



CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP FOUNDATIONS

*Passion Seven:*  
**Sway**

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*from grace to sway*

THE SEVEN PASSIONS OF BIBLICAL LEADERS



## study 1

# Introduction to SWAY

The final biblical passion of Christian leaders that I can see the Bible calls for is SWAY. A passion for SWAY means intentionally maximising your sphere and depth of influence with others. Let me explain.

**In Bobby Clinton's book, *The Making of a Leader*, he describes three ways in which God forms and grows Christian leaders:**

- 1. Spiritual formation** comes through our growing relationship with God and its implications for ministry and leadership. Spiritual formation is basically what I have called the Operating System for Christian influence (GRACE, LOVE and HEART). As we have seen, spiritual formation lies at the centre of Christian influence. It involves knowing God and his truth and living it out in our influential relationships. Spiritual formation is foundational to Christian character and influence and must continue throughout our lives.
- 2. Ministry formation** comes through our growth in leadership skills and abilities as we serve God and learn how to influence others effectively. Through prayer, study, experience, reflection, success, failure, mentoring, etc., we are forged as Christian leaders and our gifts and skills develop. I have focused on ministry formation in the Apps for Christian influence (CROP, FAITH and TEAM). As God forms us as Christians of influence, our leadership skills grow and our sphere of influence usually increases. Ministry formation is particularly important in the early years of leadership, but it progresses throughout our leadership ministry. We continue to learn how to lead well.
- 3. Strategic formation** occurs when leaders intentionally maximise their sphere of influence and ensure that their gifts are being used to their greatest effect. As God forms leaders strategically, they move towards leadership ministries in which they can be most productive with greatest influence. This may eventually lead to what Clinton originally called "convergence" – the stage when the leader's gifts, leadership experience, and spiritual growth come together ("converge") to maximise a leader's influence.

What Clinton defines as strategic formation, I have called SWAY. It's our intentional progression towards our greatest strategic kingdom impact. In other words, as we deliberately increase our sphere of influence (through God's leading), we grow our SWAY with others.

SWAY comes as the last of the biblical passions of Christian influence because it is often not a focus until our middle to late leadership growth. There will be times when we work through SWAY earlier in our journey towards influence. We may consider SWAY when we take on a new leadership role by asking questions like, "Is this a good use of my gifts?" and "Will my influence grow through this role?" I was in my early 30s when I felt God prompting me to leave my very enjoyable and effective role as a youth pastor to take on a solo pastor position. I believed this was the next step in my leadership formation. Unknown to me at the time, I was really thinking about SWAY in my leadership.

But a significant focus on SWAY usually follows the consolidation of our leadership Operating System and our growth in the leadership Apps. While God is always growing our ministry and leadership strategically, we don't usually get heavily involved in the process until he has forged our character and significantly developed our gifts.

For many Christians of influence, SWAY will never be a big issue. We are called to influence for God by using our gifts effectively and faithfully serving others. We may occasionally prayerfully choose between ministry opportunities, but we don't need to analyse our gift cluster or strategically plan to maximise our influence.

**For some Christian leaders, SWAY will become a growing imperative as our influence grows.**

However, for some Christian leaders, SWAY will become a growing imperative as our influence grows. We have limited time and resources and need to ensure that we are in the right place and doing the right things for God to maximise our contribution to his kingdom. We need to think SWAY.

But in light of what we have learned about leadership in this course, talk about SWAY may raise some immediate alarms for you. Am I promoting the idea that leaders should be actively seeking higher positions and greater power? What is the difference between wanting to increase SWAY and grasping after power and prominence? We need to carefully explore the issue of SWAY in Scripture before we go further.

## Should we really have a passion to grow SWAY?

**The Bible calls leaders to humility and servanthood not prominence or power.**

As we have already seen, there is no doubt that Scripture calls leaders not to seek importance (at least in the world's terms) but to lay down their lives for others and to be humble. Check out the following verses:

**Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves... Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in nature God ... made himself nothing.** (Phil. 2:3, 5, 7)

**Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."** (Mark 9:35)

**The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.** (Matt. 23:12)

When James and John came to Jesus and asked for the most powerful and influential positions in Christ's rule (Mark 10:35-45), Jesus associated these places with great suffering and with his call to be a servant. The disciples were not to seek power and prominence but were to suffer with Jesus and lay down their lives to serve others.

God clearly gives some leaders more prominent roles, but this is God's call and not something we seek. Pride is such a danger for influencers. Christian leaders pursue humility. God will give importance and standing if he chooses:

**All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourself, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.** (1 Pet. 5:5-6)

This certainly was the pathway that Jesus took:

**And being found in appearance as a man, he [Jesus] humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.** (Phil. 2:8-9)

So God challenges us to recognise our own brokenness, and to lay down our lives for God and others so that God's power may be seen through us. We're looking for God's power, not our own:

**We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.** (2 Cor. 4:7)

If seeking SWAY means chasing importance, power, significance or status, then it is not something God wants for Christian leaders. The passions of GRACE and LOVE have already shown us that humility and servanthood are foundational aspects of Christian leadership.

## The Bible calls leaders to grow SWAY

However, Scripture encourages the appropriate use of power and authority. In fact, this is exactly what Jesus gave his disciples when he sent them out to preach and heal:

**When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.** (Luke 9:1-2)

Now this was particularly power in the spiritual realm, but it certainly made these ordinary disciples

very influential people.

In the “Great Commission” of his disciples, Jesus called them to tap into the authority that was his. In order to disciple the nations, they would need to be leaders with power and authority:

**All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...** (Matt. 28:18-19)

**God’s leaders will be spiritually powerful.**

So spiritual power and authority (and the consequent SWAY with people that they generate) are not to be downplayed or avoided. They are actually necessary components of Christian influence. While the Bible emphasises an attitude of humility in leaders, it never separates power from influence. God’s leaders will be spiritually powerful and authoritative people.

But should Christian leaders seek greater power and authority or wait for God to bestow it? Well despite the important biblical warnings in the previous section on humility, there are some biblical indications that desiring more powerful positions and gifts is a good thing. For example, Paul writes:

**Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer, desires a noble task. (1 Tim. 3:1)**

**But eagerly desire the greater gifts.** (1 Cor. 12:31)

**Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.** (1 Cor. 14:1)

While a passion for SWAY (the intentional growth of our spiritual authority and consequent influence on people) is fraught with dangerous temptations, it is an important part of leadership development, especially for those who will have a wider sphere of influence and greater authority. Of course, ultimately God is the one who offers us authority, power and position, but Christian leaders seek these things, not for their own benefit but for the sake of God’s kingdom and those they influence.

This means that Christian leaders with significant influence need to carefully choose the roles they take on and the people they invest in. Paul calls leaders to seek out people with strong potential to teach others and to invest in them:

**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.** (2 Tim. 2:2)

So biblical leadership is not a matter of sitting back and waiting for followers to come to us as God draws them, but to actively seek out those who we may be able to influence and the associated roles that will enable us to do this effectively. Put in the language of this chapter, we are to passionately seek SWAY.

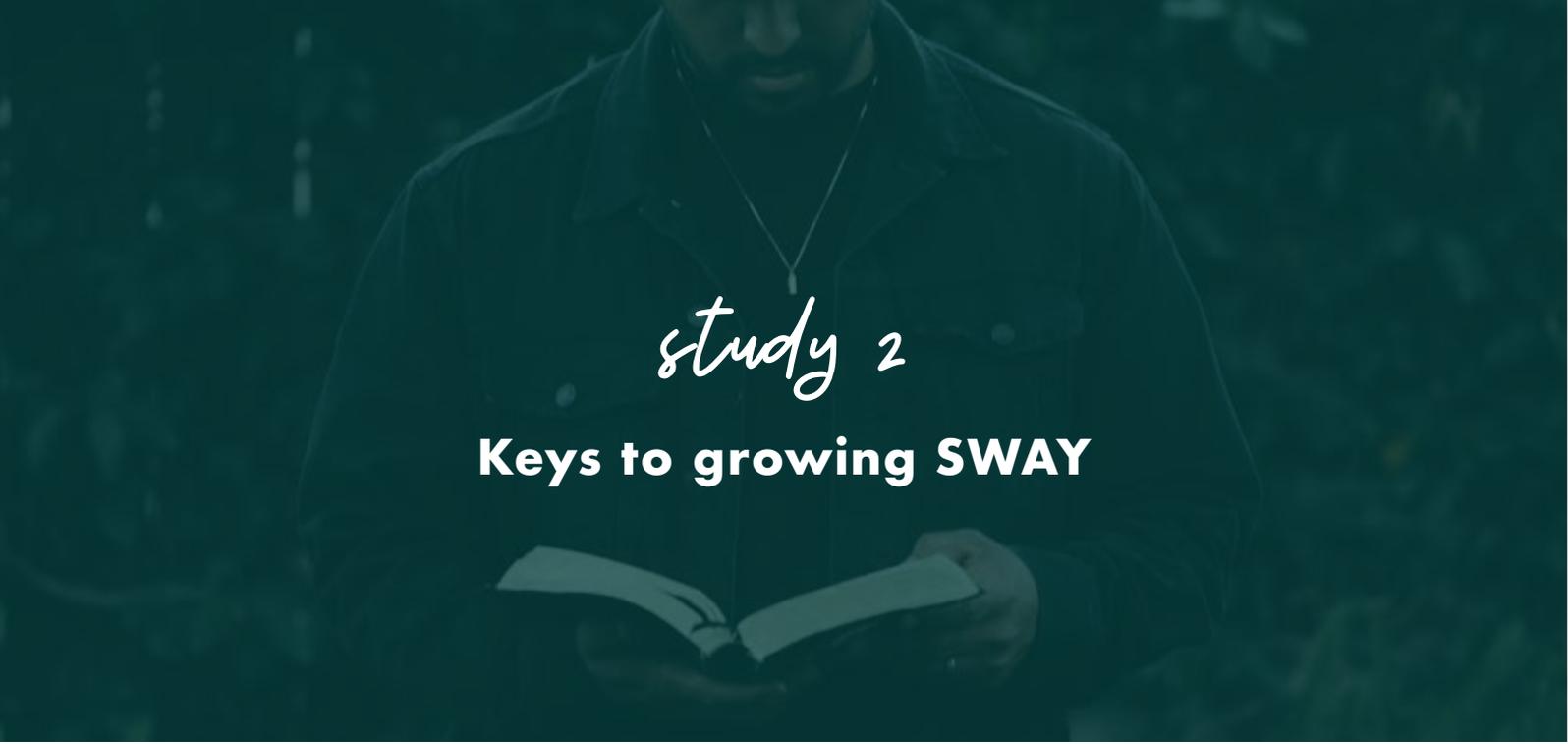
This is what Jesus did when he called his inner circle of disciples. He carefully and prayerfully chose his team and then called them to follow so that he might invest in and influence them more

effectively.

It appears that God not only wants us to influence as widely as we can, but also to seek the positions and gifts that will give us the greatest SWAY. He wants us to be ambitious and intentional in growing SWAY, particularly if he is intending us to have a wider sphere of influence.

### **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 7.1**

1. Do you think it is possible to be humble and still want to grow your SWAY? Can you think of a leader who is a real servant and yet has significant influence and authority?
2. Is your biggest challenge to be more ambitious or less ambitious in leadership?



## study 2

# Keys to growing SWAY

## The key to healthy SWAY: Get the Operating System right

On the one hand, we as Christian leaders are called to be completely unselfish, laying down our lives for others, pursuing humility not prominence and asking for God's power to be seen through our weakness. On the other hand, we are to influence as widely as we can, even looking for positions and gifts that will enable us to do this more effectively. How do these two callings fit together?

Well it's a matter of getting our foundations right. That's why SWAY is the last passion we consider. If SWAY was the first on our list of passions for those who seek to influence as Christians, there would be a great danger that power and position would be pursued for their own sake. It could be understood that primarily Christians of influence should maximise their leadership by aiming for the most prominent roles and most powerful positions.

But instead we started with an Operating System that undergirds our approach to Christian influence. This involves:

- **GRACE:** That this is God's work not ours, and that we have a role because God has chosen to love us and use us. We are humbly dependent on God and seek to honour and please him.
- **LOVE:** That our fundamental priority is actively loving those we influence. We lay down our lives to serve them and help them become all that God intends.
- **HEART:** That we want to consistently live for God and know God and his ways. Through a heart for God and his word, we develop character and wisdom so that we can lead God's way.

Once this Operating System is truly in place, there is no problem with seeking SWAY. We will want to maximise our influence so that we can please God and serve others more effectively. It's not a matter of building our own reputation and authority, but of honouring God by serving him in positions of greater responsibility in order to influence more people for the sake of God's kingdom.

I'm not saying that power and authority don't have a tendency to corrupt our motives. When we wield authority and have people following us, it's easy to get carried away with our own abilities and our position with all its trappings. But this is where our Operating System is so foundational. We must continue to return to these passions that underlie our influence for God. Our Operating System keeps us humble and protects us against the dangerous temptations of SWAY.

## Grow your sphere of influence and maximise the use of your gifts

Developing SWAY has two main connected components: growing your sphere of influence and maximising the use of your gifts. But what does this actually look like in practice? Let me start with a biblical example of someone developing SWAY.

### **An example: Timothy's growth in SWAY**

Timothy is a good example because we know a considerable amount about his development as a leader through his link with Paul. I will briefly trace the growth of his SWAY during Paul's ministry (the ages quoted below are approximate).

**Timothy is a great biblical example of the growth of SWAY.**

- 1.** Although his father was a non-believing Greek (Acts 16:2), Timothy was brought up in the Jewish faith by his mother (and grandmother) and was well grounded in Scripture as a boy and young man (2 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:15).
- 2.** He probably became a Christian when he was about 30 during Paul's first visit to Lystra (on Paul's first missionary journey). It seems that Paul was involved in his conversion because Paul calls him a "true son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2).
- 3.** Over the next few years, Timothy developed a good reputation among the Christians in the area around Lystra (Acts 16:2) and was commended to Paul by others from this area, so he must have grown some influence in the church.
- 4.** When he was about 32, Timothy was invited by Paul to join the team on his second major missionary journey with Silas (Acts 16:3) as they encouraged the new church plants. But Timothy is not mentioned in connection with the persecution of Paul and Silas in Philippi and Thessalonica, so he was probably a junior member of the team. However, he is mentioned ministering with Silas at Berea (Acts 17:14-15) after Paul had to flee, so he seemed to begin taking on more responsibility as the mission trip progressed.
- 5.** Paul wanted to return to Thessalonica but was prevented from doing so (1 Thess. 2:17-18), so he sent Timothy (perhaps now 33) on his behalf to strengthen and encourage the church there, calling him "God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ" (1 Thess. 3:2). So Timothy's role and responsibilities were growing. He was now ministering by himself on special missions

(though still under Paul's authority).

6. Timothy joined Paul again on his third missionary journey. Now about 36, he was directed by Paul to deal with a particularly difficult situation in the Corinthian church. The Corinthians were rejecting Paul's authority and Timothy was sent with Paul's letter to straighten them out (1 Cor. 4:17). Paul had to write "see that Timothy has nothing to fear while he is with you" (1 Cor. 16:10), so it must have been a challenging assignment.
7. After his first Roman imprisonment, Paul commissioned Timothy (who was now about 44) to pastor the Ephesian church (1 Tim. 1:3). This involved refuting false teaching, supervising the church and appointing leaders. In a culture in which age was deeply respected, Timothy was young to have such significant responsibilities (SWAY), but Paul challenged him, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young" (1 Tim. 4:12).
8. In Paul's second letter to Timothy (and final epistle), Paul saw Timothy (now about 48) as a guardian of the gospel after he died (2 Tim. 1:14). Timothy was responsible to preach and maintain the truth in the church during a time in which many people throughout God's church would be led astray by false doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-3). This was a big responsibility and a great opportunity to influence.

So we have traced Timothy's journey, over a period of about 18 years, from keen, young Christian in his local church to guardian of the gospel for the whole church. We have followed his development of SWAY – both growing his sphere of influence (from local church to the worldwide church) and maximising the use of his gifts (mainly leading and teaching). This was not an easy journey for Timothy. We know that he was somewhat timid (2 Tim. 1:7) and in his last letter, Paul still had to encourage him to "fan into flame" his gift (2 Tim. 1:8), even though Timothy was an experienced church leader by this time.

I'm not sure how intentional Timothy's growth of SWAY was. Did he deliberately take on extra projects to develop his leadership? Possibly. But I am convinced that it was very intentional on Paul's part. He had a vision for Timothy's leadership and oversaw the growth of his influence by giving him more and more responsibility. Paul wanted Timothy's SWAY to increase and he provided the pathway for this.

## Grow your sphere of influence

The simplest way to understand "sphere of influence" is to see it in terms of how many people you are leading/influencing. The more people you have following you, the greater your sphere of influence. Here is a simple scheme that categorises sphere of influence in terms of numbers of people following. Your sphere of influence could be:

1. Individuals
2. A small group
3. A team of people working together

4. A larger group/ministry/team
5. A church or organisation
6. A large church or group of churches or large organisation
7. A wide group of people or a local area
8. A national influence
9. An international influence

**A passion and commitment to increase our influence with people (as God opens up opportunities) is an important dimension of SWAY.**

So using these categories, Timothy started with individuals (1), moved to a team of people (3) when he joined Paul's group, progressed to a larger group (4/5) when he was sent by Paul to churches, influenced a large church/area (6/7) when he pastored the Ephesian church, and finished with international influence (9) when he continued Paul's ministry of guarding the gospel after Paul's death.

But these categories are far from clear-cut. They don't specify the depth of influence. For example, does someone who advises the CEO of a large company influence an individual or the whole company? At the moment, I write a bi-monthly article in a State-wide magazine. Many people read my article. Does that mean that I have State-wide influence or merely that some people enjoy my articles? Does a good pastor who is effectively leading a local congregation have more or less influence than a travelling preacher who touches the lives of many more people but not nearly as deeply? So there is no categorical way of measuring influence. **It's difficult and probably unproductive to calculate and compare spheres of influence.**

However, there is no doubt that some people have greater influence than others, even if only eternity will tell the extent of that influence. Whether we see sphere of influence in terms of breadth or depth, a passion and commitment to increase our influence with people (as God opens up opportunities) is an important dimension of SWAY.

## Maximise the use of your gifts

**In CROP, we explored how to find and use your gifts effectively. If you want to be "proficient," you need to know how God has gifted you and to use those gifts.**

SWAY adds another dimension. You try to find ministry environments in which you are mainly using your strongest gifts and abilities. For example, let's look at Timothy's strengths in his mid 40s. He was well-versed in the Old Testament Scriptures from a young age, he was a close companion of Paul's and would have been drenched in the gospel, he had a gift of preaching, and he had travelled widely building international networks. If Timothy was seeking to intentionally increase his SWAY, he probably would be best to take on a role where he could equip the whole church. He wasn't to avoid evangelism (2 Tim. 4:5) because that was part of the job, but his major contribution long-term was to keep the church on a solid theological foundation.

There is a significant danger here. Maximising the use of our gifts could be interpreted as just doing the things that we like and enjoy. **LOVE rules this out.** Laying down our lives for other necessarily

**Maximising the use of our gifts could be interpreted as just doing the things that we like and enjoy. LOVE rules this out. Laying down our lives for other necessarily involves sacrifice.**

involves sacrifice. As we lead others, there will be aspects of our ministry that we won't find easy or enjoyable. I'm not a big fan of conflict. But working through conflict is a necessary part of high-level leadership. It's not my gift, but it comes with the territory, and it's good for my growth and dependence on God.

However, if I spend most of my time dealing with conflict, I will wither inside, and that's not going to be much help to God's kingdom. So if I am to grow SWAY, I need to orient my ministry, as much as possible, to my strengths - inspiration, problem-solving, structuring change and teaching. These are my gifts and using them prodigiously will most grow my SWAY.

When it comes to a focus on SWAY, timing is important. The quest to use our strongest gifts is not always easy to pursue early on in the leadership journey. We may not get a lot of choice in how we follow God and serve people in the church or the workplace. That's why SWAY tends to become more significant later on in leadership when options may open up and we are more confident in our greatest contributions to God's kingdom. **As our influence and opportunities grow, it becomes important and often easier to find or create environments that allow us to maximise the use of our gifts and skills.**

## **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 7.2**

1. What are the main two ways leaders grow in SWAY? Have you seen any change in your SWAY over the last few years? How has this happened?
2. Do you have any idea of how God is planning to increase your SWAY in the future?



## study 3

### Advice about SWAY

As we have already touched on the use of our gifts in CROP, for the rest of this chapter I will focus on growing our sphere of influence. But you must remember that SWAY does not just involve influencing more widely but also influencing more deeply and effectively by intentionally using the strongest gifts and abilities that God has given us and by developing spiritual authority (HEART).

Before we consider specific ways to intentionally grow our influence, I will outline two keys to understanding the concept of SWAY.

## 1. Accept that you have a SWAY limit (set by God)

Talking about a SWAY limit seems to be a strange way to start, but you need to understand and accept that the sky is not the limit in developing SWAY. You have potential to grow your influence, but it is unlikely that you will be an international influencer. In fact, you may never influence more widely than a small group of people. If you think that your sphere of influence is unlimited, you will probably end up either feeling a failure or feeling hardly done by.

The parable of the talents revolves around the concept that people have different God-given abilities and therefore different potentials leading to different results. This is what Jesus said:

**To one servant he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.** (Matt. 25:15-17)

The master in the parable understood that different servants had different abilities. He was just as happy with the two-talent servant who earned two more talents as with the five-talent servant who earned five more. God has created us all with the capacities we need to achieve his calling on our lives. Our capacities are very different and that's fine. We won't all have the same influence.

It is vital to understand this as a Christian leader. If you feel that everyone has the same potential, you will tend to either feel inadequate (because others have been more successful) or superior

(because you have achieved more than others). God does not expect the same fruit from every person. He has determined our capacity and only holds us responsible for what he has called us to do.

I would often say to students, “If Brian Houston [presently the Australian global senior pastor of Hillsong who is about my age] was principal of Malyon Theological College, the College would have a lot more students.” This is not because Brian is better than me or works harder or has more faith (although he could be all of those things). It’s just that God has given him a greater capacity to influence. Whatever he does, he will have a wider sphere of influence than me. And that’s good, because it’s God’s design. **When it comes to SWAY, I don’t have to compare myself** with Brian Houston, thank goodness. And you don’t need to compare yourself with anyone either.

### **Some of your God-given personal abilities that may impact your potential to grow SWAY are:**

- **Mental capacity.** Some leaders are more intelligent than others. Smart people are not always the greatest influencers, but it may help if you can grasp things well and think quickly.
- **Emotional intelligence.** Some leaders have a greater self-understanding and understanding of others and the way they behave. This can be learned, but some leaders have a head start.
- **Emotional resilience.** Some leaders have a greater capacity to absorb and work through emotional challenges like disappointment or criticism or stress or conflict.
- **Physical capacity.** Some leaders can just work harder and longer. They don’t need as much rest.
- **Personality type.** Some leaders like being in front of crowds and other like working one-on-one. While both types may have great SWAY, it will probably be easier for the up-front person to influence more widely.
- **Communication ability.** Some leaders just relate and communicate better.
- **Driveness.** Some leaders are more driven. This may come from insecurities as well as personality. But driven people often achieve more.

I could go on but I hope you’ve got the message by now. God has put you together in a way that will determine your potential for SWAY. This has nothing to do with how good or effective or godly you are; it’s just a matter of the way God has designed you. Understanding this, sets us free from comparison, pride, guilt and inadequacy. I can only do what God has made and called me to do.

## **2. Develop your SWAY to its full potential**

Having said that, it is much more likely that you will fall short of the potential SWAY God has for you than that you will try to push past the limits of your God-given potential. We have already seen how Paul kept encouraging Timothy to grow his SWAY and not hold back (as Timothy probably would have preferred to do). Paul’s imploring of Timothy included:

- **“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young”** (1 Tim. 4:12),
- **“Do not neglect your gift”** (1Tim. 4:14),
- **“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may**

**see your progress”** (1 Tim. 4:15), and

- **“Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of hands”** (2 Tim. 1:6).

Perhaps it’s a little simplistic, but here is the way I see it. God gives each of us a certain amount of natural influence or natural SWAY (what I call “inherent influence”). You can see this in children. Some naturally have more influence than others. If we do nothing to develop our leadership, this is the amount of influence we will have for the rest of our lives.

**God also decides on our “potential influence.”** As I’ve already pointed out, this is not unlimited, but it is way beyond our inherent influence. God calls and gifts and equips us to make a difference in the lives of many people. So the individual challenge of SWAY is to intentionally grow our leadership from our inherent ability to its full God-decided potential.

This is not a smooth or straightforward journey. There are times when we toil away and our influence seems to be static, maybe even diminishing. There are times when we are forced or guided to step back from prominence and upfront influence. Paul’s imprisonment was an example of an apparent forced retreat from SWAY, although the letters he wrote in those difficult years proved to be incredibly influential. Depending on our legacy, we may have diminishing influence in the latter years of our life.

**It is much more likely that you will fall short of the potential SWAY God has for you than that you will try to push past the limits of your God-given potential.**

However, the general concept still holds. Our SWAY should continue to grow (with some ups and downs) until it reaches the potential God has decided for us. This takes hard work, risk, discipline, prayer and will inevitably involve failure and disappointment along with success and blessing.

Many Christians of influence begin to serve as leaders and quickly grow their SWAY, but as they settle down with marriage and children and responsibilities and pressure, they pull back and their Christian influence diminishes considerably. While there are circumstances or seasons when a retreat from growing SWAY may be appropriate, often this withdrawal is driven by self-protection and lack of discipline, and therefore it prevents leaders from reaching their God-given potential to influence.

Just so that you are aware, here are a few of the inhibitors to the growth of SWAY. These are factors that keep Christians of influence from growing SWAY over a lifetime.

- 1. Consumer mentality.** When we view Christian life as being basically about our needs and our convenience, we will never have a passion to continue to grow SWAY. It doesn’t have enough spin-offs for us.
- 2. Pressures of life.** Our lives are very busy with lots of demands that often include raising a

family and building a career. There's not a lot of space left to invest in influencing others.

- 3. Lack of confidence.** As our SWAY increases, we often feel out of our depth and unsure of what we are doing. It just takes a few failures to severely dent our confidence. That's why a focus on GRACE and God's part in our leadership is so important.
- 4. Demands of leadership.** When we take on wider leadership roles as part of our growth in SWAY, we are faced with all the demands of producing CROP, stepping out in FAITH and managing and building TEAM. Sometimes it just feels too demanding.
- 5. Societal change regarding leadership.** New generation leaders in the West tend to be stronger on relationships and weaker on achievement. There are a lot of positives about this trend, but it can mean less intentional effort to increase sphere of influence and grow SWAY.
- 6. Inability to find mentors.** As we will see later in this passion, being mentored and sponsored can have a big impact on the development of SWAY. Without mentoring, our growth will be slower.

There are plenty of factors that will inhibit us growing our sphere of influence. Generally, our SWAY will not continue to develop unless we are committed and intentional. As you mature as a leader, be determined to influence more widely and deeply. Jesus' commission of his disciples is true for all who would influence:

**“All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them ... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”** (Matt. 28:18-20).

There are a lot of people still to be influenced. Develop your SWAY to its God-given potential. Give it your best shot.

## Revision of a few biblical ideas for growing SWAY

How does the Bible suggest that we can grow our sphere of influence so that we can eventually reach our full SWAY potential? Well this whole course has been focused on developing influence/ SWAY, so you already have plenty of ideas. Get your Operating System (GRACE, LOVE, HEART) in place and then work on the Apps (CROP, FAITH, TEAM).

But let me remind you of a few biblical challenges that may be helpful. Then I will focus on what I see as two important contributors to the growth of SWAY.

**Be diligent in your present commitments (CROP).** Whatever God has called you to do at the moment, do it well. Don't see it as a stepping-stone to something bigger or greater, but as your call from God. Give it all you've got. Do the best job you possibly can. After Paul outlined what Timothy had to do in his ministry at Ephesus, he finished with this advice:

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

**Use your gifts effectively (CROP).** God has given you gifts that are for the benefit of others. Clearly, the more you use these gifts, the greater your influence will be. Again, as Paul instructs

**We have seen that God's call is bigger than anything we can achieve ourselves. This means that if we are to maximise our SWAY, there will be times when we have to stretch ourselves and take on tasks/responsibilities that are beyond our current abilities.**

Timothy:

**For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.** (2 Tim. 1:6)

**Get out of your comfort zone and take some risks (GRACE and FAITH).** We have seen that God's call is bigger than anything we can achieve ourselves. This means that if we are to maximise our SWAY, there will be times when we have to stretch ourselves and take on tasks/responsibilities that are beyond our current abilities. After challenging Timothy to fan his gift into flame, Paul gives this rationale:

**For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.** (2 Tim. 1:7)

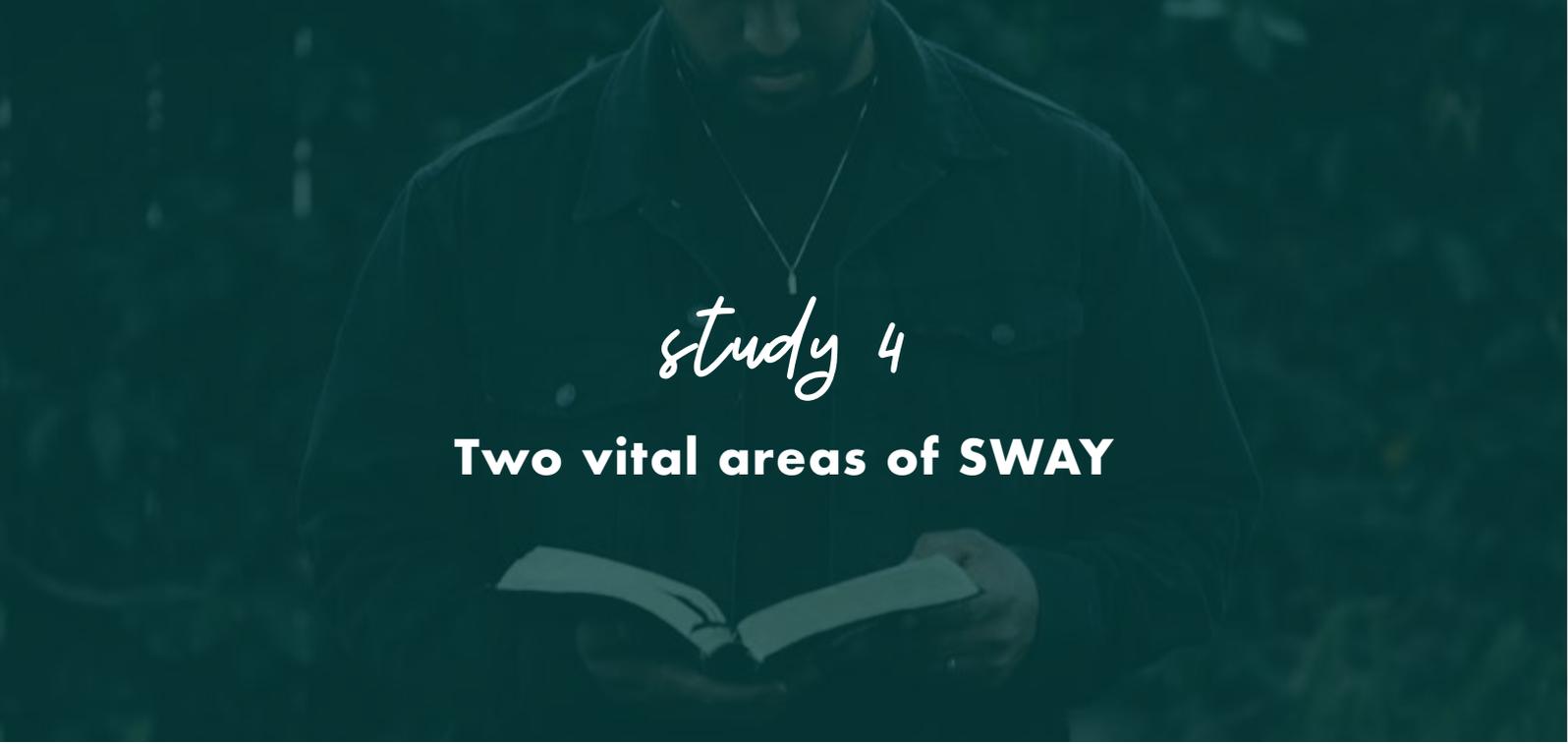
**Pray and dream of what could be (FAITH).** Don't be satisfied. Certainly, praise God for what he is doing and enjoy your present ministry but keep seeking God for the future. Paul was always thinking of the future. In Romans, he explained that he had pretty well fulfilled his call to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles in all the regions he had visited (Rom. 15:18-19). But instead of having a break, he was looking for God's next challenge. He was heading to Spain to evangelise that country and he planned to stop at Rome on the way (Rom. 15:23-29). Well it didn't work out as he expected, but it looks like he did make it. What is God calling you to do next? Keep dreaming and praying (as well as being diligent in what you're presently doing).

**Build a team (TEAM).** You will significantly increase your SWAY when you work well with a real team. So as God gives opportunity, call people to join you in pursuing God's FAITH vision. That's what Jesus did:

**As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.** (Mark 1:16-18)

### **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 7.3**

1. What is most likely to prevent you developing your SWAY to its God-given potential?
2. Of the 5 biblical ideas for growing SWAY above, which is the most pertinent for you at the moment?



## study 4

### Two vital areas of SWAY

You already have much to think about and work on in growing SWAY. But I want to finish this section with two key factors that will make a significant difference as you come to the point in your leadership when you focus more intentionally on SWAY.

#### 1. Being mentored and sponsored

**The growth of SWAY occurs more easily and effectively with the support of a mentor who already has significant SWAY.** We see this many times throughout Scripture. For example, in the Old Testament we have Joshua's growth of SWAY through his work with Moses, Elisha's growth of SWAY through his ministry with Elijah, David's early growth of SWAY through being employed by King Saul, and Nehemiah's growth of SWAY through his relationship with Artaxerxes, the emperor of Persia. The influence of these men of God owed much to the SWAY of their sponsors.

In the New Testament, we find the same pattern. The disciples were mostly simple, middle-class, country tradesmen, who were thrust into significant roles in the early church through their relationship with Jesus. It is difficult to see them having the impact (SWAY) they did without the mentoring and sponsoring of Jesus.

Paul is another example. While Paul had significant influence in the Jewish world, he had no standing or SWAY in the early church until Barnabas (a respected leader in the church) took him under his wing and introduced him to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). After that, Paul was able to preach freely in Jerusalem, but he quickly disappeared off the scene. Many years later, Barnabas was sent to the burgeoning church in Antioch to check out a new move of God among Gentiles. One of his first actions was to find Paul and sponsor him onto the church pastoral team (Acts 11:25-26). Saul worked closely with Barnabas in Antioch and then headed off in mission with him. The rest is history. It is unlikely that Paul would ever have had so much SWAY in the early church without the mentoring and sponsoring of Barnabas.

This makes sense. Your growth in SWAY will be accelerated if you have mentors with SWAY who will guide you, develop you, believe in you, and use their networks to sponsor your development. I'm not saying that you can't do it by yourself (with God). But your growth in SWAY will be more laborious and probably more protracted. You'll hit a lot more obstacles.

As you get to the stage in leadership when you begin to focus on ways in which you can intentionally develop SWAY, one of the keys is to find helpful mentors who are further along in the journey of influence and who have strong networks. Hopefully, you will already have these people in your life. If not, it's time to seek them out. Ask them for guidance, let them point out what may be holding you back, learn from their experience, and let them help you. You may be a strong influencer who is dependent on God but fiercely independent of others. Your independence and self-sufficiency could be part of the reason you've got this far in leadership. Well self-reliance may help you in CROP but it will hold you back in growing SWAY. Be humble, learn from others, and seek mentors who can guide and support and network you.

**Your growth in SWAY will be accelerated if you have mentors with SWAY**

## 2. Investing in those with potential

**The second key contributor to the growth of SWAY is to invest significantly in followers with potential.** While your mentors can equip you for and sponsor you into places of greater influence, those you mentor yourself (if they are effective in their ministry) will multiply the spread of your influence and therefore also increase your SWAY. When you influence them and they influence others, you are indirectly influencing a wider group of people.

This is what Paul tried to put in place in his own teaching ministry. He advised Timothy:

**“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others”** (2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul passed his teaching on to Timothy and then Timothy was to deliver it to dependable and gifted people who would teach others. If they did this well, the influence of Paul's teaching would spread significantly. His SWAY would increase dramatically.

Now of course, we don't invest in others purely to grow our influence. This would contradict what we have learned about LOVE. **We invest in others because we care about them and we want to see them grow and make a difference for God.** But an inevitable corollary of effective influence is growth in SWAY for the leader, and this is good for God's kingdom.

You will notice that Paul didn't suggest that Timothy invest in anyone who was interested. No, he was to find reliable people who had teaching gifts. Jesus too was careful about those he chose to significantly invest in. This is how Luke describes Jesus' calling of the disciples:

**One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.** (Luke 6:12-13)

Jesus bathed this important decision in prayer and then selected 12 out of a much wider group. We are called to LOVE everyone with whom we serve. We need to build TEAM with all those in the group we are leading. But when it comes to significant investment, we are to choose wisely. We look for character, gifting, commitment, heart, competency and potential to influence. Of course, everyone is flawed, so there will be no perfect mentees, but both Jesus and Paul show that it is important to prayerfully and carefully select people with potential in order to invest in them. The importance and challenge of intentional mentoring relationships

We have seen that effective mentoring of those with potential has a strong impact on our growth of SWAY. But it has an even deeper impact on those we mentor. Yet mentoring doesn't come naturally for many leaders in our culture. It is essential for Christians of influence to intentionally form mentoring relationships.

While mentoring has been the normal way to learn and grow throughout most of history, this is no longer the case for many in the West. Let me offer a few reasons why I think this is true.

**We are called to LOVE everyone with whom we serve. We need to build TEAM with all those in the group we are leading. But when it comes to significant investment, we are to choose wisely.**

**First, we can now live largely private lives.** I almost always travel by myself in my car. I sit in my own office working on my computer all day. I can even watch TV in a different room from my wife if she is looking at one of those lifestyle programs. Of course, I do talk with people during the day, but apart from the demands of my job, I don't have to. In other words, I can now live the kind of private life that would have been impossible until very recent times in the West. In most historical cultures and in many cultures now, privacy is neither valued nor possible. People are constantly with others as they do life. In these contexts, a lot of reflection and mentoring happens naturally. People living largely private lives just don't have the same opportunities to mentor or be mentored.

**Second, our lives are very full.** We pack our lives with doing. We can cram more in than has ever been possible before. What did Jesus do after the sun went down? Mostly chatted with his mates I guess. There weren't too many other options. In Jesus' day, there was so much time for building relationships. On the other hand, we race from one thing to the next, and then when we get a break, we are too exhausted for significant relationships. Friends on social media are often the best we can do. Full lives can leave little time for relationships, particularly the deeper kind in which mentoring more naturally occurs.

**Third, we have lost respect for local mentors.** In a culture in which change is very slow, the most respected people in society are those with the most experience to offer others. These are the

## **Capacity to influence grows best through relationship. No change occurs until life touches life.**

elders, the mentors. But in a rapidly changing world, it's the experts and innovators and celebrities that are admired. They are seen as the ones who have mastered modern life, the ones to learn from. So if we want to develop as a cook, our mentor is a TV celebrity, not our parents. Or if we want to learn how to nurse, we do a University course, not an apprenticeship with an experienced nurse who may not be aware of the latest techniques. We believe that we can learn and grow more easily and more efficiently through conferences and courses and podcasts and TED talks. Mentoring will not offer what we need.

I realise that some of these mentoring limitations don't apply to everyone. You may be very involved with others and put aside lots of time to "waste" with your friends. Not everyone is as introverted and task oriented as I am. But almost all of us are impacted in some way by these issues. We don't have lots of free time or opportunity to mentor or be mentored. And even when we do, we're not sure that it's worth the effort and time involved when there are other options for learning.

So mentoring easily disappears from our lives and with it we (and those we would mentor) lose accountability and wisdom and personal encouragement and perspective and support and sponsoring. We basically have to grow our Christian influence by ourselves (with God's help of course). But doing it alone is so tough, slow, risky and inefficient.

### **The need for intentionality**

If mentoring really is important for us and those with potential that God puts around us, it's probably going to take special effort. Due to the challenges I've described above, it's not likely to happen naturally. You will need to be intentional about building mentoring relationships by organising the time and opportunity to do it.

**First, this means intentionally spending time with people both corporately and individually.** I'm sorry if you are an introvert, but you have to do it. It means socialising with others. It means working in ministry together and reflecting on the outcomes. It means grabbing a few minutes to chat about important issues when the opportunity arises.

Capacity to influence grows best through relationship. No change occurs until life touches life. It's in the reality of a relationship that issues can be lovingly confronted, new thoughts can be anchored in real experiences, and hearts can be honest and open.

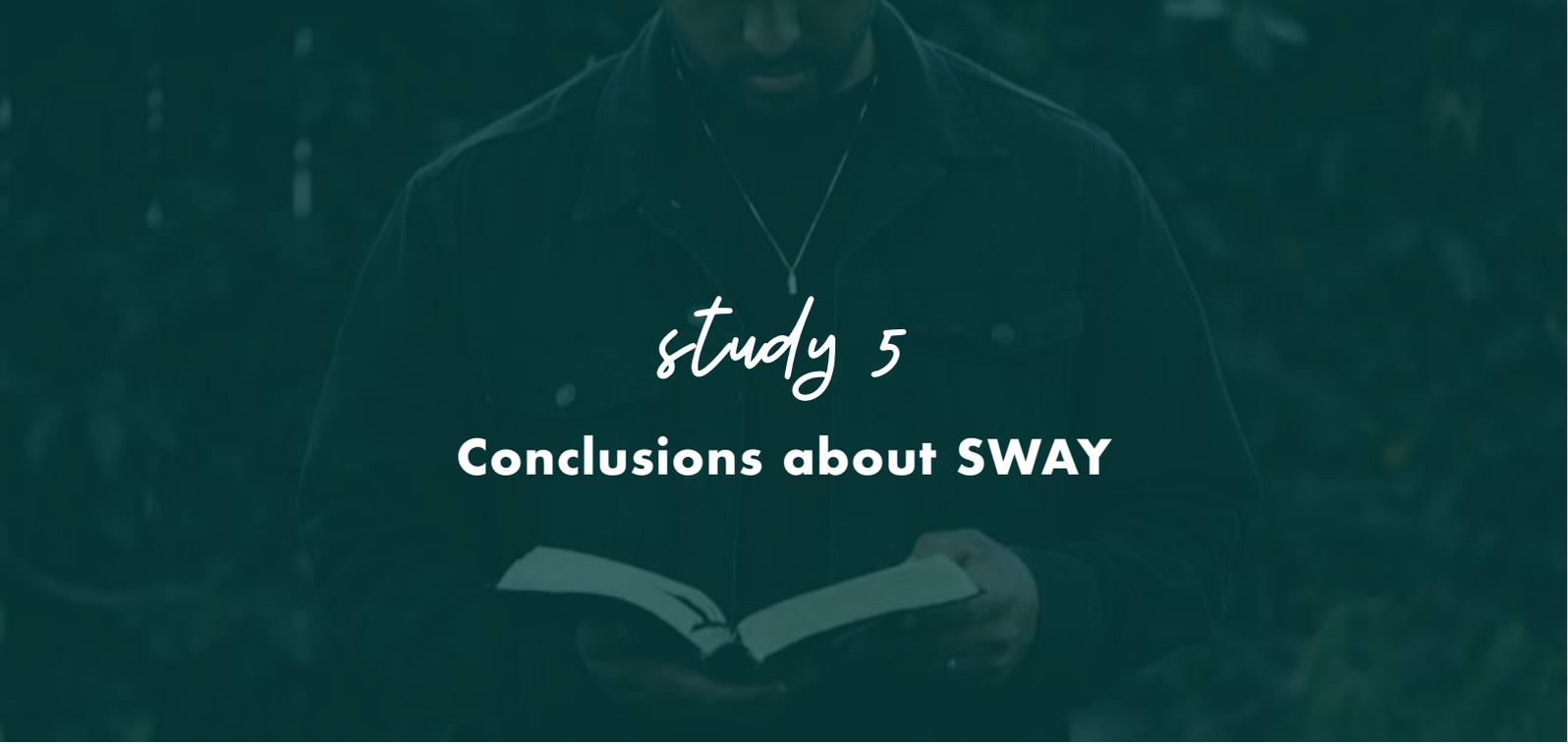
So those you influence will develop as you spend time with them one on one, reflecting on their experiences, holding them accountable, and humbly sharing some of your resources with them. Your life will touch theirs and generally the result will be growth. Here's an important question to ask. "What am I presently doing by myself that I could do with someone I would love to influence?" Your influence will be deepest when your life touches the lives of those who are serving with you.

**Second, intentionality means organising specific times to personally catch up** with a mentor or mentee with a specific agenda in mind. I mentor largely in my office and on the phone. Many other mentors prefer homes and coffee shops. It doesn't really matter how and where. But if you are not making an intentional effort to find time, I suspect that mentoring is largely not happening. It takes real determination.

**Finally, part of the passion of SWAY means intentionally finding and raising up new leaders.** Effective influencers are always seeking potential leaders who they can call into influence and equip in leadership. While our programs and structures will come and go according to the seasons, many of those we have equipped for influence and service will continue to make a difference, no matter where they are.

#### **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 7.4**

1. Who is mentoring you? How have you benefitted from their experience and networks?
2. Who are you mentoring? What approach do you use?



## study 5

# Conclusions about SWAY

## How SWAY serves followers

Of the seven biblical passions underlying Christian influence that we have considered, SWAY appears to be the most potentially problematic. It's hard to go too far wrong with passions like GRACE or LOVE or FAITH or even TEAM. But the intentional growth of SWAY can be driven by very selfish motives. Christian leaders who want to build a reputation and power base for their own ends will cause considerable damage to their followers. That's why the Operating System passions are so vital to ensure our hearts are right before we pursue SWAY.

**But the growth of our SWAY can actually have excellent spin-offs for those we influence. How do followers benefit from our SWAY?**

### 1. Investment

We have seen that the growth of SWAY occurs as leaders invest in and mentor those with potential. This will result in greater influence for the leader, but it also means that followers gain resources and wisdom and accountability and perspective, which helps hugely in their own growth. They have someone they respect who believes in them and is investing in their life and ministry. This is a great blessing for them.

**It is vital to ensure our hearts are right before we pursue SWAY.**

It's actually a win-win for both followers and leader. The more followers grow through the investment of their leader (the win for followers), the more they will respect that leader and follow them (the SWAY win for the leader).

## 2. Influence

We have seen that leaders grow in SWAY when they are mentored and sponsored by a leader with greater SWAY. This means that as you grow in SWAY, your followers will have greater access to your growing influence and therefore will grow in influence themselves. Your growing SWAY carries them to higher levels of SWAY (influence). In a way, they are carried on your coat tails.

For example, as the church at Bracken Ridge grew and my SWAY as senior pastor increased, those in the pastoral team also grew in SWAY because my influence and standing was opening up new opportunities for them to influence. They had access to my networks.

**So when growing SWAY is tempered by a humble focus on GRACE, it will be a great blessing for those you influence.**

## Conclusion

The last of our Apps is SWAY. It's last because it requires some mastery of the other six biblical passions before it can really grow healthily. You need the right attitudes of the Operating System to keep SWAY in perspective and you need the skills of the Apps to gain the impact/success needed to build significant influence.

As we have found, not every Christian of influence will have a large amount of SWAY, and that is fine. Our potential SWAY is determined by God and the abilities he gives us. But our challenge is to make sure that we intentionally grow our SWAY to its full potential. As well as pursuing the biblical passions we have discussed in the previous chapters, this will mean intentionally finding mentors who can guide and sponsor us and investing in those with potential around us.

## My personal reflection

I was first alerted to the importance of what I have called SWAY when I completed a week-long workshop led by Bobby Clinton (Professor at Fuller Seminary at the time). He decried the fact that few Christian leaders finish well and implored us to continue our growth as leaders and to eventually seek convergence where our gifts would be used most effectively, and our kingdom influence would be greatest.

At the time, I was senior pastor of a large church and part-time lecturer at a theological college. The two roles allowed me to use my main gifts of leadership (church) and teaching (college), but I began to feel the urging of God's Spirit to broaden my sphere of influence. It was time to step out again.

But my dilemma was which gifting to pursue. I could focus more on leadership e.g. leading a larger church or a parachurch organisation, but the opportunity to use my teaching gift would diminish. Or I could focus more on teaching e.g. become a full-time faculty member in a theological college, but the use of my leadership gift would be curtailed. As I worked through this, the position of

theological college principal opened up, and I saw this as a wonderful God-given opportunity to increase SWAY by growing my sphere of influence and using both my major gifts together.

I realise that not every Christian leader will find such a clear sweet spot as I did. But as our leadership matures, it's important that those with a growing sphere of influence focus more on what Clinton calls strategic formation or what I have called SWAY. This prevents us lapsing into self-satisfaction or mediocrity and the inevitable loss of godly influence that this will bring.

**Everyone's leadership journey is different.** Like Timothy's, mine has been stereotypical. I have seen a fairly steady growth of my sphere of influence and effective use of my major gifts throughout my ministry. But many of my leadership colleagues have walked other paths. Some have experienced burnout and had to pull back from major influence for a time. Some have chosen to focus on using their gifts and taken roles with less breadth of influence. Some have gone through very difficult seasons of diminishing spheres of influence and then suddenly seen a huge surge in God's powerful work and its consequent growth in influence. Some faithfully serve God for their whole life without any obvious growth in influence.

**It's important to find satisfaction and peace in your leadership journey and the seasons that it involves.** Maybe SWAY will never be a big issue for you. That's fine, as long as you don't retreat from God's calling to develop your influence and you eventually reach your God-given influence potential.

## JOURNAL ACTIVITY 7.5

### Checkpoint 7: SWAY

TOTAL:

Please rate each statement on the following scale:

- 5 - Strongly Agree;
- 4 - Agree;
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree;
- 2 - Disagree;
- 1 - Strongly Disagree

TOTAL the scores for each quality and put the total in the box. This gives a score out of 25. A score below 20 indicates significant room for growth.

1. **There is evidence that I am growing in my sphere of influence.**
2. **I have a mentor/sponsor who is helping me grow my skills and influence.**
3. **I know my main gifts and am using them effectively in my present role.**
4. **I intentionally invest in and mentor followers I sense have strong potential.**
5. **I am actively seeking to raise up the next generation of Christian influencers.**

Describe briefly what you have learned about SWAY as essential for Christian leaders. Reflect on your self-assessment (above) and discuss the steps you are taking (or will take) to develop SWAY.

## Discussion Questions: Sway

*Choose the most appropriate questions.*

- 1.** What issues have the readings and journaling raised for you? Share your answers, thoughts and questions.
- 2.** What struck you most as you worked through these studies on SWAY?
- 3.** Share your response to Journal Activity 7.5.
- 4.** Are you growing in influence at the moment? How do you know? How would you describe your sphere of influence at the moment? Do you think you're near your SWAY potential or have a fair way to go?
- 5.** How did Jesus go about helping his disciples grow in SWAY? What can you learn from this?
- 6.** Who has helped you grow in SWAY in the past? Who is helping you at the moment? How are they doing this?
- 7.** What challenges you at the moment? What are you doing that is beyond your natural ability? Where are you being stretched?
- 8.** Choose someone in your circle of influence. How do you think this person needs to grow at the moment? How could you help them? What could you offer?
- 9.** What are you presently doing by yourself that you could do with someone else?
- 10.** You have now completed the leadership foundations course. What is the next step for you in the growth of your leadership?

## Case Studies: Sway

*Choose the most relevant case studies to discuss.*

- 1.** Shane, who is in his late 20s, is a very gifted worship leader. He works hard on the services he leads and people appreciate his spiritual authority, creativity and musical ability. He enjoys leading worship and is a great encourager of people. Shane has been approached by the pastor to lead the whole worship ministry, but he is unsure. While he has a heart for worship and some idea of how it could develop in the church, it would mean more responsibility, more effort and would take him outside his comfort zone. How does he know whether this is a SWAY issue or whether it will stretch him beyond his abilities and giftings. How would you advise him?
- 2.** Bek feels that while she is growing in her SWAY at work, she needs someone to hold her accountable and to give her some help in the decisions she is making. She is really close to her mum but is not sure that her mum is the right person to hold her accountable. Do you agree? If Bek was in your church, where would she find someone to help her and mentor her?
- 3.** Richard is incredibly busy. He has a demanding job that involves regular travel, is on the local chaplaincy committee, and is newly married. He runs the missions' support group in the church and manages to squeeze in a meeting a month around all his other responsibilities. Richard frankly admits that apart from the meetings, he has no time to put into developing the missions' team. The two younger team members appreciate Richard's wisdom and would like to learn from him but accept that he is just too busy to spend time with them. Is this okay? What can Richard do?
- 4.** Melanie has a very charismatic personality and always has people around her. Although lots of her friends take notice of her opinions, she insists that she is not a leader and she will not take on any formal leadership role, although she has been asked many times. When pressured to consider leadership, Melanie says that she has nothing to offer as a leader and is not worth following. You have noticed that some of the younger girls really look up to her. How can you help Melanie understand her potential as a leader and what could you suggest she do to develop those younger girls?
- 5.** The small group I lead is going well and the group is working effectively together, but I'm bored. I feel like I'm just keeping the wheels turning. There's no challenge anymore. It's all more of the same. What can I do to grow my SWAY? How can I develop when everything is so sameish and predictable?