

Discussion Summary of
The Making of a Leader
Written by J. Robert Clinton
Summary by Mark R. Elliott*

For years I have focused my reading list on books related to spiritual development, church growth, church revitalization, and leadership development. When I have encountered a “great read” I have done what I call a Discussion Summary as a way for pastors and ministry leaders, whose primary reading list includes commentaries and preaching books, to be able to take advantage of great insights from other areas of study.

While reading Christian leadership books, I often saw quotes from J. Robert Clinton’s book *The Making of a Leader*. So I concluded, if everyone is quoting him, then I need to read his book. So I bought it and began to read it. It is a 272 page paperback with 22 pages of expanded endnotes, a 24 page glossary, a 7 page general index, and a two page scripture text index. The opening introduction about the author lets us know that he is a seminary professor (doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary) with an undergraduate BA and MA in electrical engineering. Are you getting the picture that it might not be a quick read? I’m generally able to grasp ideas and concepts fairly quickly, but it took me three readings before I understood most of what he was saying. During my first read, I spent a lot of time in the endnotes and glossary section.

Through his own life experiences; study of Biblical, historical, and contemporary leaders; along with years of research he and his students have done, Clinton identified six general phases of spiritual development that individuals can experience. He defines these phases as a *Pattern* and states that because of the brevity of life, our life choices, and circumstances beyond our control, few of us will experience all six. For several years I have used a generalized description of the phases to encourage leaders to humbly identify where they are and to continue to seek God and the right kind of relationships that will help them move through their current level as God prepares them for the next level. I have expanded my description for our current context.

Six Phases of Spiritual Development

(1) Phase I is called “Sovereign Foundations” – God providentially works through family, environment, and historical events. This begins at birth. Personality characteristics, experiences both good and bad, and the cultural and world context will all be used by God. You might find it hard to believe that God was working through your family or your environment, especially if these were not godly influences, but He was. The potential leader has little control over what happens in this phase. God is starting to lay the foundation and building blocks for the emerging leader’s life of leadership. It is a time where character issues are developing, skills are developing, and one begins to wrestle with a sense of God’s calling. Usually the *Boundary Event* between Phase I and Phase II is the conversion experience or at times an all-out commitment to Christ.

(2) Phase II is called “Inner Life Growth” – This is a time where the leader is learning to hear and obey God’s leading. Often it is informal training as the leader-to-be learns by doing in the

context of a local church or Christian organization. Sometimes it is formal training. Often it is both. It is a time of deep spiritual growth and developing intimacy with God with the major thrust of God's development being inward. The real training program is in the heart of the person, where God will be doing what Clinton calls "growth testing." The leader is often put through several major tests during this process. At each of these challenging experiences, God is determining if the individual will obey and submit wholeheartedly to Him. Henry Blackaby would call these Crisis of Belief moments.

(3) Phase III is called "Ministry Maturing" – In this stage the leader is reaching out to others and discovering and practicing their spiritual gifts. Both positive and negative lessons are being learned during this phase. The leader is learning his or her individual strengths and weaknesses in working with others. Oftentimes there is a strong desire to get more training during this time to minimize one's weaknesses and enhance one's strengths. In the first three phases God is primarily working "in" the leader not through him or her. In the next three phases, God can begin to work "through" the obedient, maturing leader. As Clinton articulates "Many emerging leaders don't recognize this, and become frustrated. They are constantly evaluating productivity and activities, while God is quietly and patiently evaluating their leadership potential and developing their character. He wants to teach us that we minister out of who we are." We want to learn a thousand things because there is so much to learn and do. But God will teach us one thing, perhaps in a thousand ways, as He seeks to form Christ in us.

(4) Phase IV is called "Life Maturing" – This is a time in the leader's life where the leader is using their spiritual gifts in a ministry that is satisfying. We have gained a sense of priorities concerning the best use of our gifts, and we understand that learning what not to do is as important as learning what to do. A mature fruitfulness is the result. Isolation, crisis, and conflict take on new meaning. The principle that "ministry flows out of being" has new significance as the leader's character mellows and matures. Communion and intimacy with God become immensely more important than one's "success" in ministry.

(5) Phase V is called "Convergence" – God takes the leader and connects them with a role that matches their gift-mix, temperament, and experience so that ministry is maximized. Clinton has observed that geographic location is an important part of convergence. Life Maturing and Ministry Maturing peak together during this phase. Many leaders never get to experience this phase. Some leaders like Dawson Trotman and Jim Elliott were taken to Heaven before entering this phase. Some leaders don't get to experience this phase because of their own sin, or other providential circumstances. For those who experience convergence it is a time of transitional leadership where the baton is passed down to other faithful leaders who will continue to develop the leader's vision for the church or organization they have been equipped by God to lead.

(6) The final phase (VI) is called "Afterglow" or "Celebration" – Clinton writes that this stage occurs when "The fruit of a lifetime of ministry growth culminates in an era of recognition and indirect influence at broad levels. Leaders in Afterglow have built up a lifetime of contacts and continue to exert influence in these relationships. Others will seek them out because of their consistent track record of following God. Their storehouse of wisdom gathered over a lifetime of leadership will continue to bless and benefit many."

Question: Based on this quick overview, in which of these phases would you place yourself, and why?

Q: Can you identify someone who is at a developmental phase beyond yours, who could mentor you?

Recently I heard a very mature Christian leader recommend this book to a fairly new in the faith, very young in age, and extremely sharp developing young leader. I had an immediate flashback to my own challenges with comprehending the book. I also had a flashback to another recent conversation I had with a mature, high quality, very intelligent, and seasoned leader. We were discussing Clinton's book, and he told me he started to read it, but he put it down because it was such a tedious read. It is not a book that can be skim read. Every sentence has meaning and insights that must be understood and remembered if you are going to grasp all that Clinton is saying.

The reality is that Clinton is trying to describe the exceedingly complex way in which God has and is working in the lives of individuals. Paul reminds us that, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). It should not surprise us that the activities of an incomprehensible, all powerful, all knowing God *might* be beyond our complete and perfect understanding. As such, the following is my humble effort to bring clarity and simplicity to some great, but complex, terms and concepts that you will find in *The Making of a Leader*. My quotations and comments are from the 1988 edition.

My suggestion is that you read Chapter 2 first and be willing to read it a couple of times, if necessary, to get a good grasp of where Clinton is heading before you even embark on the Preface. A quick scan read of Chapter 9 might also help. After you've thoroughly read Chapter 2 and scanned Chapter 9 and worked through the Preface, I would suggest you then jump to Chapter 6 where he discusses ten different types of experiences we are likely to encounter in our life-time. Then read the Introduction and embark on Chapter 1 and read the chapters in sequence. I would also recommend that you read the opening section and then jump to the summary at the end of each chapter before you read the rest of the chapter. Doing so will provide you a good outline for that chapter.

Preface

- A. Clinton opens the book with three great questions. I would encourage you to take a moment and answer them from your current perspective:
1. What does it mean to be a leader?
 2. What does it take to become the leader God wants you to be?
 3. What are the processes, the cost, and the result?
- B. "Effective spiritual ministry flows out of being, and God is concerned with our being. He is constantly forming it. God uses various *patterns*¹ and *processes*² to shape us, and they are

worthwhile subjects for leadership study. Those who study patterns and processes, and use insights from them in life and ministry, will be better prepared leaders.”

As mentioned in my opening comments, Clinton’s book includes a glossary, and you have to be familiar with how he defines terms before you are going to understand what he is saying. Reading the opening paragraphs of his preface required me to take a trip to the glossary. There you will find definitions for several *patterns*¹ and *processes*², and a definition for the two terms:

¹ A pattern is a repetitive cycle [or sequence] of events that God will use to shape our lives.

² A process is a providential event, person, circumstance, special intervention, life lesson, or anything else God chooses to use to develop our spiritual leadership skills.

My suggestion is that you commit to memory how he defines and consistently uses these two general terms. But beyond them, let me suggest that you will get more out of the book if you look for and cling to the principles and general concepts he provides—they are extremely helpful. Any attempt to follow his detailed, often tedious, and sometimes fluid use of terms will frustrate you to the point of setting the book aside.

Q: As you look at your current understanding of leadership, how much of it relates to doing (learning, applying, and perfecting skills) versus being (learning from life experiences and opportunities that were designed by God. How often do you permit your day-to-day life experiences to draw you closer to Him, make you look more objectively at yourself, and then lead you to make changes that will help you look more like Jesus?

C. Clinton writes, “Leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God’s people toward His purposes for the group. This is contrary to the popular notion that a leader must have a formal position, a formal title, or formal training. To be considered a leader, one does not require a professional position nor need to be a ‘full-time Christian worker.’ This book is written for all who influence a specific group of people for God’s purposes, whether or not they are professional leaders.”

Q: How does Clinton’s definition of leadership compare to yours?

Q: Describe a time when you significantly influenced a group although you didn’t have a formal position or title.

D. “Development includes all of life’s processes, not just formal training. Leaders are shaped by deliberate training and by experience. ‘Leadership development,’ is a much broader term than leadership training.”

Activity: List some of the formal leadership training experiences you have had. And then list some experiences you have had (both positive and negative) through which God developed your leadership abilities.

Q: Which list is longer? Which list has provided more enduring leadership insights or skills?

E. “In general, readers with little or no ministry experience will not identify with as many of the processes and patterns mentioned in this book as those who are further along in their development. If you have more experience as a leader, you will grasp the underlying concept of God’s processing [using Divinely designed life experiences] for leadership and be sensitized to the general idea of a development pattern. You will be able to see your own pattern as it develops and respond with a more teachable attitude.”

Q: Would you describe yourself as someone with little ministry experience or with a lot of experience? If you said “a lot,” how does your level of experience compare to your most mature mentor?

Even if you are one of the brightest and best young leaders, you will struggle to identify personally with some of Clinton’s concepts, but if you will push through them, you CAN glean some valuable insights. I share this having years of experience telling church planters and pastors who are not familiar with the culture of the upper Midwest about the things they will face. I long ago lost count of the number of times I heard these leaders say, “I wish someone would have told me _____.” Looking back, I probably didn’t do them a service by not responding, “I DID tell you that, but you had to experience it before you could really comprehend what I was saying.” So, read it carefully, prayerfully, and reflectively, with a willingness to process the information with a spiritually mature mentor. Don’t make Clinton or me say, “I told you so, but you didn’t listen!”

If you are an “old dog,” let me assure you that you will glean some “new tricks” that will help you understand more clearly what God was doing at critical and challenging times in your life. You will also find helpful insights for dealing with what you otherwise might view as mundane life experiences in the future.

F. “Four things will happen as you read this book. 1) You will learn about the providence of God. 2) You will begin to sense a continuity of God’s working in your past to develop you as a leader. 3) You will have a high degree of anticipation because God is going to use you in the future. 4) Finally, you will perceive yourself and others in terms of insights gained from this book.”

Q: When was the last time you read or listened to a writer or preacher’s promises and were disappointed? Let me assure you, that if you will take time to let Clinton’s insights slowly soak into your life, you will find his promises to be true.

G. “When you look on leadership development in terms of life’s processes, you quickly realize who the academic dean really is. It is God. Each of us has leadership courses that are individually tailored for us by the Academic Dean.”

Activity: Take time to ask God to give you eyes to see, ears to hear, and a mind to remember what you learn from this book—that means we do the opposite of what Jesus said about His disciples in Mark 8:18: “Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?”

Introduction: Who Needs These Lessons Anyway?

A. Clinton opens the introduction and all but the first chapter with a statement of **The Challenge** that the chapter will address. Here he begins with a proverb he learned in Bible College: “Well begun is half done. Forewarned is forearmed.” He then provides the stories of four individuals at four very different phases of spiritual development. As he does, he points to specific tools that will be introduced later in the book that would have helped each individual understand better what God was doing in their life. However, in someone’s first read of the book, the examples are not that helpful because the reader hasn’t been exposed to his terminology, formal definitions, and explanations. As such, many readers get bogged down, and they set the book aside before giving it a chance. That’s why I suggested on page three that most people would benefit by not reading the book sequentially from cover to cover.

Q: Describe a time when you looked back at a life experience and realized you had given up way too quickly and probably missed a HUGE opportunity.

B. The closing section of the Introduction asks the question, “Who Needs This Book?” He quickly provides the answer: “If you know that God will be developing you over a lifetime, you’ll most likely stay for the whole ride.” God develops a leader over a lifetime. That development occurs as God uses a variety of events and people over a period of time. How an individual responds will determine their leadership potential. All leaders can point to critical incidents in their lives where God taught them something very important. Clinton states that the book was written for leaders or potential leaders who:

- Are wondering what God is doing.
- Are beginning to seek their place of ministry.
- Need a fresh challenge from God.
- Need to understand how to select and develop younger leaders.
- Are at a crossroads, facing a major decision.
- Want to know how God develops leaders.

Activity: Which of the above situations best describes where you are today?

C. Leaders, or emerging leaders, need a roadmap to point out where God will take them as He develops their gifts. Each journey is unique, but a map key can help a person understand what is happening when God is working in their life, let them anticipate the future, better understand the past, and more appropriately respond to God’s leading. Leadership development theory does what a good map key does. In leadership, the key is a set of well-integrated ideas of how God has developed leaders in the past that will help us today as we:

- Organize what we see happening in a developing leader’s life as well as our own.
- Anticipate what might happen in future development.
- Use hindsight to better understand past events so that we can glean new insights.
- Come to better order our lives today.

Activity: Think back to your last really difficult life experience—one that’s far enough in the past that you have had time to heal, reflect, and evaluate what happened. What is one life lesson that you gleaned from that experience? If your answer is “Nothing,” then I challenge you to stop right now and ask God to reveal why He permitted you to have that experience. You might also want to ask that same question of a spiritually mature friend who knows you well and knows about the situation.

Chapter 1: A Letter to Dan the Intern

A. This chapter is very similar to the Introduction except here he provides an expanded look at one young man struggling to find his place in God’s Kingdom. It opens with a description of a man named Dan. He was in his second year of seminary and had a sense that God was calling him to be a missionary to China. He became restless with all the study and wanted to be where the action was. He dropped out of school and went to Hong Kong for a nine-month internship. Half way through his internship he found himself frustrated again—in spite of his lack of language skills, he was now contemplating an opportunity in mainland China. He sent out a prayer letter sharing his frustration and asking for prayer. The chapter is a long letter that Clinton wrote to encourage, enlighten, and challenge him. The heart of the chapter is an overview of the six phases I described on pages one and two.

He wraps up his description of the phases by stating, “God’s goal is a Spirit-filled leader through whom the living Christ ministers, utilizing the leader’s spiritual gifts. The fruit of the Spirit is the mark of the mature Christian. The gifts of the Spirit are a mark of a leader being used of God. God wants that balance. His approach is to work in you and then through you.”

Q: Describe a time when you got impatient with a situation, quit, and then moved quickly to what you thought at the time was a more exciting opportunity only to discover it wasn’t what you thought it would be. With hindsight, how would you describe the wisdom of your choice?

B. After Clinton suggests that God could use Dan’s current situation to instill spiritual strength in him, he describes three specific processes [remember the word process has a technical meaning for Clinton] that God might be using: integrity check, isolation, and ministry task. He wrote, “*An Integrity Check* tests inner character for consistency. Will you follow through on a commitment? Perhaps God is using your time in Hong Kong to let you see if you will persist in your desire to minister to Chinese. It is one thing to make a decision in the heat of the moment (or quietness as the case may be). It is quite another to serve for a lifetime. Perhaps what God is saying to you through this experience is the message of Jeremiah 12:5, ‘If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?’”

Q: Being a person of integrity means that you are willing to follow-through with your commitments even when it gets hard. Describe a time when you were willing to persevere through significant challenges to complete a job. What life lessons did you learn?

C. The second *process item* Clinton introduces to Dan is what he calls *Isolation*. He then defines it. “Several times in a leader’s life the leader may be set aside. Usually this process item is seen in the ministry phase and life maturing phase [phases III and IV on pages one and two]. These times can occur because of crises, illness, persecution or discipline, self-choice, or providential circumstances.” They “are used by God to teach important inner leadership lessons that could not be learned in the pressures and activities of normal ministry. God has to get your attention first. Then He teaches.”

Q: Have you ever felt like God or others had put you on a shelf? What kind of lessons do you think God might have been trying to teach you through that experience?

D. Clinton then moves to a third *Process Item*: “A *Ministry Task*, which usually occurs in Phase II. It is an assignment from God in which the leader is tested on some basic lessons. Upon successful completion of the ministry task, the leader is usually given a bigger task. Ministry Tasks involve getting experience, gaining knowledge, or doing things that will bring out character and giftedness. Ministry Tasks are not always clear-cut and easy to see. But they are stepping stones to other ministry. Your job is to do them as unto the Lord.”

Q: What was the first ministry task that you were asked to do? How did it make you feel when you were asked to help? What did you learn about yourself through that experience?

E. The chapter concludes when Clinton gives Dan five very specific assignments along with some counsel that I’m sure Dan was not excited to read.

1. Work on submission: It is one thing to know what God’s will is; it is another thing altogether to know the timing (both what and when). From what I see, you are not ready yet for a full-time ministry. God is not in as big a hurry as you and I are. He is more interested in shaping you and me first. Submission is an essential leadership lesson.”
2. Read the chapter on “Time” in *Principles of Spiritual Growth* by Miles Stanford: You are in a hurry to get on with ministry. Particularly note the quote concerning the difference between a squash and an oak tree.
3. Wait on the Lord: He will lead in a plain path in His time.
4. Talk to my friend Steve Torgerson: He is going through isolation because of Chinese language study. He knows what you are going through. Spend some time with him. Cultivate his friendship and seek his advice.
5. Read the story of J. O. Fraser who served in China. He was prepared by isolation. I think you are ready for it now.

Q: Obviously the key concept Clinton was trying to communicate to Dan was patience. Describe a time when God was able to teach you to be patient.

Chapter 2: The Basis for Lessons: The Big Picture

A. The Challenge/Problem that opens the chapter is found in Hebrews 13:7-8: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and

imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” He then states, “Today there are more churches, more Christian organizations, and more mission organizations than ever before, all of which present a crying need for leadership. We need men and women whose lives imitate those people in the Bible who were worthy of the name ‘leader.’ The church worldwide is in need of a committed group of disciples, like those past leaders, who can lead the way by demonstrating through their lives a faith worth imitating.” He continues, “The same lessons He taught in the past apply to me today. The same Jesus Christ who enabled those leaders to live lives of faith will enable me to live a life of faith today. He is both the source and the reason for our study of leadership. Leadership is a lifetime of lessons. We can profit from both *how* God developed them and *what* God taught them.

Q: What was the last BIG lesson that God taught you? How or who did He use to help you learn it?

Q: Are you still applying that lesson today?

- B. After providing a general *Time-Line* (pattern) for three historic Christian leaders which are further developed later in the chapter, Clinton provides a more formal definition of some terms he has already been using. “The terms *patterns*, *processes*, and *principles* are foundational to understanding the analysis of a person’s life. Patterns deal with the overall framework, or the big picture, of a life. Processes deal with the ways and means used by God to move a leader along in the overall pattern. Principles deal with the identification of foundational truths within processes and patterns that have a wider application to leaders.

He then describes the value of *Time-Lines*. “When studying patterns, the time-line is useful for making long-term observations. When studying processes, we analyze process items—those providential events, people, circumstances, special interventions, and inner-life lessons that can be God’s way of indicating leadership potential. Process items also develop potential, confirm the leadership role, and move the emerging leader along to God’s appointed ministry level.

Principles are different from both patterns and processes in that they identify foundational truths.” To clarify what principles are, Clinton quotes Warren Wiersbe:

About the only thing I remember from one of my courses at seminary is a bit of doggerel that the weary professor dropped into a boring lecture:

Methods are many,
Principles are few.
Methods always change,
Principles never do.

That conviction led me into a lifelong search for principles, the foundational truths that never change and yet always have a fresh meaning and application for each new situation. I learned never to adopt a method until I understood the principle behind it. I learned to evaluate men and ministries on the basis of the principles that motivated them, as well as on the basis of the fruit they produced.

Activity: Take a few minutes and use your own words to define what he means by *pattern*, *process*, and *principle*.

- C. In a section titled The Generalized Time-Line, he elaborates further on the six phases which he introduced in Chapter 1. I used information from this section and that in Chapter 1 to develop the overview on pages one and two of this resource.

A section titled Identifying Development Phases begins and ends with a further definition of terms. “Development phases are consistently characterized in at least three different ways. First, different kinds of process items occur in different phases. Second, each phase is terminated by specific boundary events. Third, there is a different sphere of influence. There is usually an interplay between these three factors that also helps to determine development phases.”

Clinton used the phrase “boundary events” to describe process items that God has consistently used at major spiritual transitions in our life. The clearest example would be a person’s conversion experience that initiates the transition between Phase I Sovereign Foundations and Phase II Inner-Life Growth. He uses the phrase “sphere of influence” to indicate our level of leadership influence.

Q: Take a few minutes and use your own words to define what he means by a *Development Phase*, *Boundary Event*, and *Sphere of Influence*.

- D. He continues his definitions by stating, “I have grouped the various process items into six general categories: foundational factors, inner-growth factors, ministry factors, maturity factors, convergence factors, and guidance factors.” You will note that all but one of the process item categories align with one of the six phases. He continues, “The Guidance process items occur throughout all the phases. They are often crucial during transitions between phases.” He defines process items that occur during a transition between phases as Boundary Events. They include such factors as crises, promotions, a new ministry, learning a major new concept, unusual experiences, life-changing encounters with a person, a divine guidance experience, or a geographic move.” Sandwiched in with the definitions, Clinton develops more fully the Time-Lines of the three Christian leaders he introduced earlier in the chapter: Watchman Nee, A. W. Tozer, and Dawson Trotman. With a clearer understanding of his terms, he closes the chapter with some questions—I’ll include two of them here.

Q: In what way has your development followed along the generalized pattern? In what ways has it differed?

Q: He mentioned twice in the chapter that “ministry flows out of being.” Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

Chapter 3: Foundational Lessons: Inner-Life Growth Processes

A. The Challenge/Problem that opens this chapter is addressed in Proverbs 4:23: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for of it are the issues of life.” Clinton then states, “In this phase, God uses four important process items to test an emerging leader’s character.” Remember, Clinton defines a process item as “a providential event, person, circumstance, special intervention, life lesson, or anything else God chooses to use to develop our spiritual leadership skills.” He points out that the God-given capacity to lead has two parts: giftedness and character. In Psalm 78:72 Asaph describes these two qualities of leadership as being true of King David: “So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.” We live in an impatient culture where we expect—maybe I should even go so far as to say we demand—instant action. Those to whom God has given an abundant portion of natural abilities, tend to race ahead before God has had an opportunity to test and develop their character.

Q: Have you had an opportunity to listen to Christianity Today’s podcasts entitled the *Rise and Fall of Mars Hill*? If so, you have a contemporary illustration of what can happen when someone experiences “success” beyond what their character can handle.

Activity: Ask someone who knows you very well AND who is willing to speak truth into your life to compare the development of your skills and abilities with that of your character.

B. Clinton states that in this phase, God generally uses four different process items: integrity check, obedience check, word check, and ministry tasks. He discusses the first three in this chapter and defers a discussion of ministry tasks to the next chapter. He begins with what he calls an integrity check and states that “Integrity is foundational for effective leadership; it must be instilled early in a leader’s character.” In this section, Clinton provides four individuals who experienced integrity checks: Biblical examples of Daniel and Saul (one positive and one negative) and historic examples of Amy Carmichael and Carlton Booth.

He writes, “Character development has many facets, there are a variety of integrity checks. This is a sample of the many that I have identified: values (which determine convictions), temptation (which tests conviction), conflict against ministry vision (which tests faith), an alternative in guidance situations (which tests calling), persecution (which tests steadfastness), loyalty (which tests allegiance), and restitution (which tests honesty).

Q: To the extent that you currently understand what Clinton means by an integrity check, select one of them that you have personally experienced and prayerfully reflect on how God was trying to shape your character through that experience.

C. Under the Obedience Check section, he notes, “An obedience check is a process item through which a leader learns to recognize, understand, and obey God’s voice. Through it God tests a leader’s personal response to revealed truth.” Here again he provides both a positive (Abraham) and negative (Ananias and Sapphira) Biblical example and a historical example (Watchman Nee). He lists the following as examples of obedience checks: learning

about possessions and giving, learning to put God first in the choice of a mate, learning to be willing to be used by God in ministry, and having a readiness to trust God given truths related to forgiveness, confession, or righting a wrong. The section closes with the statement that “obedience is first leaned and then taught.”

Q: To the extent that you can discern what Clinton means by an obedience check, stop to reflect on a time when you responded in obedience and another time when you said no to God. Compare and contrast the long-term impact of each decision. Which one turned out the way YOU hoped it would.

D. The third section discusses what Clinton calls *The Word Check*, and he defines it as “a process item that tests a leader’s ability to understand or receive a word from God personally and then allow God to work it out in his or her life. Word checks are frequently combined with integrity checks and obedience checks, because the revealed truth will test integrity or obedience.” He again provides examples: Samuel, Watchman Nee, Dawson Trotman, and Amy Carmichael. And he again provides several ways that God can use a word check: to give inner conviction, to assign ministry, to solve problems, to motivate toward vision, to encourage faith, to give divine assurance, and to clarify guidance. He throws a bit of a curve ball in this section by introducing the term “word gifts” in the opening paragraph before he returns to the subject at the close of the section where he explains the relationship between *word checks* and *word gifts*.

“Word checks also lead to the identification of word gifts in an emerging leader. This usually follows a pattern. An emerging leader is sensitive to God’s voice and personally responds to truth through word checks. This opens the door to sharing the truths he’s learned with others. The communication of truth allows for the development of various word gifts in the leader.” Earlier in the section Clinton wrote, “Leaders always have at least one word gift along with other gifts that make up their overall gift-mix. The primary word gifts are teaching, prophecy, and exhortation. The secondary word gifts are apostleship, evangelism, and pastoring.” He states, “Leadership gifts primarily involve word gifts, which initially emerge through word checks.”

Q: To the extent that you currently understand what Clinton means by a word check, describe a recent example in your own life.

E. The chapter closes with two significant acknowledgements:

1) Having described three kinds of tests: integrity check, obedience check, and word check, Clinton admits that sometimes it is not easy to differentiate them. Life is complex and a given situation or experience does not always fit into neat analytical categories. Often a test involves a combination of one or more process items. He then provides the following diagram:

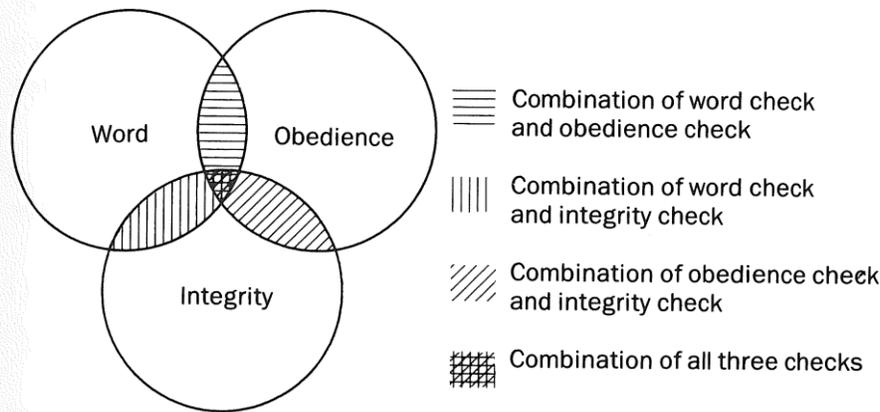


Figure 3-1 Diagram Showing Overlap of Testing Items

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- 2) He then acknowledges that although it is good to identify a given process item it is much more important to see the significance of the test. In other words, to see and learn the lesson God was trying to instill.

With these two realities in mind, my suggestion is that we focus on the three principles he mentions with the reality that God can create an infinite number of ways to guide and shape our lives—if we are willing to listen, learn, and change.

- Integrity is foundational for effective leadership; it must be instilled early in a leader’s character.
- Obedience is first learned, then taught.
- Leadership gifts primarily involve word gifts, which initially emerge through word checks.

Activity: List at least three principles you gleaned from this chapter or principles that you previously believed that were confirmed.

Chapter 4: Second Lessons: Ministry Maturing Processes—Part I

- A. The Challenge/Problem that opens this chapter is highlighted in Luke 16:10: “He who is faithful in a very little and therefore can be relied upon, is faithful also in much and can be relied upon there. And he who violates law and justice in a very little thing does the same also in regard to much.” Clinton opens with the statement that “Faithfulness is the yardstick by which God measures ministry maturity.” Once God has seen evidence of integrity and character, He begins to provide opportunities for an individual to share with others what they have learned and implemented in their life. Although the book is specifically designed to speak to ministry leaders, it has applications for every professing Christian: God calls EVERY Christian to identify and faithfully use their unique giftedness. Christian leaders are specifically called to be part of that equipping process. “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Q: What is your reaction to Clinton’s statement that “Faithfulness is the yardstick by which God measures ministry maturity?”

Q: In your own life, describe a time when God found you faithful. Now, describe a time when you know you were not faithful. What did you learn in each of those situations?

B. Clinton breaks down *Phase III Ministry Maturing* into four developmental stages, and then discusses two in this chapter (early and training) and two in the next chapter (relational and learning). After providing a general description of the four developmental stages, he provides the diagram below. He cautions us that “This development takes place over a long period of time, often many years. And he adds, “The development stages are not always clearly delineated because there is some overlap in the learning process.” Here again I caution you to not get lost in his forest of terms, but glean the principles and gain a general understanding of the processes God has used in other people’s lives. Very likely, God has and will continue to use some of them in your life.

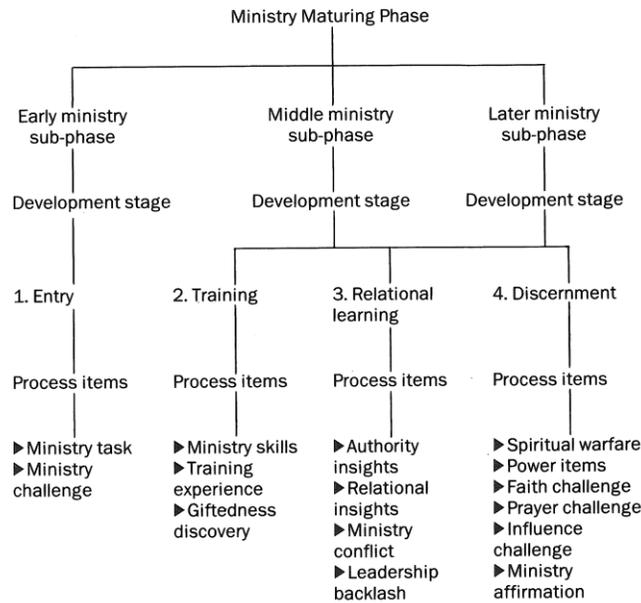


Figure 4-1 Early, Middle, and Later Ministry Sub-Phases and Process Items

He then begins by discussing the *Entry Developmental Stage*, Clinton has identified two primary process items: Ministry Task and Ministry Challenge. He defines the former as “an assignment from God that tests a person’s faithfulness and obedience to use his or her gifts in a task that has a *beginning and ending, accountability, and evaluation.*” My years of experience tell me that most churches and most Christian leaders don’t do a good job of helping someone who is in the early stages of development. We are quick to give a task (after all we usually have more slots to fill than we have people to fill them) but slow to equip (tyranny of the urgent and failure to prioritize equipping others). We don’t do a very good job of defining their responsibility (giving clear position descriptions), granting them the proper authority (necessary training, resources, and decision making power so they can

do the job well), or providing them accountability (evaluation and feedback to affirm them and help them get better).

Activity: Think about your early ministry opportunities. Describe how your mentor(s) defined your responsibilities, granted you authority, and provided you with accountability?

Now, think about someone you are mentoring. Ask them to state what they understand are their responsibilities, areas of authority, and lines of accountability.

- D. The second process item Clinton mentions for the entry stage is Ministry Challenge. He states that it “Focuses on the leader’s acceptance of his ministry. Specifically, it is the means through which a leader or potential leader is prompted by God to sense the need for and accept a new assignment.” The heart of the ministry challenge is twofold: sensing God’s direction and enjoying what it means to be a channel through whom God works. He points out that a major responsibility for leaders is the selection and development of potential leaders. He then says, “A danger sign indicating a plateaued leader is a lack of enthusiasm for challenging and recruiting potential leaders. A growing leader, on the other hand, stimulates the emergence of potential leaders.” Clinton provides the following questions:

Q: Are you still regularly recognizing ministry challenges and ministry assignments for yourself?

Q: Are you still willing to accept new challenges and assignments, and are you recruiting others for them?

Clinton suggests if the answers are no, then you have plateaued and in order to move on, you need to ask God for fresh enthusiasm for ministry.

- E. In the *Training Developmental Stage* (the second stage in Phase III Ministry Maturing), Clinton identifies three process items: Ministry Skills, Training Experience, and Giftedness Discovery. He states, “the Ministry Skills process item is the acquisition of one or more identifiable skills that help a leader accomplish a ministry assignment.” He then lists a variety of areas in which the skills of a young leader will need to be developed: leading groups, implementing change, dealing with conflict, learning how to study and effectively communicate Biblical truth. He again points out that “Leaders who plateau early reveal a common pattern. They learn new skills until they can operate comfortably with them, but then they fail to seek new skills—they coast on their experience.” I remember one of my mentors telling me there is a big difference between someone who has twenty years of experience and someone who has four years of experience five times.

Q: Describe the last time you learned a new skill—a time when you had to acquire a new skill, or you were able to significantly adapt a skill you had when you encountered a new and different challenge.

- F. He then addresses the Training Experience process item. After stating, “most skills are picked up through experience, observation, and self-study,” Clinton defines this process

item as “an experience that gives some form of affirmation, assuring the leader that God will continue to use him or her in the future. It is characterized by identifiable progress in terms of sphere of influence, leadership responsibility, or self-confidence.” Another caution is extended, “All leaders are constantly being trained by God, but not all of them learn from the training.”

I will extend a personal observation: not everyone has the same learning style. Personally, I can pick up a good book and glean great insights from it. I also enjoy and can point to conferences and intensive training modules that have deeply impacted my life. Two points to remember: 1) You need to have the self-awareness to know your learning style, and 2) As a mentor, you cannot expect every prospective leader to learn like you do. Help them to identify how they learn best.

Q: Describe a book, conference, class, individual, etc. through which you gained great insights or affirmation.

Q: How would you describe your learning style?

- G. The longest section in the chapter deals with the Giftedness Discovery process item. Clinton defines it as “any significant advance in the discovery of spiritual gifts and their use along with the event, person, or reflection that brought about the discovery.” He then describes an eight-step process he calls the Giftedness Development Pattern:
1. Ministry experience usually leads to...
 2. Discovering a spiritual gift which can lead to...
 3. Increased use of that gift which can lead to...
 4. Effectiveness in using that gift which can lead to...
 5. Discovery of other gifts which can lead to...
 6. Identification of our gift-mix which can lead to...
 7. Development of a gift-cluster which can lead to...
 8. Convergence. [Phase V]

He summarizes the above process in a short section he titles *The Little-Big Principle*. In it he states as a principle the fact that “Faithfulness in a small responsibility is an indicator of probable faithfulness in a larger responsibility.”

Q: Can you describe a specific time that a ministry experience helped you to see or affirm your giftedness in a specific area?

Activity: List those gifts that you believe God has given you. How has He affirmed them in your life?

Q: How are you helping others identify and affirm their own unique giftedness?

Q: Can you point to a time that your faithfulness in a small task opened opportunities for greater impact and influence?

- H. Before he closes the section with a short blip on Barnabas and a longer section on his own personal experiences in the area of becoming aware of his giftedness, Clinton points to two patterns that he has observed:
- Like Attracts Like Pattern—Potential leaders are intuitively attracted to leaders who have the same spiritual gifts.
 - Giftedness [Shift]—Potential leaders respond intuitively to ministry challenges and assignments that call for their spiritual gift, even if not explicitly known. I chose to use the phrase Giftedness “Shift” instead of the phrase he uses, Giftedness “Drift,” because the word “drift” often carries a negative meaning.

Q: Have you observed either of these patterns in your own life? If so, what have been the positive and the negative aspects of this reality.

Chapter 5: Second Lessons: Ministry Maturing Processes—Part II

- A. The scriptures Clinton uses to identify the Challenge/Problem addressed in this chapter are II Cor. 4:1, 5, and 7: “God in His mercy has given us this work to do, and so we do not become discouraged...For it is not ourselves that we preach; we preach Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake...Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us.”

He then tells the story of a young couple as they stepped into their first ministry position following graduation from seminary. Their experience tested their sense of call. Clinton then remarks that many ministers drop out after three or four years. The ones who stay are the exceptions.

What he has observed is that *unless a solid foundation has been established in Phases I and II* where God is focusing on our “being” in right relationship with God and with others, particularly as He develops our character and integrity, then somewhere in Phase III the individual will

- 1) Drop out,
- 2) Plateau in their spiritual and skill level development,
- 3) Experience ethical or moral failures that limit their ministry.

A fourth, and obviously more desirable option can occur when *a solid foundation has been established in Phases I and II*.

- 4) Continue to grow in their relationship with God and their fellow man.

To his studied opinion, I will add a hearty AMEN from my almost thirty years of experience of working with pastors and church leaders. Only a minority of Christian leaders I have personally observed would fall into the fourth category.

Q: If you are a young leader, what is your response to the reality that the vast majority of individuals who express a calling to Christian leadership are no longer following that path ten years later?

Q: From what you know about yourself today and the insights you have already gleaned from this book, what needs to change in your life so that twenty years from now, if the Lord tarry, you will find yourself in group four?

Q: If you are an experienced leader, on which of the paths are you traveling? If it is not group four, what needs to change in your life?

B. This chapter discusses what Clinton calls the third and fourth stages of the Ministry Maturing Phase: Relational Learning and Discernment. I have cropped figure 4-1 to bring greater focus to our current discussion.

Before he describes the four Process Items he observes most often in the Relational Learning Stage and the six Process Items he observes in the Discernment stage, he introduces four “problems” that are often encountered in these two stages: the Authority Problem which he states we will encounter in the Relational Learning Stage, and the Spiritual Warfare Problem, Plateau Barrier Problem, and Ministry Philosophy Problem that will occur in the Discernment Stage. The chapter then intermingles the definition and discussion of the ten Process Items with the Four Problems we will face.



Activity: Take a deep breath and re-read the previous paragraph. But before you do, remember how he defines a process item, that he is describing things that often occur in Phase III, and that he is giving a general overview of topics he will describe in this chapter.

C. In the opening paragraph of the Relational Learning section he notes, “In order to influence and motivate people, a leader must learn how to relate to people effectively. He or she must also learn how to work within existing organizational structures and learn to create new structures to enhance ministry. These *fundamental concepts* are learned in the relational learning development stage.” What I would point out is that organizational structures are simply the formalization of how we relate to one another. Where we have organizational problems, it’s usually because we have relational problems. What I have observed in ministry is that you can be the smartest person in the room and the most theologically correct person in the room, but if you can’t work with people you will never be able to lead the people who are in that room.

Question & Activity: Are you familiar with the difference between IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient)? If so, you know that your EQ is a far greater measure of success than is your IQ. If you’re not familiar with the terms, and you consistently encounter ministry challenges because of the people around you, then you need to do some reading, self-evaluation, and self-development in the EQ area.

D. In the Relational Learning Stage he first addresses the Authority Problem (see B above) before he discusses the four process items that often occur in this stage. He states that, “All

four of the problems discussed in this chapter can be barriers or bridges.” As is true of many things in life, it all depends on how you handle them—they can either make or break you; make you better or make you bitter.

He then begins to clarify what he means by the Authority Problem. Spiritual authority is delegated by God, and differs from authority that is based on position. Leaders who have trouble submitting to authority will usually have trouble properly exercising spiritual authority.

In the heart of this section he lists Ten Commandments of Spiritual Authority that he gleaned from Watchman Nee’s book *Spiritual Authority*. I have paraphrased them for you.

1. God is the source of all authority.
2. God delegates authority to Christian leaders, but that person is only a channel not the source.
3. The leader is accountable to God for how that authority is used.
4. A Christian leader will observe that delegated authority being used by God in real-life situations.
5. Submitting to a Christian leader is ultimately submission to God.
6. Rebellion against the authority bestowed upon a Christian leader is ultimately rebellion against God. This becomes difficult when a leader is manifesting impure motives or acting in an immoral or unethical manner.
7. People who are under God’s authority look for and recognize spiritual authority and willingly place themselves under it.
8. Spiritual authority must never be exercised for one’s own benefit.
9. One who has been bestowed spiritual authority should not demand obedience—that is the moral responsibility of the follower.
10. God will defend [and judge] those upon whom He bestows spiritual authority.

Q: Think of a situation where you struggled to be submissive to someone in authority. Why was it hard for you to submit?

Q: Think of a situation where someone you supervised was openly resistant to your authority. In what ways might you have contributed to their disrespect? How did you resolve the issue?

E. Clinton then moves to a discussion of the four process items he lists under the Relational Learning Stage beginning with Authority Insights. In it he lists the components of what he calls the Five Stage Authority Pattern:

1. Positive and negative life experiences teach us lessons on submitting to authority.
2. We begin to understand that there are legitimate authority structures.
3. We learn how to model legitimate authority.
4. We will experience conflicts related to how we are handling our authority.
5. We learn how to properly exercise spiritual authority.

Activity: Reflect on the stages and see if you can identify multiple life-experiences from each of them. Your responses, or the lack thereof, will give you an indication of where you are and the lessons you will still need to learn in the days ahead.

- F. He then defines and discusses the Relational Insights process item. It refers to instances in which a leader learns either a positive or negative lesson about relating to others. In this section he gives both Biblical and personal examples. He states that God often uses negative experiences (conflict) to heighten our awareness of the areas where we are struggling with inter-personal relationships. I would refer you back to section C above.

In the next section he attempts to distinguish General Conflict process items from Ministry Conflict process items, but it seems to be a distinction without much of a difference. The difference he sees is derived from our feelings that as a Christian, when we have conflicts with other Christians (and I would add when we have conflicts among family members), those situations are harder to deal with because we have higher expectations from them. Clinton points out that who we are in the midst of conflict will expose our character to others—and if we are paying attention it will also reveal it to our self. He notes that closure is often weak in conflict situations because too often we leave things partially or completely unresolved. He also states, “It is bad enough to go through conflict; it is worse to go through conflict and not profit from it.”

One of the tools I have found to be extremely helpful in this area is Jim Van Yperen’s *Conflict Style Assessment*. I have used it in one-on-one and couple’s counseling contexts to help individuals understand how they contribute to conflict. I have also used it very effectively with church staff and leadership teams in a time of “relative peace” to help them better understand how their conflict style can turn a benign situation into a conflict.

Activity: If you have never taken a Conflict Style Assessment, do one NOW! It might even be beneficial, if you are married, to have your spouse take it also. Discuss the results as a couple and your results with your mentor. After you have done that, ask yourself, “What did I discover about myself?”

- G. The fourth and final process item he discusses under the Relational Learning Stage is Leadership Backlash. It refers to the negative reactions of followers, other leaders within the group, and Christians outside the group to a course of action taken by a leader once ramifications develop from his decision.” I would add that leaders can also receive backlash from “perceived ramifications” of decisions and changes that have taken place. This can happen even when followers have agreed on a course of action—too often we don’t foresee the impact that our decisions will have on others. Here again Clinton provides a structured analysis of what he calls The Leadership Backlash Cycle. Again I have paraphrased it:
1. The leader gets a vision (direction) from God.
 2. The followers are convinced it is the right direction.
 3. The group moves in that direction.
 4. It doesn’t work as planned, and they experience persecution, hard times, or attacks from Satan (spiritual warfare).
 5. There is backlash from some in the group.

6. The leader is driven to God to seek affirmation.
7. God affirms that it is the right direction He wants the group to go.
8. God vindicates Himself and the leader.

A HUGE caution! When you are at step one, make sure it's God's direction and not your own. Young leaders can let their passion, emotions, and impatience race them through multiple stop signs that become visible to them only through their rear view mirror. If you are in the first year of a new ministry, ask everyone that would or could know about a specific activity or decision, "What has the church done in the past?" And if you don't understand why on earth it would be done that way, ask the follow up question, "Why do we do it that way?" Please note that I didn't suggest you ask, "Why did you do it that way?"

Q: Describe a time when you forced an idea to be adopted and then discovered too late that there were far better options available. I'm going to be bold enough to say, if you can't think of one you're either a new and very inexperienced leader or you need to ask someone who knows you and is willing to be honest with you to remind you of times when it was true.

- H. We're now half-way through chapter 5 and it's probably time for me to remind you that Chapters 4 and 5 are discussing Phase III: Ministry Maturing. He divides this Phase into four development stages: 1) Entry and 2) Training which he addressed in Chapter Four, and 3) Relational Learning and 4) Discernment here in Chapter Five. At this point we are starting on stage four: Discernment. I should also remind you that he is addressing four "problems" in this chapter. We have discussed the Authority Problem that he stated we will encounter in the Relational Learning Stage, and now we will look at the Spiritual Warfare Problem and Plateau Barrier Problem. Although he introduces the Ministry Philosophy Problem and says it occurs in this phase, he doesn't discuss it until Chapter 8. It also might be helpful for you to review section B above.

The opening section of his discussion on the Discernment Stage is a prime example of how confusing his terminology can become. He combines a discussion of the Spiritual Warfare Problem with a discussion of the Spiritual Warfare Process Item and the Power Process Item(s) which he says God uses to help us discern and deal with the Spiritual Warfare Problem. Got it? Again, let me encourage you to seek insights from the legions of excellent Biblical principles he discusses—don't get caught up in trying to understand nor to debate his terminology.

In the spiritual warfare area, he lays down two very clear principles. First, a leader needs to understand that ultimately everything rises and falls on the spiritual realities of a given situation because God is absolutely in charge of all things. But Clinton quickly cautions, "Some leaders have a tendency to go overboard, blaming all conflict and problems on spiritual warfare. They see spiritual forces behind all human realities. Other leaders are blind to spiritual reality and see no spiritual forces behind any human action. Scripture strikes a balance between these two extremes. Don't underestimate and don't overestimate the spiritual warfare behind a given situation."

He gives two good Biblical examples of Spiritual Warfare. One is Peter’s response to Jesus’s question, “Who do men say that I am?”—“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” To which Jesus said “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” Jesus then began to describe a Christ (Messiah) who would suffer. As He did, Peter took Him aside and tried to correct Jesus’ theological understanding of the Messiah. Jesus’ response was, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matthew 16:13-23)

Q: Where have you normally landed on the Spiritual Warfare Spectrum:



Q: How do you react to the Matthew 16 example Clinton provides?

- I. The second principle he lays down in the Spiritual Warfare area is that because we are powerless to deal with Spiritual Warfare on our own, we will need to lean into what he calls the Power Process Items. He lists four and briefly describes them. [I again paraphrase them for better understanding.]
 - a. Spiritual Giftedness: He gives the example of the prophet Agabus in Acts 11:27-28 who was uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to help the church in Antioch respond appropriately to the famine that would arise in Jerusalem.
 - b. Prayer: When God demonstrates His power and affirms a leader’s authority by answering a specific prayer request.
 - c. Divine intervention: When God intercedes between people who represent Him and those who are representing other powers. Elijah’s encounter on Mt. Carmel is a good example. Clinton refers to a Watchman Nee story he had previously shared.
 - d. Networking: When God puts the right person in the right place at the right time so the ministry that God has called us to lead can move forward for His glory.

Q: I know the definitions are not extensive, but from what you understand, can you think of a personal example of these four items?

- J. Clinton now moves on to address the third problem: Breaking the Plateau Barrier. He states, “Leaders have a tendency to cease developing once they have some skills and ministry experience. They may be content to continue their ministry as is.” Contentment (that can slide into complacency), discouragement (ministry is filled with reasons to be), and burnout (failure to equip and release others is a primary source) can cause a leader to plateau or even drop out of ministry. Clinton suggests two factors that can help you overcome these natural tendencies: understand how God develops leaders (the purpose of this book, but more specifically in the area of discernment the three process items in this section) and ministry affirmation (a fourth process item he also addresses in this section).

The three process items he suggests are specific to helping us avoid becoming plateaued are:

- a. Prayer: At the heart of leadership is communication between God and the leader. In the hectic pace of ministry, vital communication with God via prayer is often neglected. In fact the lack of prayer has been identified as one key indicator that a moral failure has occurred or is right around the corner. Clinton states, “If God calls you to a ministry, then He calls you to pray for that ministry.”
- b. Faith: Those instances in ministry when a leader is challenged by God to take steps of faith. God reveals an opportunity, He calls us to respond to that opportunity, and we are willing to make the leadership decisions that enable it to happen.
- c. Sphere of Influence: An instance where God prompts us to expand our sphere of influence. He does caution that a leader is not to consciously seek to expand his own sphere of influence as if bigger is always better. An increased sphere of influence usually comes with additional responsibility—more work!

Q: If you’ve taken time to read this far, I probably don’t have to push you to see the problem with being plateaued. But let me ask you to seriously reflect on the three process items above

1. Describe the last time you were broken enough to get on your face before God and cry out unto Him on behalf of the ministry you lead.
2. Describe the last time God laid a new opportunity on your heart that you knew would be very difficult. What did you do to respond in faith to that challenge?
3. Describe the last time God asked you to take on a new responsibility that would require “a lot of work!” How did you respond?

K. Clinton mentions that another way God helps push us past a ministry plateau is through affirmation. He defines a Ministry Affirmation Process Item as a special kind of ministry assignment or experience through which God gives approval to a leader, resulting in a renewed sense of purpose. It can include such things as new vision, a special ministry success, expressions of appreciation, sense of inner satisfaction, a promotion, or expansion of our sphere of influence. He notes that affirmation often is associated with a leader seeking God in times of isolation, fasting, and/or prayer. God can use ministry affirmation to also vindicate a leader before his followers.

Q: Describe three ways that God has affirmed your call to lead your current ministry.

Chapter 6: Ongoing Lessons: Guidance and Other Multi-Phase Processes

A. He uses Exodus 13:21 to introduce The Challenge/Problem for this chapter: “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.” He then describes his interaction with Ken who told him, “I don’t know what to do.” Clinton states, “Guidance is an ongoing need in the life of a leader! Wouldn’t it be nice if God would provide a cloud for Ken like He did for the nation of Israel in Exodus?” Clinton uses the term “Guidance Process Items” to describe ways that God provides us with insights into what He has created us to do for His Kingdom.

He then outlines the process items to be described in this chapter, and states they can be encountered throughout all the development phases. He groups them into two sections: six guidance process items and four miscellaneous process items.

Q: Describe the last time you cried out to God or to a friend, “I don’t know what to do!”

Q: What happened that provided you with clarity regarding what you should do?

- B. He begins the Guidance Processing section by pointing out that as a leader we not only have to discern God’s direction for our own life, but we are also called to provide clarity for the organization that He has called us to lead. He refers back to his definition of a leader as “a person with God-given capacity and God-given responsibility who influences a group of followers towards ***God’s purposes for the group.***” I added the emphasis because I have observed that Christian leaders often lack the ability to distinguish between the two. The bigger issue is having personal clarity. But some who gain that clarity can try to force their personal passion and unique gifting upon the ministry they were called to lead rather than doing the hard work of discerning God’s purposes for the group.

Clinton makes it clear that God’s guidance for a church or ministry comes in two steps. “The basic guidance pattern is simple. A leader first learns about personal guidance for his own life. Having learned to discern God’s direction for his own life in numerous crucial decisions, he can then shift to the leadership function of determining guidance for the group that he leads.” In case we think this is a quick and easy process, he writes, “This is not an overnight lesson. It takes place slowly through many process items over an extended period of time embracing several phases.”

Q: Have you developed a personal calling statement and ministry philosophy for your life that includes an awareness of your unique giftedness and the areas in which you can best serve God’s Kingdom? If not, don’t get too anxious. Clinton suggests that such clarity doesn’t usually come until we are late in the Ministry Maturing or are in the Life Maturing Phase of life.

Q: If you haven’t walked through that personal discernment process and arrived at clarity, why would you think that God can use you to lead a group through the process of developing a clear and compelling statement of purpose? In short, until you are willing and able to let God shape you into who He wants you to be, how can you do the same for others or for a church or ministry?

Q: Our American culture celebrates innovation and size. The Christianity Today series on the *Rise and Fall of Mars Hill* has illuminated that reality. Our culture also seems to diminish tradition and the experience and opinions of seniors. How do you think our culture will develop self awareness and then the patience that we will need for God to work over time to develop spiritually mature Christian leaders?

- C. He then introduces two process items that are often observed together: Divine Contacts and Mentors. He describes a Divine Contact as a time when “God brings just what is needed into

the life of a developing leader to inspire, explain truth, or give direction. This could be *a tract* that challenges or explains some truth, *a book* that gives new perspectives, or *a person* who will be greatly used by God in that leader's life." Don't put God in a box and think that He can only use tracts, books, and people—His toolbox is full of all kinds of creative ways to communicate truth and clarity. Clinton then lists Biblical and personal examples of Divine Contact.

He describes Mentoring as "the process where a person with a serving, giving, encouraging attitude (the mentor) sees leadership potential in a still-to-be developed person (the protégé) and is able to promote or otherwise significantly influence the protégé along in the realization of potential." A mentor is someone who helps a protégé in some very practical ways: by giving timely advice that encourages, by risking his or her own reputation to back them, by modeling and setting expectations that challenge, by recommending resources that will provide knowledge or insights, by giving financial assistance, by co-ministering to enhance their credibility, and/or by giving them the freedom to grow beyond their own level of leadership. He again provides some Biblical, historical, and personal examples.

Q: Describe a recent time when God gave you an "aha" moment where He provided knowledge or insights just when you needed it most. Who or what did He use to help you?

Q: Describe a current mentoring relationship you have.

D. Clinton continues his list of process items from the Guidance area by discussing what he terms Double Confirmation. It is a process item in which God makes His will clear by reinforcing it through more than one source. The classic pattern for double confirmation involves four steps. First, there is a crucial moment in the leader's ministry when a sure word from God is needed for direction. Second, God gives direction to the leader. Third, God confirms this direction through another experience. Fourth, God brings the two together in some unmistakable, sovereign way. Gideon's fleece experience in Judges 6:36-40 is a good biblical example. In Acts 10, when God sent visions to Cornelius and then to Peter at a critical time in the early church is another good example.

Q: As you reflect on seasons when you were seeking clarity from God, can you describe a time when God provided you with a double confirmation that indicated He had a certain direction in mind for you?

E. The fourth Guidance Principle he describes is the Negative Preparation Process Item. It involves God's use of events, people, conflict, persecution, or experiences that are negative. God uses such experiences to free us from our present situation when He is preparing us to accept a new responsibility. He lists the hardships of the Israelite slaves in Egypt as a negative preparation for the exodus God was planning for them.

He opens AND closes the section with the warning that negative experiences are not always used to move us out of a given ministry setting. Often we use them as an excuse to run when things get hard. In such situations, we would benefit more by letting God chip off a few rough edges in our life, so we could be more conformed to the image of Christ. I have a

phrase I use with people who are assuming that a difficult time means it's time to go somewhere else, anywhere else, rather than to stay in my current situation: "Make sure you're not running from or with, but rather being called to." I then expound on the phrase by asking them if they are simply trying to escape ("run from") a difficult situation that God could use to teach them something about them self, about Him, or maybe God is trying to use them to help someone else see what perseverance looks like. I then state, don't "run with" your hurts and hang-ups without taking time to process what happened, own and confess your part of it, and seek and extend forgiveness. Only when those steps have taken place, will we be able to "run to" the vision God has for the next chapter of our life.

Q: The reality is that ministry is hard and in any given season we will be encountering difficult situations—not all of them are Negative Preparation Process Items. Think about a particularly difficult time in ministry when you realized with hindsight that God was seeking to transform rather than to transfer you.

Q: If you have experienced "a transfer"—ministry change—describe how God used guidance process items to give you clarity. [We will discuss two additional items, so you might want to return to this question again.]

- F. The fifth Guidance Process Item he mentions is a Flesh Act. Clinton defines it as times when decisions are made hastily or without proper discernment of God's intentions. Based on his definition, a better term might be Presumptive or Presumed Decisions. He lists three good biblical examples. Abraham and Sarah taking things into their own hands with the actions that provided Ishmael as Abraham's heir (Genesis 16). The Gibeonite deception of Joshua recorded in Joshua 9. And Hezekiah's prideful tour of all the wealth of Jerusalem he gave to the Babylonian messengers recorded in Isaiah 39.

Everyday affairs are fraught with things that seem minor at the moment, but can have long-term impacts on ministry. I have found two areas that help me stay in the proper lane as "minor" daily decisions are being made. First, I ask myself is the option I am prepared to choose morally, ethically, and biblically wise? Second, I ask myself does it align with my personal calling statement (if it is a personal decision) or does it align with the missional purpose of the ministry I am called to lead?

Clinton reminds us that "What, when, and how are all important facets of guidance. Certainty on one and not the others often leads to presumptions about the others. Presumptuous faith assumes God will do something that He has not communicated." This is an area where our personality can deeply impact how we handle daily decisions. If you make snap decisions without much consideration, you will constantly be facing unforeseen consequences—and too often you will not connect the dots between your decision and the negative side effects. On the opposite end of the spectrum are those of us who really struggle to make decisions. For some of us choosing Plan A means then I can't do Plan B, C, D... If this is where you are, then God might have to send the Angel Gabriel every day or two to give you absolute clarity. Demanding that level of clarity will result in paralysis by over analysis.

Q: Every leader has made a number of decisions that would fall into this category. Describe a recent one. Now think about a BIGGIE—a presumptive decision you made that went really, really bad. What has changed in your decision making process to help you avoid such mistakes?

- G. The final Guidance Process Item he mentions is Divine Affirmation. It is a special kind of experience in which God gives approval to a leader, so that the leader has a renewed sense of ultimate purpose and a refreshed desire to continue serving God. In a lifetime of ministry, there will be times when a leader will need reassurance from God that the ministry is relevant and that the leader is making a difference.

Clinton again provides several good biblical examples: God's affirmation of Jesus' earthly ministry, Abraham's multiple visions related to his calling, God's answer to Samuel's prayer for rain, and Joseph the son of Jacob's multiple dreams.

On a number of occasions, I have shared with a leader who is questioning whether they are being effective the reality that God will, from time-to-time, pull back the curtain of life and let us know that we are making an impact. I point out that it is not too often and when it does happen it is usually a very quick peek. That's because our human tendency is to spend too much time patting ourselves on the back rather than using our hands to pat someone else on the back. I have never talked to a leader that wasn't able to point to several times when God had provided them with such an experience. Our human reality is that we will focus on the one or two negative experiences and overlook the many times God has let us know for certain that we are on track.

Q: Describe times when God has provided you with affirmation that you were on track with His plan for your life.

- H. The rest of the chapter is used to discuss four additional process items that Clinton has observed across all six developmental phases. He points out that the first two, the literary and word process items, are usually positive experiences. The last two, the crises and conflict process items, are related and are usually negative, but through them we can learn positive life lessons.

He begins by defining the Literary Process Item. It refers to how God uses the writings of others to teach us life lessons. He provides ample personal examples. I personally define "true wisdom" as learning through the success and failure of others. I then point out that I don't have time to make all the mistakes or have all of the experiences the world has to offer. When I can glean insights from others, AND I am willing to apply them to my life, then I have truly learned from them. This is what Clinton is defining as a Literary Process Item.

Q: Describe a major change that you have made in your life based upon what you had read.

- I. He then moves to the Word Process Item. It refers to an instance in which a leader receives a word from God that significantly affects them. He reminds us that a major symptom of a plateaued leader is one to whom word items are infrequent. This can happen even when a

leader is regularly preparing to preach or teach the Bible. One of the critical identifiers for ministers who have fallen morally in one research project were that to a man they had all lost personal sensitivity to what the Bible is seeking to say to them on a daily basis.

Q: A question I regularly ask myself and often ask others is, “When was the last time you had a personal aha moment or significant insight while you were reading the Bible?”

Q: Follow up questions I would ask are, “What did you learn? How did that insight change your life?” And, “Who did you tell?”

- J. Clinton reiterates that the next two process items, Crises and Conflict, usually involve negative experiences. But he says the challenge is magnified by the fact that in the midst of them, we need to discern what God is trying to teach us. He states, “God will cultivate sensitivity to His working in these experiences if a leader allows it and has a teachable spirit.” Crisis Process Items are unique intense pressure situations in life that God uses to teach total dependence on Him. He lists a variety of experiences that can fall into this category: potential loss of life, property or way of life; conflict; perceived need for change; inner turmoil; sickness; persecution; or the need to see God’s character vindicated.

He closes the section by pointing to Paul and Jephthah’s experiences described in II Corinthians 1:3-4 and Judges 10-11.

Q: It is not uncommon for a series of personal and ministry crises to occur in a relatively short period of time. When that happens, God is usually trying to get our attention. Describe a season when that has happened to you. What did you learn through those experiences?

- K. The Conflict Process Item is the final one he discusses. It refers to those instances in a leader’s life in which God uses conflict, whether personal or ministry related, to develop the leader’s dependence upon God, build faith, and provide insights. An obvious biblical example is the life of Jeremiah. Our intention should not be to gain insights, but to identify areas and opportunities for personal development.

I have served churches and Christian leaders for almost thirty years as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist). The number one thing I have been “invited” to do is not written in my job description. It has been to step in during a time of conflict in a local church. Through those multiple encounters, I have gleaned a ton of relational insights—mostly I have learned what not to do. I have observed that even in the local church we don’t do a good job of teaching and modeling how to develop and sustain healthy inter-personal relationships. I love the phrase I heard from one church: we are willing to fight for relationships.

Conflict seems to be a tool God uses to teach us the value of healthy relationships and in the midst of it we should learn ways to enhance our relational skills. A leader who isn’t able to learn positive lessons from times of conflict, will end up constantly in conflict with others.

Q: Describe a recent major inter-personal conflict you have had. What did you learn about yourself through that experience? What are you changing about the way you interact with others because of that experience?

Chapter 7: The Deepening Lessons: Life Maturing Processes

A. Clinton gives us a look into his heart and soul in this chapter. He tells us about a very difficult experience that God used to shape his life and shift his ministry focus. His experience also speaks to the way through which we are often able to see God most clearly at work in our own life. As usual, the chapter opens with scriptures that speak to The Challenge/Problem that will be addressed:

- It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees (Psalm 119:71).
- Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad (Song of Songs 4:16).
- Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (II Cor. 1:3-4).

In addition to his own experience, Clinton shares life events of two individuals he has mentioned in previous chapters: Watchman Nee and Amy Carmichael. Here he describes difficult experiences they had that were similar to his.

Q: Clinton states again in this chapter that it's bad enough that we have to go through very negative experiences, but it's even worse if we go through them and don't benefit from them. Looking back at the last few major challenges you have faced, what significant life lessons have you learned? If you can't identify any, then I would suggest you process this question with a friend who knows you well and loves you enough to speak to you openly and honestly.

B. The title of the opening section could be the theme for the entire book: Ministry Flows out of Being. He writes, "God does not stop working on character after moving someone into leadership. God continues to form character throughout the ministry of a leader." The relational side of leadership is the emphasis of this chapter as God seeks to develop qualities like love, compassion, empathy, and discernment.

Subsequent sections are used to discuss two maturity patterns and three process items that he includes in the maturity cluster. An end note gives the definition for this cluster group along with the fact that not all of the process items he includes in the cluster are discussed in the book. Remember my exhortation to identify and take with you principles rather than lists and definitions.

The first maturity pattern he discusses is the Reflective Evaluation Pattern. Because leaders can easily get preoccupied with their day-to-day duties to the neglect of their personal development, God will often intervene. A pattern Clinton has observed is:

1. God uses life experiences to get our attention.
2. We are forced to reflect on current realities, life issues, and ministry roles.

3. If we let it happen, God will help us do a self-evaluation, shift our thinking, and commit our self to new personal growth measures.
4. We gain a renewed determination to know God more deeply.
5. God blesses our doing through our improved being.

Clinton warns that the pattern is not guaranteed. We can stop at step two if we blame circumstances or people, or if we rationalize away what is happening. Completing the pattern will require internal spiritual processing.

Q: Take a few minutes and evaluate a time in your life when you clearly experienced this five step process. Can you also remember a time when you got stuck on step two? What made the difference for you?

- C. The second maturity pattern he calls the Upward Development Pattern. He describes it as a cyclical pattern in which our “doing” increases in effectiveness based upon the increase in our “being” in a growing relationship with God. How I would describe the normal human pattern is that we “do” all we can “do” until we hit a wall. Then we are willing to turn to God to enhance our “being.” Using the insights we just learned and a little more reliance on His strength, we continue our cycle of “doing” until we hit another wall. If we are learning new lessons with each cycle, the overall pattern will result in growing spiritual maturity.

Clinton warns that individual cycle times can be long, but he encourages us by stating, if we have teachable hearts, the end result will be a spiritual maturity that permits a fusion of being and doing. In other words, heightened spiritual sensitivity can shorten the cycle time by making the walls less formidable and make the lessons come more easily.

Q: Describe a recent “doing” and “being” cycle of spiritual development in your life. What did you learn about God and yourself?

- D. Clinton then shifts to his discussion of three Process Items that he groups into the Maturity Cluster. The first is Isolation. He begins this section with the “isolation” experiences of Watchman Nee and Amy Carmichael. He then defines it as a time when a leader is separated from normal ministry involvement for an extended time and through that experience the leader gains new insights or develops a deeper relationship with God.

He then provides a table showing various types of isolation and the variety of lessons that can be learned through each [See Figure 7-2 on the right). The types of isolation he

| ISOLATION TYPE | LESSON OBSERVED |
|--|--|
| Sickness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Dependence upon God ▶ Knowledge of supernatural healing ▶ Urgency to accomplish God's work ▶ Deepening of inner life through intercessory prayer |
| Prison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Dependence upon God ▶ Increased use of mental facilities, especially memory ▶ Submission to God's will ▶ Indirect influence through modeling and a widened intercessory life |
| Personality conflicts and organizational pressures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Submission to God ▶ Submission to spiritual authority ▶ Non-vindication of one's spiritual authority ▶ Value of other's perspectives ▶ Dependence upon God |
| Self-choice for renewal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ New perspective on ministry ▶ Rekindled sense of destiny ▶ Power of prayer ▶ Inner convictions from Word ▶ Spiritual guidance |
| Self-choice for education, training, or transition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ New perspective on ministry ▶ Rekindled sense of destiny ▶ Openness to new ideas and change ▶ Dependency upon the wider Body of Christ ▶ Broadening through exposure to others |

Figure 7-2 Isolation Processes—Kinds and Results

mentions are sickness, imprisonment, personality conflicts, organizational pressures, self-choice for renewal, and self-choice for education, training, or transition.

Q: Have you ever experienced a season of *Isolation*? If so, what did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about God?

- E. We have already encountered the next two process items, so my discussion will be brief: Conflict and Life Crisis. In this chapter, Clinton emphasizes how they can be used by God to provide new insights and clarity resulting in increased spiritual maturity. Related to the Conflict Process Item, he writes, “In my travels, I have been particularly amazed at how much conflict there is in churches and in parachurch ministries. Leaders are constantly dealing with conflict. I would guess that most leaders spend the majority of their time and energy dealing with conflict. Here I am focusing on conflict as a means of developing character.”

Related to the Life Crisis Process Item, he writes, “It is not limited to life and death situations. They can be any kind of crisis that causes reflection on ultimate purpose and deepening of one’s relationship with God, seeing that relationship as more important than any of life’s attainments.”

Q: Describe either a Conflict or Life Crisis issue in your life that provided you with greater clarity for your role in ministry or yielded a much closer walk with God?

- F. He uses a significantly expanded summary section to provide his intensely personal example I mentioned earlier. But before he does that, Clinton give us three important principles:
- Ministry can be successful through giftedness alone; but a leader whose ministry skills outstrip his character formation will eventually falter.
 - Spiritual authority is not a goal but rather a byproduct. Spiritual authority results when a leader’s lifestyle gives clear evidence of the presence of God in their life.
 - A wise leader will benefit not only from experience, but from the maturity lessons of others.

I will not take time to summarize the personal experience that Clinton shares, for two reasons. First, it is too lengthy, and second, you need to read it in his own words not mine. However, I will include his opening comments so that you will be aware of how deeply impacting “Process Items” can be. Clinton wrote:

I want to close this chapter with a personal experience of maturity processing. It occurred over ten years ago. For about eight years, I never shared it. It seemed too personal. But now enough time has gone by, so that I can share it without too strong an emotional bias.

Q: If you have a copy of the book—and I would encourage you to get one if you don’t—take time to read Clinton’s story. Have you ever experienced something that impacted you as significantly as his did? Does his story help you understand him better?

Chapter 8: Integrating the Lessons of Life: Toward a Ministry Philosophy

- A. Clinton illustrates The Challenge/Problem with Proverbs 3:13—“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding.” Here he is applying the “wisdom” and “understanding” we need to acquire to the specific area of discerning God’s perfect will for our life—what He wants us to “be” and as we begin to live out the “being” area, what He wants us to “do” for His Kingdom. The chapter begins and ends with the stories of a pastor who is struggling to define his ministry philosophy and two pastors who seem to have it figured out: an unnamed pastor, one simply identified as Pastor Johnson, and Warren Wiersbe. In between, Clinton lists a number of principles that have shaped his own ministry philosophy, provides a basic definition of a ministry philosophy, and provides a template that helped him to more clearly understand his ministry philosophy.

Clinton opens the chapter with an all too common picture of a church who has a new pastor whose giftedness, personality, and ministry philosophy are the polar opposite of their previous pastor. As Clinton describes the situation, the former pastor had great personal and organizational clarity while the current pastor had yet to develop/identify his ministry philosophy. Although that was probably the case in this situation, at the core was an all too common pastoral leadership pendulum swing. Working with pastor search teams has been a major part of my ministry. I warn every team that they will subconsciously look for a pastor who has strengths where their previous pastor was weak and in so doing they seem to assume that whoever they call will have the strengths of their previous pastor—thus the leadership pendulum swing. So, I will insert a commercial message for a book I recently published: *Pastor Search: Finding God’s Man for Your Church*. It suggests a process that specifically addresses the circumstances that create these kinds of pendulum swings.

Q: Have you ever stepped into a ministry leadership position only to discover that your giftedness was radically different from your predecessors? What impact did that have on your effectiveness?

Q: Have you been a member of a church or part of a ministry team where there was a transition in leaders and the new guy was radically different than the predecessor? What impact did that have on the church/ministry?

- B. In the next section, Clinton lists a series of principles that he has gleaned through various ministry experiences and that significantly shape how he does ministry:
- Use it or lose it!
 - Learn a little! Use it a lot!
 - Ministry has to be personal.
 - Give as much as you can to one who chooses to have it.
 - Expression deepens impression! Repeating what we have just learned reinforces the learning process.
 - Truth discovered by the learner sticks longer.
 - Be as clear as the Bible is clear; nothing less, nothing more, nothing else.
 - In a power conflict the leader with higher power will usually win regardless of rightness of issue.
 - A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.

Q: Take a few minutes to write down some of the most important principles that you have gleaned in life.

- C. Clinton then states, “All leaders operate from a ministry philosophy. However, that philosophy may not be adequate or it may be simplistic.” Some leaders might not even be able to articulate one at all, but an effective leader can. “Ministry philosophy is the result of leadership development—the ideas, values, and principles that a leader uses as guidelines for decision making, for exercising influence, or for evaluating ministry.”

He writes, “One of the striking characteristics seen in effective leaders is their drive to learn. Effective leaders, at all levels of leadership, maintain a learning posture throughout life.” He then extends the following challenge: “Leaders must develop a ministry philosophy that simultaneously honors biblical leadership values, embraces the challenges of the [place] in which they [serve], and fits their unique gifts and personal development if they expect to be productive over a whole lifetime.”

He then expounds on the three components of his challenge, beginning with a philosophy that honors Biblical leadership values. “A Christian leader bases values, methodology, motivation, and goals on what God has revealed in Scripture.” I changed two words in the second component of his challenge to more accurately reflect his explanation—I changed “times” to [place] and “live” to [serve]. Clinton writes that, “There are three basal elements of leadership: leader, followers, and situation. A new ministry setting will obviously change the followers and the situation. However, even if you remain in the same role there will be changes over time. The final component addresses the fact that like snowflakes, no two leaders are alike. “Giftedness is a set, including natural abilities, acquired skills, and spiritual gifts.” Therefore, a ministry philosophy must be dynamic while at the same time there is consistency within the core. Another implication is the reality that you are not a good fit for every ministry position that comes open. If neither you nor the ministry seeking a new leader can articulate some form of a ministry philosophy, you both will be extremely susceptible to trying to pound a round peg into a square hole.

Q: Write out, to the best of your current understanding, your personal ministry philosophy.

Q: If you are currently leading a ministry, to the best of your current understanding, write the ministry philosophy of that ministry.

- D. If you are one of the majority of leaders who hasn’t completely formulated a ministry philosophy, the balance of the chapter provides a template that some will find helpful. He begins by describing the “evolutionary pattern” that he has often seen.
1. Stage 1: Osmosis—The vast majority of newly developing leaders simply absorb and replicate the patterns that they have experienced. In a few instances, they will be part of a ministry setting that clearly articulates and seeks to replicate their ministry philosophy. In most cases, they will have been a part of a ministry that didn’t.
 2. Stage 2: Baby Steps—In either case, like most teenagers, developing leaders will begin to ask “Why?” They will often begin to see discrepancies between “what is” and “what

ought to be.” As they wrestle with these and similar questions, they will begin to develop their own ministry philosophy or adopt one that best fits them.

3. **Stage 3: Maturity**—Effective leaders have taken time to reflect, study, and formulate a personal ministry philosophy that they can clearly and powerfully articulate and then seek to replicate in others.

Q: As you reflect on this three stage process, where would you say you are today? What needs to happen for you to move to the next stage?

E. Before closing the chapter with two excellent examples of pastors who have arrived at Stage Three, Clinton describes another three step process that helped him clarify his ministry philosophy.

1. Start by learning to identify principles—He personally differentiates between Absolutes, Guidelines, and Suggestions. Remember, he listed several of his.
2. Grouping Principles—He uses two main categories: principles related to character (being) and doing. Again, he includes his categories and a sample of how he divided his principles.
3. Look for obvious categories that are missing—Here he suggests eight broad categories that a mature leader will encounter and therefore will need identify and develop operating principles for each area.
 - Vision casting
 - Leadership selection and training
 - Decision making
 - Crisis resolution
 - Routine problem solving
 - Coordinating with superiors
 - Coordinating with peers
 - Coordinating with subordinates

In the area of developing a personal ministry/calling statement, your personality will dictate what process will work best for you. For myself, I have encountered a number of far more helpful resources. But this is not the place to elaborate on them. The two examples Clinton provides of leaders who have developed their ministry philosophy are definitely worth reading. In fact, I would strongly exhort you to get a copy of the Warren Wiersbe article he outlines. It can be found at the following website:

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1980/winter/warren-wiersbe-advice-to-new-pastors.html>

Activity: Discuss with your mentor their ministry philosophy and the process they used to clarify it. Ask your mentor to recommend two or three other leaders you could interview as well.

Chapter 9: Accepting the Lessons of Life: The Leadership Challenge

A. Clinton uses this chapter as a summary of the book in the same manner he used the summaries at the end of all the chapters except 8. He begins with a single verse that speaks to The Challenge/Problem, but he then adds for the first time verses pertaining to The Challenge/*The Solution*:

The Challenge/Problem: “When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field’” (Matthew 9:36-38).

The Challenge/The Solution: “‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men’” (Matthew 4:19).

“The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (II Timothy 2:2).

Clinton opens the first section entitled *The Need—More and Better Leaders* by suggesting we face three leadership challenges that have led to our current shortage of Christian leaders. He writes, “Everywhere I go I hear, ‘We don’t have enough trained leadership.’” As he discusses the need, Clinton writes, “To echo Jesus’ statement in Matthew 9:37 the work load is great. There is need for leadership, equipped for the multitude of tasks facing leaders in Christian work, The perspectives given in this book can help us to raise up leaders to fill the gaps more sensitively and effectively, and in less time.” He then states the three challenges:

1. When Christ calls leaders to Christian ministry He intends to develop them to their full potential. Each of us in leadership is responsible to continue developing in accordance with God’s processing all our life.
2. A major function of all leadership is that of identifying and equipping potential leaders. Leaders must continually be aware of God’s processing of younger leaders and work with that process.
3. Leaders must develop a ministry philosophy that simultaneously honors biblical leadership values, embraces the challenges of the [place] in which they [serve], and fits their unique gifts and personal development if they expect to be productive over a whole lifetime.

Q: To what extent do you agree that churches and ministries face a huge shortage of equipped leaders?

Q: To what extent do you agree with his three challenges—the major causes for this shortage?

Q: What other areas would you say also need to be addressed if we are going to increase the number of equipped leaders?

Q: What are you currently doing to be part of the solution?

- B. In the next three sections, Clinton restates definitions and provides a brief summary of what he has already written about each of the three challenges. Under Personal Leadership he states, “A leader is a person (1) with God-given capacity *and* (2) with God-given responsibility to *influence* (3) a specific group of God’s people (4) toward God’s purposes for the group.” He emphasizes the God-given capacity aspect by stating that “leaders have capacities that must be developed and used.” He also notes, that leaders are “expected to

assess their spiritual gifts and abilities and to use them to full capacity. Each is unique. Another's success is not our standard. Bigger is not better, nor is a greater sphere of influence." He closes the section by stating, "Unless we experience God's ongoing development we will not be able to help others develop their leadership capacity."

Q: How would you describe your current capacity as a Christian leader?

Q: In what ways are you seeking to help others identify and develop their God-given capacities?

- C. Clinton then discusses the challenge of raising up leaders and begins with a disclaimer. "I don't mean picking young people to send off to Bible college or seminary, but rather observing those God is selecting and processing, and then finding ways to enhance their development." My personal observation is that in American Christianity we misunderstand the role of Bible colleges and seminaries. They can provide knowledge and language skills, but they can't identify potential leaders nor can they help lay the necessary Biblical and relational foundation upon which to build. The vast majority of the leadership development described in this book will be done in a highly relational context.

He then states that "Paul points out that faithfulness is a key ingredient in the selection of emerging leaders." I remember an old Sunday School acronym for identifying workers. We were encouraged to look for FAT people—those who were Faithful, Available, and Teachable.

Clinton noted, "A potential leader tends to rise to the level of genuine expectancy of a leader he or she respects. Make sure you are a respected leader. Make sure you know followers well enough to spot emerging leaders. And make sure you are giving challenges that stretch yet are reachable."

Q: Let me return to the questions Clinton used: Are you a respected leader? If you think you are a leader but no one is following, you're just taking a walk.

Q: Who have you identified within your sphere of influence as potential emerging leaders? List them by name.

Q: Regarding developing leaders you are currently mentoring, are you giving them challenges that stretch them yet are reachable?

- D. He then returns to the subject of the previous chapter: Ministry Philosophy. But as he does, he takes us back to Chapter 5's discussion of developing our discernment skills. He again reminds us that the majority of Christian leaders do not finish well. Unless we are growing in our personal walk with God, we will not be able to lead others to do the same.

Clinton reminds us that "We cannot copy a successful leader's philosophy and simply put it into our situation. The ministry philosophy of a leader must arise out of that leader's leadership development. While at the same time it is true that, "There are values in the Bible

concerning leadership ethics and styles, ends and means, and the overarching attitude of servant leadership that apply to all leaders.”

Q: Pick an individual you know who has a clearly defined ministry philosophy. If you know them well enough, describe some of the life experiences they have had that were used by God to shape who they are today. If you don't know them that well, ask them to give you an hour of their time, and ask them about key experiences they have had that were used by God to get them where they are today.

E. In the chapter summary, Clinton extends a Final Challenge from Hebrews 13:7-8: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” He closes by stating, “Leadership evolves and emerges over a lifetime. In fact, leadership is a lifetime of God's lessons.”

Q: Are you stepping back from time-to-time to consider the outcome of your current trajectory as a Christian leader? When you have done that, what are some of the changes you sense you need to make? How many of those changes have you actually implemented?

Q: To what extent are you imitating the type of faith that was evident in Godly leaders described in the Bible? Are you doing a better job of emulating secular leaders of our day or of imitating spiritually mature leaders of our day? Be careful that your contemporary leadership models are men and women who have been tested by time and are not individuals whose “success” has thrown them into the spotlight before their character has been sufficiently developed to handle it.

Activity: List some contemporary leaders you are seeking to emulate. Beside each name write the things you admire about them.

Appendix: Observations on Leadership Selection

Clinton includes a four page Appendix that provides ten principles and then eighteen ways for a mature leader to apply them. They are all principles related to identifying and equipping potential leaders. He breaks the principles down into two categories: 1) six principles related to how a potential leader responds to biblical truth, prays for a ministry in which they are involved, and how they develop personal and group discernment of God's will, and 2) four principles in the area of how they interact with and respond to mentors. He then gives nine “implications” or ways mature leaders should apply the principles in each of the two categories.

Personal Applications

Go back to pages one and two and reread the overview I provided for the six phases of spiritual development Clinton has outlined. Then answer again my opening questions:

Q: Based on this overview and the insights you have gained in the book, in which of these phases would you place yourself, and why?

Q: Does your answer differ from what you gave the first time I asked the question? Why or why not?

Clinton opened his Preface with the following questions. I would encourage you to answer them again and compare your responses.

Q: What does it mean to be a leader?

Q: What does it take to become the leader God wants you to be?

Q: What are the processes, the cost, and the result?

My prayer is that God will use the insights you have gained through Clinton's life-work to continue to grow as a Christian leader.

*Mark R. Elliott served as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist) in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska assisting local pastors and churches for almost three decades. He is a strong advocate for obedience and Biblically-based disciple making. As such, he knows that making healthy disciples requires Christian leaders to be constantly pursuing spiritual maturity—be lifelong learners. Because of the time constraints of ministry, most pastors focus their reading list on resources that assist them in teaching and preaching the Word of God. As such, books focusing on church health, leadership development, and church growth tend to find their way to the bottom of the stack. With that reality in mind, Mark has written discussion summaries on several books that have helped him to personally grow in Christ and that pastors have mentioned a desire to read, but lack the time to do it. Many pastors have found them to be helpful as they are able to more quickly process great insights from other pastors and authors.