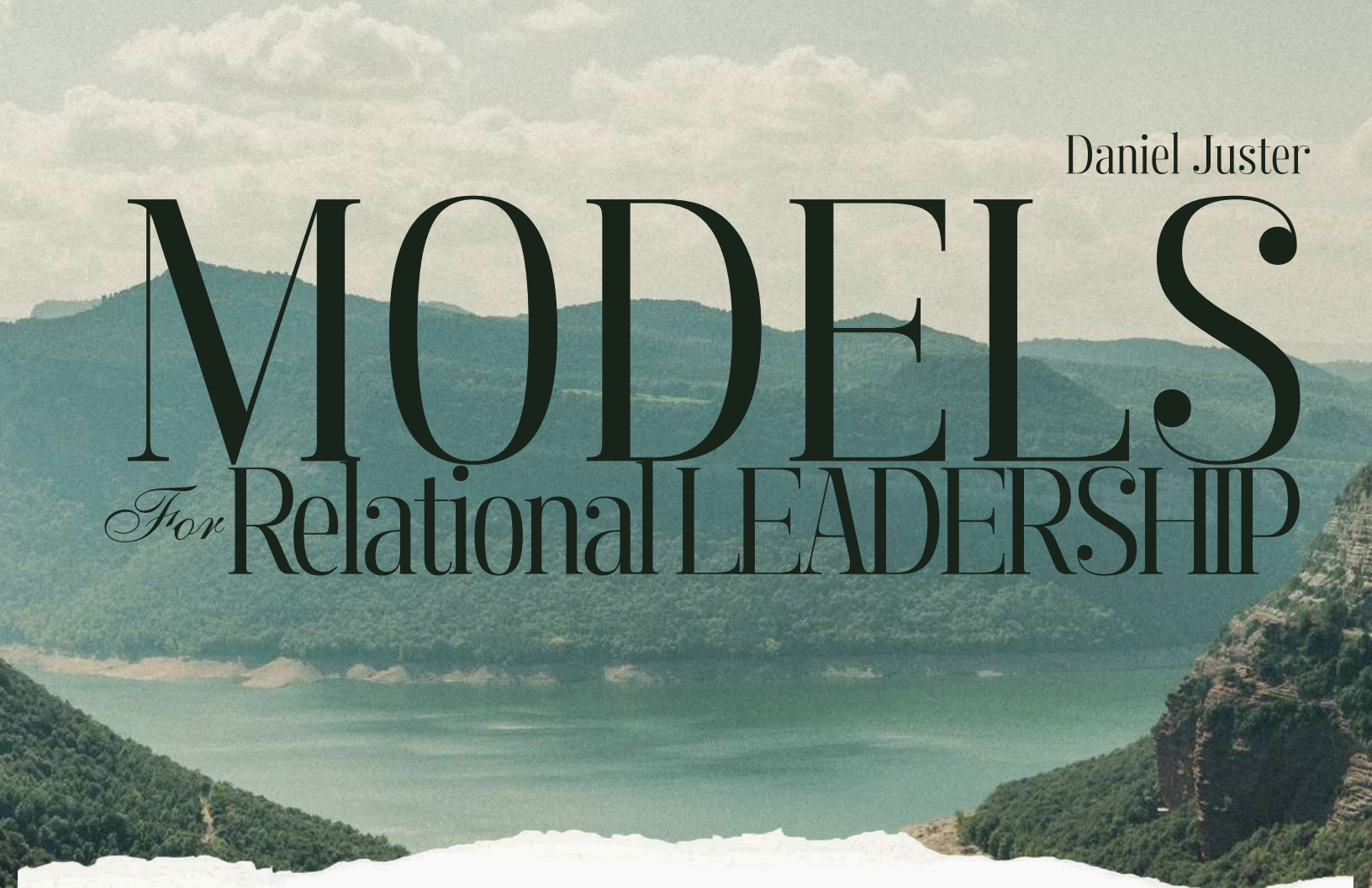




Daniel Juster

MODELS

For Relational LEADERSHIP

The Professional Model

When I attended the Presbyterian Seminary from 1972-1974, we were taught that we were professionals and that we were not to pursue or develop personal friendships with the Elders of our congregations or the people God had tasked us to serve. From their perspective, we had to maintain a professional distance for counseling, preaching, and even leading board meetings within the Church. Friendships should be developed only with other Pastors and people outside our communities. I call this an organizational professional model.

When I was in Graduate School between 1969 and 1971, I developed a vision that was the opposite of this. I saw in the model of Yeshua a friendship relationship (relational) model. He lived with the disciples for over three years. From this context, they developed a deep friendship with Him and with each other. In John 15:15, we read, *"I am no longer calling you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. Now I have called you friends, because everything I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."* (TLV) Yeshua here calls his disciples friends and says that, as a friend, he would tell them both what he is doing (and planning).



The Acts 2:42 Model

In Acts 2:42, Luke notes that the disciples “... were devoting themselves to the teaching of the emissaries, and to fellowship, to breaking bread and to prayers.” (TLV) This new community was continually together; they met together from house to house, they shared meals, and gave themselves to prayer and to the apostles' teaching. In that era, my student friends were reacting against what we called plastic, artificial, and inauthenticity in relationships. We saw an alienated population driven by economic motives. We wanted to see a lasting biblical community that brought humane living for God's people.

We called this developing a community characterized by covenant love relationships that would last a lifetime. In such a community, love will be tested, people will be disciplined, and they will grow into the likeness of Yeshua. Open, transparent relationships would be key. New people would be won to Yeshua and be added to the community. This is certainly the model we see with Paul. Note how he expresses his father's heart to the Corinthians (I Cor. 4:15) in stating, “*For though you may have ten thousand guardians in Messiah, yet you do not have many fathers. For in Messiah Yeshua, I became a father through the Good News.*” We also note how Paul wept in parting from the Elders of Ephesus in Acts 20. This is not a distant professional model.

Implementing the Acts 2:42 Model

My first opportunity to implement this vision was when I was called to the First Hebrew Christian Church in Chicago in 1972. I did not have a method for raising leaders. I only knew to call those who were willing to live near and form a proximity community, and to live within walking distance of one another. 45 heeded that call. I developed discipleship lessons. Then, from those who were responding to the vision, ... now a Messianic Jewish vision, Elders were nominated from those who seemed mature enough. Two of the key couples were young and had no children yet. Our first child was born in 1975. However, the idea of long-term community and raising our children together inspired us. To our surprise, we were called to move from Chicago to lead Beth Messiah Congregation in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. The question now was how do we build community and develop Elders in this new context. My heart was that God would answer my prayer, that we would have a group of Elders that would walk together in a covenant love relationship for a lifetime.

A Growing Understanding of Developing Leaders

In the early years in my new congregation, I discovered a network of congregations that emphasized the raising up of leaders. If we are to grow in a community-oriented way, then we are limited by the number of Elders and home group deacon leaders that we can raise. Here is what I learned:



1. Preach radical commitment and dedication to the Lord and submission to His will in leading us in service in the congregation.

2. Find those who are willing to be raised, and look for four main characteristics:

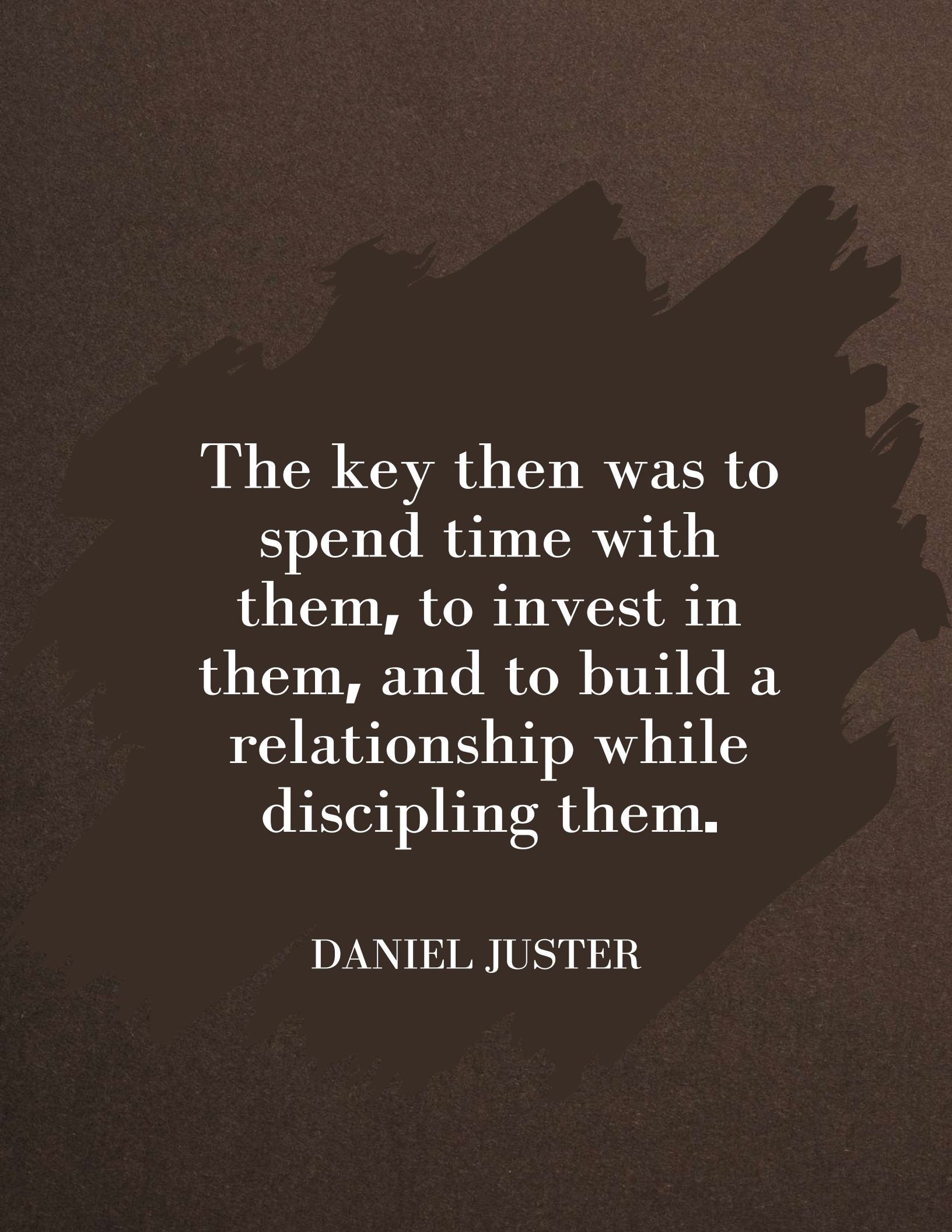
1. Worshippers of God
2. Teachable
3. Marriage and family in order
4. Intellectual capacity to lead and to articulate

If I did not have any that fit the criteria, then it was my job to find those closest to qualifying. The key then was to spend time with him, to invest in them, and to build a relationship while discipling them to qualify. **This sounds like what Yeshua did, and it worked!**

Not only did we raise up Elders and Shamashim (Deacons), but we built covenant love relationships that have lasted in many cases until this day, 45 years later.

Homegroups became the basis for intimacy, love, and transparency for members. This included such a covenant love connection in a network of congregations, planting congregations, and even ministry stretching across the ocean to Israel, where I now serve with my right and left arm leaders from that early time, along with people who were in my congregation then and are now in Israel in our congregations there.





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