



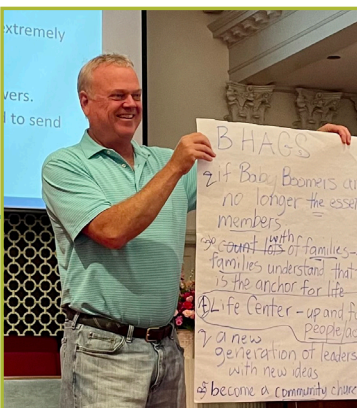
Dear [Name],

Imagine the critical Kingdom impact that can be made through the creation of 20 new mentoring groups the next five years across Latin America: **“We are so excited to share with other leaders what we’ve experienced from Leighton Ford Ministries. We need help to make this dream a reality.”**

That’s what Paul and Nydia Johnson told us recently, and we are thrilled to join with them in what God is doing to make His name known.

Last year, Leighton Ford Ministries (LFM) launched our 50th mentoring group, and that was a major milestone. To have the potential of adding 20 more in the next year or so is amazing. 50 groups since 1986 – yet almost 50% more potentially in a couple of years!

The need is significant. A recent study from the Barna Research Group showed that people in ministry are struggling with burnout at unprecedented levels. In March 2022, according to Barna, “the percentage of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry



Kevin Ford leads a discussion recently while consulting with a church.

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within the past year sits at 42 percent.”¹ There has been a sharp rise in the last three years.

Younger leaders, those who LFM is called to mentor, are particularly affected by burnout. Barna notes that “46 percent of pastors under the age of 45 say they are considering quitting full-time ministry, compared to 34 percent of pastors 45 and older.”² The burnout level is also higher for women than men. We need people like Paul and Nydia Johnson to carry the torch.

Healthy Rhythms

Years ago, I heard Pastor Walt Gerber, from Menlo Park Church in California, preach from Mark 6 about how Jesus modeled staying healthy in ministry. After spending time with crowds, He told his disciples, “*Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while*” (Mark 6:31 NASB). **He knew that He — and the disciples — needed a change of pace and perspective as well as physical rest.** He needed restorative people in his life, like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Gerber concluded that Jesus needed safe times, safe places, and safe people. I knew



that applied to me. At the time, I lacked those type of restorative, soul-filling experiences and relationships. I remember calling my Dad, Leighton Ford, to talk about what I learned, and asked him to pray that I would experience the very thing that Jesus needed.

That was 1989. We've since adopted that idea as a key phrase in our work at LFM. **We provide safe times, safe places, and safe people.** It's that simple. Yet it is profound. We've seen the impact of this philosophy across the globe — from Southeast Asia and Australia to Europe and Africa.

My father embraced this practice for many years. Dad shares thoughts about mentoring . . .

Spiritual mentoring seeks to recapture a part of the ethos that Jesus modeled with His disciples. This pattern has been lost, neglected, or overlooked in our modern quest for quick solutions, easy growth, and frenetic activity. The call to “listen,” whether to God or another, is prominent throughout Scripture. There are many examples of older leaders mentoring younger, and the mutual sharing of wisdom, guidance, and admonition. One thinks of the admonitions in the Proverbs for young people to listen to wise guides. There are the examples of Moses with Joshua, of Paul with Timothy — and the group counsel Paul sought when deciding to go to Greece.

From the beginning of Leighton Ford Ministries, I have been urging young men and women to be “Kingdom seekers, not empire builders.” So, in our mentoring we have been looking for kingdom-seeking leaders, men and women who have a passion to lead more for Jesus, more like Jesus, and more people to Jesus.

A Heart for Latin America

One specific way we accomplish that purpose is by training ministry leaders and launching mentoring communities, with a particular focus on missional leaders. Once these leaders have experienced the power of “safe times, safe places, and safe people,” we typically see an exponential impact. Barnabas mentored Paul. Then Paul mentored Timothy. Mentoring is both exponential and organic.

Paul and Nydia Johnson, who serve as Coordinators for Spiritual Formation with United World Mission (UWM) in Latin America, have both experienced this reality. For more than twenty years, they've been mentoring others. Paul served as the Pastor of Missions and Evangelism at the Iglesia Bautista El Buen Pastor en Getsemani in Mexico City from 2010 – 2023.

UWM is now launching a hub strategy in Medellin, Colombia, to focus on all of Latin America. The Johnsons recently applied for financial support from LFM, asking for us to partner with them to begin new mentoring communities.

Paul shared, “We have a specific focus on spiritual formation. Among our goals this year and the ones to come is to see new mentoring groups established for pastors and ministry leaders.”

In October, they will hold a **Latin American Consultation of Spiritual Formation Ministries in**



Pictured here are two Latino mentoring groups led by Paul Johnson

Medellin and then will immediately hold a Mentoring Community Gathering:

“Our intention is to invite leaders already involved in mentoring or who have a posture toward mentoring from the different regions of Latin America. We will invite those who have a teachable attitude and a heart yearning to walk faithfully with the Lord and others. Our desire is to see regional mentoring communities emerge, as well as provide the same Mentoring Community Gathering in other parts of Latin America – for example, in Mexico, Central America, and another South American country.”

They plan to invite about seven participants from Mexico, seven from Central America, and seven from South America, for an initial group of twenty to twenty-five people.

A Catalyst Toward Mentoring

Paul and Nydia participated in one of our mentor gatherings a few years ago.

Paul says, **“I went to the gathering hungry for deeper closeness with the Lord and for living out His calling in my life.** Each morning we had a time of silent prayer led by Leighton. It was amazing — and still is — how much the Lord does in our hearts when we are quiet before Him.

The group who came together was wonderfully diverse from multiple countries and backgrounds (Nigeria, Korea, U.S.A., Mexico, France, Spain, India, England, Russia, and Germany). Listening to my brothers and sisters from each of these places impacted my heart.”

This experience became a catalyst in their hearts toward beginning spiritual mentoring groups in Mexico. Paul led one men’s group for about four years. He has also been involved in mentoring other UWM missionaries in Latin America via zoom meetings. They have had five groups going simultaneously.

They saw a deep need for mentoring opportunities for leaders in the Mexican church, who often didn’t have these type of safe spaces with each other and the Lord. In the first mentoring retreat they offered, the overwhelming response of the participants is that they wanted to be mentored.

Paul shares, “I’m passionate to accompany others as they follow Christ and see others put down deep roots in Him, growing in their love for Him and other people, and seeing God re-order our disordered lives and priorities.” As he reflects on the mentoring opportunities in front of them, he says, “This

Places Along the Way

On Sunday, April 23, the Charlotte campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary hosted a special event celebrating the art and legacy of Dr. Leighton Ford. *Places Along the Way* featured dozens of Leighton’s watercolors and celebrated his legacy as an artist, mentor, and leader, including his role as a long-time board member of Gordon-Conwell.



has been a dream for my wife and I for a number of years. We are thankful it's finally coming together."

In the past, they have not had the bandwidth to focus exclusively on mentoring. But as they step into a new ministry role focused on spiritual formation, they are in a great place to shepherd this movement. Paul says, **"Our prayer is that the Lord touches hearts and that He will raise up opportunities in differing regions of Latin America for more mentoring groups and additional gatherings in the future."**

The cost of the total gathering of this initial set of leaders from Mexico, Central America, and South America in October will be close to \$13,500.00.

To launch twenty new Latin American mentoring groups and sustain them for three years will cost an estimated \$300,000. After three years, we have found they are often able to self-sustain.

Imagine the impact that could be made for generations across Latin America through the lives influenced by these twenty mentoring communities?

Will you partner with pastors and leaders from Mexico, South America, and Central America?

- **Praying** daily for Paul and Nydia and the lives they reach?

1. Source: www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry

2. Source: www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being

- **Giving** \$1350 to provide 1/10th of the cost of funding the initial gathering in October?
- **Investing** \$13,500 to cover our total cost for the Mentoring Community Gathering in Medellin, Colombia?
- **Sharing** \$15,000 to cover one of the twenty Latin American groups?
- **Graciously providing** \$300,000 for the three-year launch of all twenty groups? It will take \$5000 a year for three years for each group to become self-sustainable. \$15,000 covers one cohort for three years. Multiply that by 20 groups and the cost is \$300,000.

In addition, you can partner with us on a monthly basis. You can conveniently sign up for a monthly automatic credit card donation to give \$50, \$100, or whatever amount you choose. Your gifts will touch kingdom leaders all over the globe – every month! Go to **leightonfordministries.kindful.com**.

Thank you for your heart to strengthen God's people. The Bible reminds us to *"encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today"* (Hebrews 3:13 NIV). You are doing just that through your prayers and gifts.

By His Amazing Grace!



Kevin Ford
Chief Catalyst



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