to their own lives and future growth. This was illustrated by the fact that the age of a former intern (Age Current) produced statistically significant, positive regression coefficients for four of the nine regression equations. Further, both a second year (Two Years) and a third year (Three Years) of internship experience also produced statistically significant, positive regression coefficients for four of the nine regression equations. Each of these three patterns will be explored in more detail in chapter 5.

**Table 4.18. Summary of Coefficients for Each of the Nine Response Variables.**

| | Grade Definition | Def Discovery | Know Strength | Know Weakness | SW Discovery | Grade Discern | PC Discovery | Grade PDP | PDP Discovery |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Background and Non-Program Variables** | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | | | | | -40.9 | | | | |
| Age Current | | | 1.4 | 2.6 | 3.4 | | 4.4 | | |
| Age Saved | | | | | 1.5 | | 2.5 | | |
| Christian School | 2.4 | | | | | | | | |
| Home School | | | | | | | 3.9 | | |
| College Experience | -0.7 | | | -0.4 | | | 0.6 | -1.6 | |
| Non-college Exp | -0.4 | | 0.4 | 0.4 | | -0.3 | -0.5 | | |
| In Ministry | | | | | -10.8 | -12.7 | | 15.8 | |
| Preparing | -19.7 | | | | | | | | |
| Trials or Difficulties | -8.7 | | | | | | | -15.4 | |
| Mentors | -4.5 | 6.4 | 4.9 | 4.6 | | | | | |
| Student Input | 5.4 | | | | | -7.9 | | | -9.7 |
| Personal Study | | | | | -6.3 | | | 23.6 | |
| **Program Variables** | | | | | | | | | |
| Two Years | 14.8 | | | 8.3 | 12.2 | -7.0 | 21.9 | | |
| Three Years | 44.6 | | | | 14.8 | | 29.3 | 47.2 | |
| Staff Input | -6.7 | 7.6 | | | | 6.3 | 9.2 | | 6.9 |
| Self-Assessment | 9.8 | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry Experience | 5.6 | | 13.0 | | -14.2 | | 10.1 | | 10.9 |
| Peer Input | -7.4 | | | 7.2 | 8.2 | | | -18.7 | 11.3 |
| Ministry Team | | | -5.2 | | 9.2 | 4.3 | -10.5 | -8.2 | |
| **Endogenous Variables** | | | | | | | | | |
| Grade Definition | * | * | | | * | | * | -0.9 | * |
| Grade Discern | * | * | | | * | * | * | | * |
| Grade PDP | * | * | 0.1 | | * | * | * | * | * |
| SW Discovery | * | * | 0.3 | | * | * | * | * | * |
| Know Strength | * | * | * | * | 0.9 | * | * | * | * |
| Know Weakness | * | * | * | * | -0.6 | * | * | * | * |
| PC Discovery | * | * | * | * | * | | * | * | * |
| PDP Discovery | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | 0.7 | * |

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The value of an internship experience has both biblical validation and secular precedence. Whether it is labeled as an apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or field education, such an experience provides an essential component to the training for many careers, not least of which is a career in vocational ministry. The Internship Program at Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas has witnessed exceptional fruit among its interns throughout its existence. An evaluation of the Internship Program proved insightful and timely as the program completed its fifteenth year.

**Encouraging Results**

A variety of Internship Program components had significant positive influence on the former interns' discernment and development of ministerial calling. Specifically, as mentioned in chapter 4, three patterns emerged from the data—the impact of a personal touch, the value of real ministry responsibility and the importance of time.

*Personal Touch*

First, the fact that former interns consistently ranked the teaching, counseling and advice provided by staff as the first or second most important component of their internship experience illustrated that there is no substitute for personal touch. Every person is most receptive to learn and grow in an atmosphere of love and grace, as demonstrated by personal attention and time.

After Peter and John's defense of their ministry and apologetic for Jesus as the Messiah before the Jewish leaders, Luke made the following observation, "Now as they

observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). One of the defining characteristics of the disciples' "internship" was their personalized training received directly from the Master—they had been *with* Jesus.

As Paul approached the end of his life he wrote an impassioned plea to Timothy: "For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline…. You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 1:6-7; 2:1-2). Paul's words reflect the personalized care, concern and training that he had poured into his beloved Timothy.

These two great mentors provide a model worthy of imitation. To train others well, there must be a personal touch. In his short but highly significant book on the motivations and methods for participating in the Great Commission, Leroy Eims takes direct aim at pastors: "Every pastor has in his congregation men who today are merely spectators in the kingdom of God, but who would pay any price to be involved with him in the real heart of the ministry…. Such men need his ermons and instruction, but he will have to share his life with them."[1] Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones and Bruce Miller approach the same issue from the perspective of leadership development and arrive at the same conclusion: "If your approach to mentoring leaders in the church is more like building a relationship than checking leadership development off your to-do list, if it is

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[1] Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 33.

more like a spiritual friendship than a spiritual contract, then teachable moments will often arise as you talk and play and work."[2]

This personal touch is experienced through several sources, but none more powerful than the attention received from a person's parents. During the years that I lived at home, my father labored constantly under the competing pressures of career demands and family needs. However, even during the years of completing a doctoral program, and later years that required significant travel, there was never any doubt regarding the fact that my father valued his family more highly than the allure of professional success. Similarly, my mother sacrificed career possibilities and innumerable opportunities for highly praiseworthy service outside of the home for her children. When the children were home, she was available – physically and emotionally. Such devotion and commitment from parents formed my most fundamental values.

The former interns who have invested time in the Program have consistently attested to the impact on their lives through personalized attention from the staff and other mentors. One former intern, reflecting on his internship and other life experiences stated, "…for anyone the one big idea of calling or developing a personal plan [for development] is to make sure that you are surrounded by those who love you (God, family, friends), as well as those you love and care for and want the best for." Another former intern, commented that the greatest contributing factor to his personal development subsequent to the Internship Program was, "Spending lots of time with a mentor who helps me see my current state and where I can go in Christ." The value of personal attention for significant growth is a lifelong principle. When commenting on his relationships with staff members, John Maxwell summarizes this principle well, "People

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[2] Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 108.

cannot be nurtured from a distance or by infrequent, short spurts of attention. They need

you to spend time with them – planned time, not just a few words on the way to a

meeting."[3]

*Ministry Responsibility*

Second, because the Internship Program has been able to give interns real and

significant ministry responsibilities from the first day of participation, former interns

were attracted to the program and made great personal discoveries. Everyone learns by

doing. The leadership development experts at The Center for Creative Leadership base

their recommendations on this well-researched and well-established principle.

> We know that although leaders learn *primarily* through their experiences, not all
> experiences are equally developmental. For example, the first year in a new job is
> usually more developmental than the fifth or sixth year…. A training program that
> encourages lots of practice and helps participants examine mistakes is usually
> more developmental than one that provides information but no practice.[4]

Management and leadership experts Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus have

made the observation, "Nearly all leaders are highly proficient in learning from

experience."[5] Most people can, and should, learn in other ways as well, but the

opportunity to immediately apply what had just been mentally catalogued in theory was,

and continues to be, one of the Internship Program's greatest strengths. Even for former

interns who chose not to pursue a ministerial calling, the internship was equally valuable

in pointing them away from vocational ministry and toward another career in which they

could fulfill their calling to honor Christ in their work. The experiences of biblical

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[3] John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around You: How to Help Others Reach Their Full Potential* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 69.

[4] Ellen Van Velsor and Cynthia D. McCauley, "Our View of Leadership Development," 3. Emphasis is the researcher's.

[5] Bennis and Nanus, *Leaders*, 176.

community, mentorship and real ministry responsibility cannot be replicated in the classroom. Instruction is a necessary component of preparation for ministry, but it cannot be separated from real life application.

Once again, Jesus Christ is the ultimate model for the development of spiritual leaders. After selecting twelve men in whom He would most intensively invest His time (Mattt 4:18-22), allowing them to listen to His teaching and observe His power (Matt 5-9), He sent them out to imitate the things they had observed Him doing (Matt 10:1-4). The ultimate purpose for which He came to earth was to be rejected and to offer Himself as a ransom for all sins for all time (John 12:27; Mark 10:45). His disciples neither understood nor embraced this (Mark 10:33-34). Nevertheless, they were given significant responsibility to speak and act in His Name. The disciples' own ministry experiences could not have been characterized as entirely "successful," but even in failure and frustration, they learned and grew (Matt 17:14-20).

The Apostle Paul followed a similar pattern. His key men spent significant time ministering alongside him. However, he did not keep them dependent upon his immediate presence. He sent both Titus and Timothy on difficult tasks for which they undoubtedly felt under-prepared. Through such significant ministry responsibilities, Titus and Timothy were able to become spiritual leaders for Christ's Church and presumably to repeat the pattern of training they had experienced from their mentor, Paul (2 Tim 2:2).

My father was an able and intentional mentor, who consistently gave just a little more responsibility than I could comfortably manage. Support, advice and assistance were available, but my father strongly encouraged initiative. Such a process instilled confidence, little fear of failure and a willingness to seek assistance when needed. Having directly experienced the effectiveness of such a developmental process implanted within me a commitment to invest my life in developing others.

*Time*

Third, there is no substitute for time. In realizing that another calls, another sets the agenda for life, and in responding humbly and submissively to that call, men and women can find their greatest joy. In fact, only in responding to the call of Another can true life, abundant life, be found. This is not typically the message delivered in school, through peers, or even in most homes. The leadership of any internship program must be conscious that significant re-orientation of life will be required for an intern to properly understand and respond to God's calling. This requires time. There is no substitute for time and patient, submissive listening. Nelson Grimm provides wise and useful advice for those who are in the job of guiding others through the process of vocational discernment. He writes, "Take a break and remember that God is not in a hurry. Allow some time for the heart and mind to synthesize the material gathered. Be confident that the Holy Spirit has been involved in the process long before one ever considered vocational ministry."[6]

Because time is necessary for the process of discernment, the second and third years of internship experience frequently demonstrated such a large influence on the discernment and development of calling. One former intern wisely observed,

> The ministry experiences I learned at the time [of my participation in the internship] created the foundation for me to be able to think about my calling (the specific one) later in life (the last few years)… [T]he internship did very much form my view of general calling – and gave me *great* tools to be able to do that more effectively. At the time, I wasn't as able to put the 'big picture' together.

The effect of an additional year or two of maturity could explain these exceptionally high regression coefficients for the second and third years of internship experience. However, this result is more likely from the effects of greater ministry responsibilities in the second and third years of the Internship Program. Former interns

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[6] Nelson J. Grimm, "Field Education and Vocational Discernment," in *Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*, ed. George M. Hillman, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 31.

ranked ministry experiences as making the greatest contribution to their biblical definition of calling. The regression equation confirmed the positive correlation of ministry experiences. Further, the structure of the program provides for much greater responsibility in years two and three of the Internship Program.

During the first year, interns' learning is focused on doing their jobs well and building a financial support base. They are most urgent about competently accomplishing their tasks, and as a result they are most teachable regarding ministry skill development. Other significant lessons, particularly concepts related to philosophy of ministry, tend to get pushed to the side. Second year interns feel more relaxed in their duties and are more eager and teachable to learn additional ideas regarding the foundations for ministry. In most cases, they have also established a solid financial support base.

The third year of the internship had an even greater statistical impact on former interns' grades on Biblical Definition of Calling than the second year. The marginal increase between one and two years was 14.8 percent, and the marginal increase between two years and three years was nearly 30 percent. The more time over which an intern was exposed to the concept of calling allowed for greater comprehension. However, in addition to time, during this third year interns know their jobs, take on even greater responsibility, and feel like a genuine part of the broader church staff team. They have more experience and better tools for self-reflection and biblical study. The structure of their time and their maturity in living a ministry lifestyle has grown significantly by the third year. These data and anecdotal evidence do not alone justify a third year for every intern, but they do indicate that in terms of understanding calling from a biblical perspective, there is great advantage to be gained from a third year.

Additional time in the Internship Program did not, however, necessarily translate into a greater number of former interns pursuing vocational ministry. As reported in chapter 4, nearly 40 percent of respondents reported that they were not

working in or preparing for a career in vocational ministry. There were few former interns who began the program with a strong intention to enter vocational ministry and then changed course away from vocational ministry subsequent to their internship experience. Yet quite a few former interns began the program with the intention of simply exploring vocational ministry as a possibility, but based on the internship experience, they sensed God directing them away from vocational ministry as a career. This is a positive observation. There could easily be a strong social pressure within the Internship Program to enter vocational ministry. The goal of the program is to help interns discern God's direction for their lives, so that they can confidently take their next steps in life, not to force them into a mold of the program's making. The confidence with which the former interns were able to articulate their understanding of God's callings on their lives presently was encouraging.

## Unexpected Discoveries

As noted in chapter 4, former interns who were preparing for ministry (i.e. former interns attending seminary full or part-time when they filled out the survey) scored the worst grades on biblical definition of calling, and three of the four highest grades were awarded to former interns that are not currently working in vocational ministry or planning on doing so in the future. While it was possible that this was simply a mark of maturity since former interns attending seminary tended to be among the youngest of the population surveyed, an alternative explanation was also possible.

After reading former interns' definitions, I predicted that I would discover this negative correlation. The definitions written by a few former interns who chose not to pursue vocational ministry indicated that these individuals had wrestled deeply with the concept of calling. Within a church internship, there exists an inevitably high value on the vocation of ministry. Those choosing not to enter vocational ministry often feel

compelled to seek biblical validation for their own careers. They need to be certain that they can serve Christ in an equally significant way even if they are not paid to do so. They are forced into God's Word where they observe that the emphasis on calling throughout the Scripture relates to salvation and sanctification, rather than on specific tasks or roles within the Church. That is, God demonstrates greater concern with who the believer is, rather than what he or she does. On the other hand, those who have completed the Internship Program and gone on to pursue further training for ministry are frequently surrounded by uncritical affirmation for their decision. This can create an environment in which they feel much less pressure to pursue biblical validation or a more thorough biblical understanding of the concept of calling. The definitions of biblical calling provided by this subset of former interns indicated a more myopic focus on calling that related to specific roles, responsibilities and tasks within ministry jobs.

For example, one former intern who now holds a successful position in sales wrote,

> In 1995 I began to get a very clear purpose as to what God wanted to do with my life.  Through the discipleship and teaching of several men God brought into my life I started to understand that I did not have to work full time at a church to fulfill my calling…. Going into my internship I felt like [I needed] to fit a certain mold of a Christian minister. My internship showed me that I could not fit that mold, and I experienced a greater sense of joy in serving Christ when I stepped out of that mold.  In the years following my internship I began to serve… in many capacitites – Sunday morning responsibilities, Vacation Bible School, Children's ministry, Men's ministry, and eventually as a Deacon. I found a tremendous amount of joy in serving knowing that I was not paid to do so, but rather out of the joy and purpose I sensed in doing it. This was the greatest indicator that I was serving in the right capacity.

Another former intern who works as a consultant wrote,

> I am at [name of company] because it is where my ministry is now. This is what changed about career paths for me after the intership – I realized my career is not about ME but about being able to be placed somewhere that I can do

ministry/reach people for Christ. I don't feel [name of company] is forever for me but it's where I am called now.

A third former intern pursuing graduate education outside of vocational ministry commented, "One important thing I have learned recently about calling—there is great freedom, responsbility, and joy in it."

## Areas for Improvement

### *Training for Interns on Calling*

Though the study yielded encouraging results overall, several significant areas for improvement were discovered as well. First, explicit teaching and reflection on the biblical concept of calling must continue to be emphasized and refined. Prior to 2008-2009, the Internship Program provided no direct teaching on the subject of calling. Many unstructured conversations between the Grace Bible Church staff and former interns included discussions of the topic of calling but without the benefit of formalized instruction and guidance. Since fall 2008, instruction from a biblical perspective on calling has been given to interns early in the first year of their Internship Program. Awareness of this deficiency in the earlier years of the Internship Program was one of the motivating factors for pursuing this particular research project. Such teaching gives biblical structure to the interns' thinking as they move through the internship experience and as they take their next vocational steps in life.

### *Training for Staff on Calling*

For this training to be most effective, I must begin by training all of the staff on the biblical definition of callings. For the concept of calling to remain clear in the minds of future interns, all of the staff must speak the same language regarding calling.

This training should also be extended to as many as possible of the other mentors with whom the interns interact.

   As noted in chapter 4, teaching, counsel and advice from staff and counsel from other mentors had a negative regression coefficient for former interns' biblical definition of calling. I cannot confidently explain this negative regression coefficient. Perhaps the staff and other mentors were not teaching biblically about calling, or they were teaching inadequately, or the message from staff and mentors was misunderstood. Most likely each staff member was approaching the subject of calling using different terminology which created confusion rather than clarity for the former interns. It was certainly possible that staff teaching left deficiencies in interns' understanding of calling, and it was almost certain that the message was not emphasized adequately in the earlier years of the Internship Program.

   The staff must learn to also speak the same language regarding the components of biblical discernment of the will of God. Though the teaching, counsel and advice of staff produced a positive regression coefficient for the equation Grade on Biblical Components of Discernment, it was not exceptionally high (coefficient of 6.3). Nor was there any evidence of consistent improvement from years one through three of an intern's experience.

<div align="center"><em>New Methods for Training Interns</em></div>

   Simple but effective processes can be initiated to facilitate greater learning among the interns. Repetition and application of the concepts of calling, discernment, and intentional personal development should occur in a variety of settings throughout the duration of the internship experience. For example, interns could be given periodic opportunities to submit written reflective exercises. While interviewing directors of other internship programs before writing this dissertation, I learned of the widespread use of

such exercises within the most effective internship programs. Such exercises are the most valuable experiences that have been overlooked by the Internship Program at Grace Bible Church.

These reflective exercises need not be onerous for the intern, and the value will be quickly apparent. The director of one program related that his reflective exercises are in fact quite short—a maximum of one written page. In many internship programs, interns are asked to reflect on a specific ministry experience (such as a counseling appointment, or a teaching opportunity), and to think through questions such as the following: (1) What theologies were evident in this experience (e.g. soteriology, ecclesiology, etc.)? (2) Where did you see God at work? (3) Where did you participate in that process? and (4) Where did you hinder that process?

Simple questions regarding calling could be used instead of these, or in addition to these questions. For example, How did this experience inform your understanding of your own callings in life? Were any strengths or weaknesses revealed? How might you grow in your areas of strength and overcome your areas of weakness?

There is a pressure in ministry to move on to the next program or event, rather than stopping to reflect and listen to the voice of the Lord. Valuable, potential lessons dissipate and are lost forever in the whirlwind of activities. One intern observed,

> It's not possible to synthesize [lessons on calling, strengths, weaknesses, discernment] without personal experiences (of our triumphs, failings, etc.), but the experiences alone do not guarantee understanding (often we walk through life only experiencing but never learning from our experiences).

Such reflective exercises could be utilized even more effectively if they included an element of biblical community. Participation in the college ministry team and input and evaluation from peers surprisingly received low rankings. Furthermore, peer input had a negative regression coefficient for former interns' Grade on a Biblical Definition of Calling, and participation in the college ministry team demonstrated no

statistical significance for that equation. This data seemed to indicate that the opportunity to learn from one another about one's own calling was being missed. In the future, college ministry staff meetings could include a brief time in which interns are asked to relate the experiences of their week to their discernment and development of personal calling. Team interaction is one of the most valuable resources for working out all of theology and especially the theology of calling for those participating in the Internship Program.

*Putting All The Pieces Together*

One of the ultimate objectives of the Internship Program is to help interns accurately discern the will of God for their lives and confidently take their next steps in pursuing His will. With this objective in mind, each intern should complete his or her internship experience with a strong biblical definition of calling, greater awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, and knowledge of the biblical components of discernment, along with the skill to put them into practice. All of this should be reflected in a specific plan for personal growth and development. Such a plan should be the capstone of the internship experience. The Internship Program did not always make the connections explicit for the interns between (1) the definition of calling; (2) the strengths and weaknesses as a component of calling; (3) the components of discernment; (4) their next steps of growth and pursuit of God's callings on their lives.

Based on this, I intend to institutionalize a more formal process for interns to finish the program with a personal development plan. This process will include study and teaching on a biblical definition of calling, not only for interns but also for staff and other mentors; continued use of *Strengths Finder 2.0* as a personal assessment tool; creation of a template for reflective exercises; and creation of a template for a personal development

plan. This plan will be used throughout the internship experience as a foundation for conversations between interns and their mentors.

## Matters for Further Development and Study

### *Expanding the Demographic*

The survey confirmed that the Internship Program has served more men than women.[7] Opportunities should be explored for recruiting more female interns. The College Ministry team has two full-time staff members, so the resources are already in place for more aggressive recruitment of female interns. Though the opportunities for female former interns to secure a church staff position are less abundant than for male former interns, the opportunities for females within para-church ministries are unlimited, and the needs are great. Of the twelve female interns who had completed the Program as of May 2009, just one was working on a church staff. However, we have seen many female former interns, as well as female former students, placed in rewarding ministry positions within para-church organizations around the world.

### *Expanding the Ministry Opportunities*

The Internship Program could serve other areas of ministry within Grace Bible Church without adding a substantial burden to the program leadership. For example, if the program were to make it known that opportunities are available in children's ministry and youth ministry, many graduating students would express serious interest. The program has, on a case-by-case basis, allowed interns to focus on areas of

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[7] If all former interns had returned the survey, the results would have been 72.5 percent male and 27.5 percent female. Since the inclusion of the first female intern in 2001, the percentages have been only slightly more balanced—63.3 percent male and 33.3 percent female.

ministry outside of the college ministry (e.g. a media intern was added in 2009), but there has never been any active recruiting of interns for other areas of ministry.

*Tools for Continual Evaluation and Improvement*

The construction, execution and analysis of a survey proved challenging, yet rewarding. I intend to develop another survey that will be administered as an intern begins the program and then again as an intern completes the program. The goal of such a survey would be to analyze growth among interns in all areas for which the Internship Program has definite training objectives. I also desire to track trends over and to receive data more immediately upon completion of the Internship Program, while the information is still fresh on former interns' minds. Further, an ongoing process for soliciting interns' feedback in future years will need to become institutionalized for the Internship Program to continue to improve. It is expected that most of these tools will be developed as web-based instruments.

I not only want to gain from the feedback of former interns but also to serve them as they continue on their journey of fulfilling God's callings on their lives. Relationships between former interns and staff have remained exceptionally strong throughout the years of the program. I am determined to capitalize on those relationships by providing former interns with continued mentoring and coaching.

The surveys showed that several former interns who were not working in vocational ministry had low scores on their personal development plans. Many of these former interns were attentive to professional development, but after just a few years away from their internship experience, they were no longer working intentionally on personal growth toward fulfilling their callings. These former interns represent the vast majority of men and women in the body of Christ who are working at ministry jobs. If a system can

be developed to coach our former interns, it could likely be expanded to others who share the same vocational path in life.

*Becoming a Resource for Others*

One of my objectives for the program remains the multiplication of similar efforts among other local churches. To the degree that the Internship Program states its objectives and demonstrates the relevance and value of the associated processes, the internship will be able to provide a valuable product for other churches and para-church ministries. Internships appear costly to many local churches. Interns consume valuable time from pastors and other church leaders. They take up space. They make mistakes. The return is not always immediate. However, in the long run, the value both for each participating local church and for the body of Christ worldwide is immeasurable. Replication of the program in other churches is worthy of significant effort.

**Conclusion**

In the final analysis, the Great Commandment and the Great Commission govern the life and mission of every individual believer, every local church, and every para-church organization on earth. All are called to worship the One True God through His Son and future King, Jesus Christ. And all are called to invite others to this ultimate purpose for which all creatures were given breath. It is no overstatement to declare that interns represent one of the most effective means for participating in that Great Commission. May more and more of God's people know the joy of raising up another generation of spiritual leaders for the Church of Jesus Christ our Lord.

INTERNSHIP SURVEY QUESTIONS

## SECTION 1 – Background information

Age:

Gender:  M ☐        F ☐

What is the background of your immediate family (i.e. parents and siblings)?

Christian ☐          Non-Christian ☐          Mixed ☐

At what age did you become a Christian?

What type of school did you attend prior to college? Enter the number of years.

Public                          Private non-Christian

Private/Christian              Home school

What was your major in college?

What training in Bible, theology or ministry skills did you receive prior to the internship? This training could be as formal as a class on theology or as informal as participation in an inductive Bible study or discipleship by a ministry leader.

What ministry leadership experiences did you have prior to your internship?
Place a check mark by each one. If you had other experiences besides the ones
listed below, please describe them. How long did you serve in each role?

| | Experience | Length of service |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Summer camp counselor | |
| ☐ | Growth group leader | |
| ☐ | Doulos leader | |
| ☐ | Servant team leader | |
| ☐ | Young Life leader | |
| ☐ | Youth Group leader | |
| ☐ | Youth Impact leader | |
| ☐ | Other (Explain:            ) | |
| ☐ | Other (Explain:            ) | |

How old were you when you entered the GBC internship?

How long did you participate in the GBC internship?

　　　1 year ☐　　　2 years ☐　　　3 years ☐

What year did you begin your internship?

What was your marital status when you began the Internship Program?
　　　Married ☐　　　　　Single ☐

Are you currently practicing or preparing to practice ministry as a profession?

　　　Yes ☐　　　　No ☐

　　　I am not considering ministry as a future profession ☐

　　　If you checked yes, at what age did you begin to consider this career path?

Briefly summarize your employment, ministry, and educational experience since completing the internship (for example, 1 year working at Starbucks, 2 years volunteering at Northwest Bible Church with singles ministry, 2 years studying at DTS).

Employment:

Ministry:

Education:

**SECTION 2 – Your understanding of calling**

What is your understanding of a biblical definition of calling?

Are there any statements in scripture or stories that illustrate your definition?

To what extent did you discover this definition during your Internship Program?

Select a Percentage Here        0%        -        50%        -        100%
                          No Discovery   Some Discovery   Complete Discovery

What internship experiences helped you the most in developing your understanding of a biblical definition of calling? Please rate each of the following on a scale of zero to four (0-4).

> 0 = no value
> 1 = little value
> 2 = moderate contribution
> 3 = significant contribution
> 4 = great contribution

>> Teaching, counsel or advice I received from staff
>> Input and evaluation from other mentors
>> Self-assessment tools (e.g. DISC)
>> Personal study (Bible and/or other Christian literature)
>> Ministry experiences
>>> Small group leadership opportunities
>>> Teaching opportunities
>>> Discipling or counseling a student
>>> Participating in a missions trip
>>> Leading a ministry team
>>> Sharing your faith
>>> Planning an event
>> Input and evaluation from peers
>> Input and evaluation from students I was leading and serving
>> Participation in the college ministry staff team
>> Trials or difficulties you experienced during your internship, whether personal or professional
>> Other (please describe

What experiences before or after the Internship Program contributed to your understanding of a biblical definition of calling?

**SECTION 3 – Your strengths and weaknesses**

How confident are you that you know your strengths as they relate to ministry? Please rank on a scale of 0-100%.

Select a Percentage Here    0%    -    50%    -    100%
                No Confidence    Some Confidence    Complete Confidence

How confident are you that you know your weaknesses as they relate to ministry? Please rank on a scale of 0-100%.

Select a Percentage Here    0%    -    50%    -    100%
                No Confidence    Some Confidence    Complete Confidence

To what extent did you discover your strengths and weaknesses during your Internship Program?

Select a Percentage Here    0%    -    50%    -    100%
                No Discovery    Some Discovery    Complete Discovery

If you were to rank the five most important factors in your discovery of your strengths and weaknesses, would your internship experience be on the list? If so, where would you rank it?

What internship experiences helped you the most in understanding your strengths and weaknesses? Please rate each of the following on a scale of zero to four (0-4).

    0 = no value
    1 = little value
    2 = moderate contribution
    3 = significant contribution
    4 = great contribution

        Teaching, counsel or advice I received from staff
        Input and evaluation from other mentors
        Self-assessment tools (e.g. DISC)
        Personal study (Bible and/or other Christian literature)
        Ministry experiences
                Small group leadership opportunities
                Teaching opportunities
                Discipling or counseling a student
                Participating in a missions trip
                Leading a ministry team
                Sharing your faith
                Planning an event
        Input and evaluation from peers
        Input and evaluation from students I was leading and serving
        Participation in the college ministry staff team
        Trials or difficulties you experienced during your internship, whether personal or professional
        Other (please describe)

What experiences before or after the Internship Program contributed to your understanding of strengths and weaknesses?

**SECTION 4 – Your personal calling**

List at least 3 of the most important components for discernment of the will of God in general? If you would prefer, you may list more than 3.

What was your intended career path prior to your internship (e.g. college pastor, missionary, school teacher, engineer)?

Did your intended career path change during the course of your internship? Please select your answer: YES or NO

Select Here

What do you now perceive to be God's calling on your life? Be as specific as you can at this stage in your life.

To what extent did you discover your calling during your Internship Program?

Select a Percentage Here     0%     -     50%     -     100%
                                   No Discovery     Some Discovery     Complete Discovery

What internship experiences helped you the most in discerning your calling? Please rate each of the following on a scale of zero to four (0-4).

0 = no value
1 = little value
2 = moderate contribution
3 = significant contribution
4 = great contribution

Teaching, counsel or advice I received from staff
Input and evaluation from other mentors
Self-assessment tools (e.g. DISC)
Personal study (Bible and/or other Christian literature)
Ministry experiences
     Small group leadership opportunities
     Teaching opportunities
     Discipling or counseling a student
     Participating in a missions trip
     Leading a ministry team
     Sharing your faith
     Planning an event
Input and evaluation from peers
Input and evaluation from students I was leading and serving
Participation in the college ministry staff team
Trials or difficulties you experienced during your internship, whether personal or professional
Other (please describe)

What experiences before or after the Internship Program contributed to your understanding of your calling?

**SECTION 5 – Your personal development plan**

What is your personal developmental plan? In other words, how do you plan to continue to develop the necessary vision, knowledge, character, skills and relationships to fulfill God's calling on your life?

To what extent did you develop your plan during your Internship Program?

Select a Percentage Here

| 0% | - | 50% | - | 100% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No Development | | Some Development | | Complete Development |

What internship experiences helped you the most in creating a personal developmental plan? Please rate each of the following on a scale of zero to four (0-4).

> 0 = no value
> 1 = little value
> 2 = moderate contribution
> 3 = significant contribution
> 4 = great contribution
>
>> Teaching, counsel or advice I received from staff
>> Input and evaluation from other mentors
>> Self-assessment tools (e.g. DISC)
>> Personal study (Bible and/or other Christian literature)
>> Ministry experiences
>>> Small group leadership opportunities
>>> Teaching opportunities
>>> Discipling or counseling a student
>>> Participating in a missions trip
>>> Leading a ministry team
>>> Sharing your faith
>>> Planning an event
>> Input and evaluation from peers
>> Input and evaluation from students I was leading and serving
>> Participation in the college ministry staff team
>> Trials or difficulties you experienced during your internship, whether personal or professional
>> Other (please describe)

What experiences after the Internship Program contributed to your personal developmental plan?

APPENDIX B

SURVEY COVER LETTER

Dear Internship Alumni,

I am currently working toward my Doctor of Ministry degree at Dallas Theological Seminary, and I need your help. The focus of my research is our Internship Program. Your feedback will help us to improve our program…and it will help me to graduate on time. Below are a few instructions to guide you as fill out the survey.

1. Be honest. You can't hurt my feelings. I really want to know what you experienced so that we can make improvements to the program for future interns.

2. Please type your answers directly into this document and email it back to me. Feel free to use as much space as you need. If you absolutely have to print the survey and write out your answers the old-fashioned way, use the back of the page to complete your answers if necessary.

3. It would really, really help me if you could complete the survey by May 15. I plan on taking a few weeks off of work in June to work on the project, and I need to have your answers compiled before that time. The survey is kind of long, but please endure until the end.

4. If additional thoughts regarding the internship are just burning on your mind, go ahead and write them down at the end of the document, even if they do not relate to the questions I have asked. My project is very focused on the issue of calling, but I would appreciate hearing from you regarding anything related to improving the internship experience for future generations.

Thanks for your help.

In God's grace,

Brian

APPENDIX C

GRADING KEY FOR NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of a biblical definition of calling? Are there any statements in scripture or stories that illustrate your definition?

|  | Possible Score |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 25 | Called to salvation (relationship, worship) |
|  | 25 | Called to sanctification (imitation) |
|  | 25 | Called to service (gifting, Great Commission, roles) |
|  | 10 | Scripture reference(s) or biblical allusions |
|  | 10 | Some called to specific roles, or biblical illustrations |
|  | 5 | Not all called to specific roles, or multiple aspects to calling |
| Total | 100 |  |

2. List at least 3 of the most important components for discernment of the will of God in general? If you would prefer, you may list more than 3.

|  | Possible Score |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 35 | Scripture |
|  | 25 | Prayer, listening to Spirit's voice |
|  | 25 | Wise counsel, godly community |
|  | 5 | Any of the following: obedience, submission |
|  | 5 | Any of the following: self-awareness, gifts, talents, desires, need, reason |
|  | 5 | Any of the following: history, background, circumstances |
| Total | 100 |  |

3. What is your personal developmental plan? In other words, how do you plan to continue to develop the necessary vision, knowledge, character, skills and relationships necessary to fulfill God's calling on your life?

|  | Possible Score |  |
|---|---|---|
|  | 30 | Intern has a plan |
|  | 30 | Plan is specific and appropriate to calling or vocation |
|  | 10 | Multiple components to personal developmental plan |
|  | 30 | Currently making progress in that plan |
| Total | 100 |  |

APPENDIX D

EXPLANATION OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR VARIABLES

Explanatory Variables: Background of Respondents and Non-Internship Variables

| ABBREVIATION | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|
| Male | 1=Male; 0=Female |
| Age Current | Age of former intern at the time the survey was taken |
| Age Saved | Age at which the former intern experienced salvation |
| Education | |
|    Public School | *Excluded variable*: Number of years attending public school |
|    Christian School | Number of years attending a private Christian school |
|    Home School | Number of years attending home school |
| Min Exp | Ministry Experience |
|    College Experience | Pre-internship ministry experience within the GBC college ministry program (months) see chart above for identical language |
|    Non-college Experience | Pre-internship ministry experience outside of the GBC college ministry program (months) |
| In Ministry | Former interns who were working in ministry at the time of the survey. 1=yes; 0=no |
| Preparing | Former interns who were preparing for vocational ministry at the time of the survey; all were in seminary. 1=yes; 0=no |
| Non-Vocational Ministry | *Excluded variable*: Defines those with jobs outside of vocational ministry at the time of the survey. 1=yes; 0=no |
| Mentors | Perceived benefit received from mentors other than church staff |
| Trials | Perceived benefit received from trials experienced during the internship |

Pre-Internship Ministry Experiences (Unused Variables)

| ABBREVIATION | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|
| Growth Group | Small group Bible study within GBC College Ministry |
| Doulos | Freshmen Bible study within GBC College Ministry |
| Servant Team | Ministry program team leaders within GBC College Ministry |
| Summer Camp | Summer camp counselor, cook, servant team, etc. |
| Youth Group Leader | Church or para-church youth volunteer |

Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences

| ABBREVIATION | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|
| One Year | *Excluded variable*: Former interns who participated in one year of the internship |
| Two Years | Former interns who participated in two years of the internship |
| Three Years | Former interns who participated in three years of the internship |
| Staff | Perceived benefit received from the teaching, counsel and advice of staff |
| Assessment | Perceived benefit received from self-assessment tools such as DISC |
| Personal Study | Perceived benefit received from personal study |
| Min Exp | Perceived benefit received from internship ministry experiences. This parameter represents the average ranking of the "Unused Variables" listed below. |
| Peer Input | Perceived benefit received from the input and evaluation of peers |
| Student Input | Perceived benefit received from the input and evaluation of students led by the intern |
| Ministry Team | Perceived benefit received from participation in the college ministry team |

Explanatory Variables: Internship Program Experiences (Unused Variables)

| ABBREVIATION | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|
| Small Group Leadership | Perceived benefit received from leading a small group such as Doulos, Growth Groups or a discipleship group during the internship |
| Participating in a Missions Trip | Perceived benefit received from going on or leading a short-term missions trip during the internship |
| Leading a Ministry Team | Perceived benefit received benefit received from leading a ministry team (leading a single team or leading the entire Servant Team) |
| Discipling or Counseling a Student | Perceived benefit received from the experience of personally discipling or counseling a student |
| Teaching Opportunities | Perceived benefit received from teaching opportunities during the internship |
| Sharing the Gospel | Perceived benefit received from sharing the gospel during the internship |
| Planning an Event | Perceived benefit received from planning and leading a ministry event |

Response Variables

| ABBREVIATION | EXPLANATION |
| --- | --- |
| Grade Definition | Hypothesis 1: Grade on a former intern's written explanation of a biblical definition of calling |
| Def Discovery | Hypothesis 1: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered a biblical definition of calling through Internship Program. |
| Know Strength | Hypothesis 2: Percent to which a former intern felt confident that he or she knew his or her strengths |
| Know Weakness | Hypothesis 2: Percent to which a former intern felt confident that he or she knew his or her weaknesses |
| SW Discovery | Hypothesis 2: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered his or her strengths and weaknesses through the Internship Program |
| Grade Discern | Hypothesis 3: Grade on a former intern's listing of the important components of discernment of the will of God. |
| PC Discovery | Hypothesis 3: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered his or her personal calling through the Internship Program. |
| Grade PDP | Hypothesis 4: Grade on a former intern's written description of his or her plan for personal vocational development. |
| PDP Discovery | Hypothesis 4: Percent to which a former intern perceived that he or she discovered his or her plan for personal vocational development through the Internship Program. |

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Pre-Internship Ministry Experience[1]

| | | Mean | Standard Deviation | Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-internship Experience (months) | | | | |
| | Growth Group | 18.7 | 12.033 | 23 |
| | Doulos | 16.8 | 8.390 | 10 |
| | Servant Team | 10.5 | 3.843 | 13 |
| | Other GBC | 40.8 | 18.199 | 5 |
| | GBC Ministries Subtotal | 33.5 | 23.176 | 28 |
| | Summer Camp | 4.2 | 2.440 | 10 |
| | Youth Group Leader | 22.0 | 9.165 | 3 |
| | Other | 20.6 | 15.941 | 14 |
| | Non-GBC Ministries Subtotal | 20.8 | 14.519 | 19 |
| | Total | 46.0 | 22.312 | 29 |

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[1] Ministry experience was measured in months, and the months were measured cumulatively. In other words, if a former intern volunteered in three different areas of ministry simultaneously over the course of 3 months, he or she received a value of 9 months of pre-internship ministry experience. Former interns actually participated in, on average, a cumulative total of 46 months of ministry experience. A higher average number of months were experienced within the college ministry (33.5) than outside of the college ministry (20.8).

Length of Internship

| Length of Internship | | Years | Percentage | Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1.0 | 48.3% | 14 |
| | | 2.0 | 37.9% | 11 |
| | | 3.0 | 13.8% | 4 |

Career Direction Subsequent to Internship Program

| Ministry | | | Percentage | Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Working in ministry | | 27.6% | 8 |
| | Preparing for ministry | | 34.5% | 10 |
| | Non-vocational | | 37.9% | 11 |

Spiritual Heritage

| Age Saved | Mean | Standard Deviation | Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 8.8 | 4.708 | 29 |
| Range Minimum | 3 | | |
| Range Maximum | 18 | | |
| | | | |
| Family | Percentage | | Respondents |
| Christian | 89.7% | | 26 |
| Non-Christian | 3.4% | | 1 |
| Mixed | 6.9% | | 2 |

APPENDIX F

FORMER INTERNS SERVING THE BODY OF CHRIST


As of May, 2009, forty men and women have passed through the Internship

Program. Of those forty interns:

One is a seminary professor.

Eleven are in the secular workplace or studying in a non-theological graduate

program. All of these former interns are involved in their local churches as

deacons, Bible study leaders, and other places of spiritual influence.

Five are on staff at Grace Bible Church.

Two are serving as worship leaders at churches other than GBC.

Ten have served as overseas missionaries for at least one year.

Seven are on the mission field or preparing to go.

Twelve are currently pursuing seminary education. Most of these are full-time

students, while a few are part-time.

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