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Rethinking Evangelism as Discipleship: Equipping Followers to Live Incarnational Lives Outside the Walls

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

RETHINKING EVANGELISM AS DISCIPLESHIP: EQUIPPING FOLLOWERS TO
LIVE INCARNATIONAL LIVES OUTSIDE THE WALLS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
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BY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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DEDICATION

Thank you to my friends and family for their patience, support and encouragement during this journey. Thank you to all advisors and mentors and professors for investing in me and providing guidance to reach this milestone. I am forever grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores how local churches can help lay people live incarnational lives of reaching out and connecting or building relationships in their communities with the potential to share the gospel. To live an incarnational life means to allow Jesus to live through you in a way that changes your life and allows you to do what you otherwise could not do on your own. To live the life of a disciple or follower fosters a missional mindset and the desire to build relationships. To spring off of Len Sweet's concept of MRI (Missional, Relational and Incarnational)¹ I will explore how the church can better develop a discipleship training that focuses on missional, relational and incarnational thinking. A relationship with Jesus is necessary and relying on Jesus' power, presence, strength, and courage which in turn will help to foster a missional attitude.

This type of discipleship is "others" focused and "outward" focused. The MRI model views missional not as a program, but rather living life as God intended, and relationships not as something followers do, but rather what faith is, and incarnational is not what followers do but how Christians live.² Today more than perhaps ever before, our communities are in great need. Foundational in outreach to neighborhoods is focusing on others and observing potential needs in communities. Communities have households where people come and go from their homes without having any idea who the individuals are that live beside them or around them. Living in such isolation hinders human

¹ Leonard Sweet. *So Beautiful, Divine Design for Life and the Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: 2009), 27.

² Ibid.

interaction and connection. This dynamic manifests itself in the church as guests come and then often leave after a short time because they haven't "connected" or built relationships with others in the church. While the internet has made global connections possible in a superficial way, it may be influencing how individuals live disconnected in our society leaving people hungry for purposeful and meaningful connections and relationships. The church has failed in connecting and instead has turned inward on itself, forming a discipleship that is shared only with its own people.

SECTION ONE:

THE PROBLEM

In this problem section I will address 1) incarnational living 2) lack of prayer and discipleship that foster incarnational living 3) decline in Christian education that fosters spiritual disciplines and 4) the decline in missional thinking that comes with incarnational sense of presence.

The problem with churches making disciples is that of inward focus. To live incarnational lives is to live as Christ. Incarnational means that Christians develop a missional mindset because they are so tightly, intimately bound in relationship with Jesus that they are compelled to act out His love (to be his hands and feet) to the people God so loved as to send His only Son into the world (as God incarnate).

People and churches have tried to create strategies, programs, tricks, and marketing gimmicks to lure people into the church (inward focus). But that's not what Jesus was about. Jesus was about going to where the people are, meeting people where they are, and inviting them into a discipleship relationship with Him. "Thy kingdom come" in other words doesn't mean that followers act out of a bunch of precepts in order to copy things Jesus did. Incarnational living means allowing Jesus to live and breathe through followers in such a way that they cannot help but exude the love of Jesus to others within the world. Our energy for reaching out to people increases not by training our minds, but by appealing to our hearts. This means praying "thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." This means the church must become a go-and-tell church, rather than come-join- us church. Connecting with individuals we do not know, opens the door to being Christ and showing them God in their story. As an

example, there was a family who attended worship at Community Church in Newark, Ohio for three weeks in a row. The third week, they took the initiative to talk to another couple after worship. The couple asked what area they were from. It was discovered that they lived four doors away from each other and this was their first meeting.

Congregations become comfortable with the circle of friends that develop within, while neglecting the potential for the circle to expand beyond them.

Humans were created for relationships and commanded to “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). God demonstrated for all what I will call a vertical relationship when he created the first human named Adam. “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7) From the very beginning God said all were created for relationships. “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” (Genesis 2:18) Here is where a change takes place in relationships and they begin to be horizontal relationships. It was not long before those perfect relationships were destroyed by the fruit-fest that took place in the Garden when sin occurred. Humanity has been trying to get relationships right ever since, trying to turn from self-will to God’s will. Incarnational living and discipleship offers a missional focus and an attempt to return to restoration and establishment of relationships as God intended.

Because of failed relationships the church has experienced an irrational fear. Relationships outside their walls and comfort zones have caused them to remain inward-focused. That focus has resulted in a lack of reaching out and has caused a decline in overall church attendance.

Throughout the United States, surveys have indicated that church attendance is progressively declining. Pew Research published an article in 2013 that indicated that roughly 29 percent of Americans rarely or never attend worship services, which is an increase from 25 percent in 2003. The survey also demonstrated that those who attend weekly has decreased from 39 percent a decade ago to 37 percent in 2013.¹ These statistics raise the question, “How does the church demonstrate an incarnational relationship with Jesus and a love for people?” A partial answer is developing a visional mindset, spiritual discipline and education. There must be evidence of people who are in love with Jesus and have a love for other people. Such education must foster the missional, relational and incarnational (MRI) focus that goes straight to the heart.

The practice of spiritual disciplines, discipleship, and education in the church today seems to be in a downward spiral. Some churches do not have a discipleship program or curriculum, or they remain inward-focused. Some such programs are more detailed concerning rules and strategies rather than fostering a relationship with Jesus. There is little done in terms of education on what individuals believe and why. The church today looks like a place where people can go and socialize and be encouraged and leave feeling better. There are buildings that are called “church” where people meet together, but often those attending do not really have an understanding of what their real purpose is in being there and are not able to communicate who God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are and what is believed about them. The church has lost its true mission of making

¹ Michael Lipka, “What Surveys Say About Worship Attendance and Why Some Stay Home,” September 13, 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org>.

disciples and excitement for fulfilling God's mission. I want to see churches filled with people who are so in love with Jesus that mission becomes part of their DNA.

There is growing concern that our churches today have done a better job at showing those attending on a regular basis the do's and don'ts of the Christian life, when in reality the church is to be more about making Jesus' story our story in a way that fosters identity and mission. When Jesus' story is shared, the church will experience excitement about what God is doing in the lives of people and sharing how he is changing lives and meeting needs. Those individuals being truly changed will want to tell others about it. As Christians, our enthusiasm will be off the charts to share God with those who do not know him and to help them to understand who he is and what he has done for us. When churches educate believers on how to build relationships with others outside the church and teach them how to communicate this love of God in such a way that others would have no other desire but to explore who God is and what he might have for their lives, Jesus' story will become epidemic. How incredible would it be to experience people excited to gather and worship the one true God?

Francis Dubose was a leader in urban missions. He was a professor of urban church studies at Golden Gate Theological Seminary. According to Seminary president Jeff Lorg, "Dr Dubose changed the way Golden Gate viewed its mission as an urban seminary and was a pioneer in leading Southern Baptist to embrace ministry in the city."²

² Phyllis Evans, "Urban Missions Leader Francis Dubose Dies," Baptist Press News, June 30, 2009, <http://www.bpnews.net/30807/urban-missions-leader-francis-dubose-dies>.

He first used the term missional in 1983 as “God who sends.”³ The missional church is dedicated to the great commission that Jesus laid out in Matthew 28:19-20. Consequently, when the church knows its neighbors sending its members out to share the gospel becomes ingrained in their identity. Ed Stetzer is a pastor, author and Christian missiologist. He has served as Dean of the School of Mission, Ministry, and Leadership at Wheaton College, and serves as Executive Director of the Billy Graham Center. He writes that the church needs to establish a new mindset; “The missional church rejects the false hopes of tradition and technique, repositioning itself as a body of people sent on mission.”⁴ Those false hopes of tradition and technique assisted in the movement of church planting where a small group of people moved into a neighborhood, built relationships, and eventually planted a church. A missional mindset is one of maintaining connection with and having an impact on the local community, by living incarnational lives, loving God and loving others.

Churches have the opportunity to bless others through loving and caring for them. Henri Nouwen said, “What makes us human is not our mind but our heart, not our ability to think but our ability to love.”⁵ Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, former General Superintendent of The Wesleyan Church, shared an experience of loving and serving others in Sierra Leone by taking desperately needed supplies to a distraught group of individuals. In her

³ Francis Dubose, *God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983).

⁴ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 22.

⁵ Henry Nouwen, *Seeds of Hope*, ed. Robert Durbeck (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 126.

experience, she realized that while they certainly needed the basics of food and shelter and material possessions, it was love and her presence there that was needed the most.

Our culture tends to see good, therefore blessing, in terms of wealth or success. We are blessed when we have more or do more. That view of blessing is not wrong so much as inadequate. Inanimate things - and money is the most dead of all things - can never truly bless us. We are blessed by one another; we are blessed by presence.⁶

Being present in a community where relationships are nurtured is foundational for moving a church beyond having an inward focus and becoming an island in and of itself. When Christ's presence is observed in our lives, it will be present in our relationships. The church must have a changed heart for reaching beyond the walls without compromising the opportunity to be Jesus to others. For example, think of the church as a VHS movie: the movie cannot be played on a Blu-ray DVD player. The church must find new opportunities to connect with the community and establish relationships with others through loving people and being Jesus Christ to those who may not know who Christ is.

Lack of Incarnational Living

While it is important for believers to live incarnational lives, it is vastly more crucial that those outside the church and in neighboring communities see such a relationship with Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the church looks immensely different today due to the changes that have taken place over the last few decades and may not be the best model of incarnational living. America's perceptions of faith and Christianity have influenced the changes that have taken place in the church. There is faith in God;

⁶ Jo Anne Lyon, *The Ultimate Blessing: My Journey to Discover God's Presence* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009), 34.

however, faith is not always the emphasis. God has created a design for our lives. Len Sweet defines Christianity as “a design for living as authentic human beings: a dialectical process of missionalizing, relationalizing, and incarnationalizing your life and community.”⁷ God designed all to be good, true and beautiful and when Jesus is incarnated within each person, we also become beautiful.

The Barna Group has provided research that demonstrates “half of all adults now contend that Christianity is just one of the many options that Americans choose from, and that a huge majority of adults pick and choose what they believe rather than adopt a church or denomination’s slate of beliefs.” Christianity is seen as another choice or option of faith. Here is a question to consider; if faith is an option, does Christianity maintain any emotional connection to individuals’ lives?

As Christians, it is imperative to connect and build relationships with unbelievers. God came to earth to invite all into a relationship with him. The gospel is void without relationships and the young Google generation understands that. Len Sweet speaks of this media-driven generation in his book *Viral*. This generation has become experts on relationships through their texting, instant messaging, tweeting, Facebook and Instagram updates. Most relationships that experience true connection involve an emotional bond. Unfortunately, many relationships today are on a superficial level, and there is no investment or risk taken. Again, there is an option for the depth of the relationship similar to that of having a choice of faith. If Christians are to have purposeful relationships, there must be a connection to the incarnate Jesus Christ.

⁷ Leonard Sweet. *So Beautiful, Divine Design for Life and the Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cooke, 2009), 28.

For Christians to live an incarnational life, faith must be evident, and others must be taught who Jesus who is. Paul writes, “Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.” (Eph 4: 11-13) I believe that God created all individuals to be in relationship with Him and to ultimately bring glory to Himself. In fulfilling that mission, followers must be taught what that relationship might look like and how to accomplish such a task. One might say that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to show in a glimpse of how that is accomplished.

Fundamental to the understanding of Christian faith is the awareness of God’s plan for humanity. God appeared in this world in human form as Jesus Christ. Christ plunged into our world, our life, what is known as our reality, so that he might bring reconciliation and make a life- changing connection between God and humanity. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsh explain the connection this way: “Jesus had to be God to be able to lift us out of our sin, but had to be fully human to create the right conditions for redemption to take place.”⁸ Understand that Jesus was both God and human. Jesus knew that when he was on earth that he could not be equal to God and must experience life as other humans experienced life.

⁸ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2013), 54.

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privilege; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, ⁸he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (Phil. 2:5-8)

In his humility, Jesus takes on human struggles, insecurities, doubts, and limits. While on earth, Jesus prayed and experienced hardships like other humans.

While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God. Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. (Hebrews 5:7-8)

As a result, others need to be taught that God is love, and that he has pursued humanity in an attempt to bring about forgiveness and have an intimate relationship and connection with humanity. There are cultures today that present the attitude that people are to take care of ourselves and make sure our own needs are met. People have become selfish and somewhat self-centered in America with freedoms that are taken for granted. David Platt states in his book, "In a world where everything revolves around yourself—protect yourself, promote yourself, comfort yourself, and take care of yourself—Jesus says, 'Crucify yourself. Put aside all self-preservation in order to live for God's glorification, no matter what that means for you in the culture around you.'"⁹

When individuals sense that they have life together and things seem to be moving smoothly, the mindset seems to be to not to rock the boat; if nothing is broken, do not change or fix it. There is also a group of people who believe that change is good, and without it, life becomes stale and monotonous. Willingness to change demonstrates active

⁹ David Platt, *Counter Culture: A Compassionate Call in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Abortion, Persecution, Orphans and Pornography* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2015), xiv.

participation in growing in Christ. Change is, in part, why God sent his son into this world. In their book, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful*, authors Gary Parrett and Steve Kang share their thoughts about why Jesus came to earth. Here are some pieces to the puzzle:

- “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mk 10:45)
- “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Lk 19:10)
- “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16)
- “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (Jn 10:10)
- “For this reason, I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.” (Jn 18:37)
- “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” (Gal 4:4-5)
- “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.” (1Tim 1:15)
- “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Heb 2: 14-15)

- “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1 Jn 3:8) ¹⁰

In essence, God the Son became human to reunite humanity with God and defeat the work of Satan and to save sinners. Jesus came to bridge the gap between God and humanity. Jesus came to serve and engage others to serve. Jesus also came to earth to serve as described in Romans 8. “Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote: “For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name.” (Romans 15: 8-9) Consider for a moment the man Zacchaeus. To my knowledge, Jesus had never heard, seen or spoken to this man Zacchaeus before until the day he met him. In the matter of a few minutes, Zacchaeus’ entire life was turned upside down! Zacchaeus was a lying, deceptive cheat, whose life was transformed into a new creature - full of love, mercy and kindness as evidenced by his giving away the wealth that he had always lived for. Zacchaeus had experience salvation. He had been brought from darkness to light - death to life! He had become a Follower - and Jesus sums up this event with these powerful words: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)

If you examine the beginning of Jesus’ ministry by looking at Luke 4 it may lend clarity to what the church’s mission should look like. Just prior to this passage of scripture, Jesus had been baptized by John the Baptist and had returned from the Jordan

¹⁰ Gary A. Parrett and Steve S. Kang. *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 21-22.

River and endured a series of temptations that the devil launched at him. Jesus battled those temptations with scripture and continued without sin in his life. Jesus headed home to Nazareth with renewed strength and courage because of the power of the Holy Spirit working in his life. As was his usual routine and behavior, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus was presented with a scroll of scripture from Isaiah and he read the following words; “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come” (Lk 4: 18-19). Jesus came to a sudden stop in his reading, rolled up the scroll, and told them they had heard the scripture fulfilled. This is the basis of what believers need to proclaim. In his writings, Paul called this reconciliation. “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ no longer counting people’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Colossians reads, “For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.” (Colossians 1: 19-20) Reconciliation and forgiveness cause life transformation and changed relationships. When those who make up the church have experienced a relationship with Jesus Christ and are actively striving to serve others, living the example will be evident.

Lack of Prayer and Discipleship That Foster Incarnational Living

The church is morally messy with superficial relationships lacking intimacy and depth of love and lack of faith. People are leaving the church, gossip is happening, conflict is present and criticism is inevitable. Christians are immature, influenced by power and position, having sex outside of marriage, have broken families, persuaded by

culture, don't know how to act during worship, and question doctrinal beliefs about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Be mindful that list was pulled from 1st Corinthians and the church of Corinth struggled with the same issues the church struggles with today, but Christ loved them. Relationships are not being established and there is evidence of a lack of faith and spiritual discipline.

As previously shared about building relationships and teaching others how love has pursued humanity, the methods for teaching and educating may need to be altered to reach various populations. There is a need for incarnation discipleship through spiritual disciplines and prayer. Albert Einstein once said, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."¹¹ In other words, it takes thinking outside the box or the norm or the expected. Another notion to consider would be this; "if you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always got." This is an important lesson the American church has failed to learn regarding Christian education. In his book, *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples*, Dr. Michael Mitchell attempts to explain the nature of Christian education. The overarching and ultimate goal of educating believers is to make disciples. Mitchell says that to make disciples you must include these four objectives: reconciliation, perfection, restoration, and correction.¹² Mitchell offers the following chart of the dimensions of *reconciliation*:

¹¹ David Mielach, "5 Business Tips from Albert Einstein," Business News Daily, April 18, 2012, <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/2381-albert-einstein-business-tips.html#sthash.YLEOO6Xl.dpuf>.

¹² Michael R. Mitchell, *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples: World-class Christian Education in the Church, School, and Home* (Bloomington, IN: Crossbooks, 2010), 246-47.

Table 14. The Dimensions of Reconciliation

The Great Commission: Matt 28:16-20	Evangelism Baptism	Education Teach them...
Reconciliation: 2Cor 5:16-21	Position in Christ (vv. 16, 17) Back to God	Practice of Christ (vv. 9, 10, 15, 17) Perfect/complete
Regeneration: John 3:3	A New Life Eph 2:9, et al	A New Life Style Eph 2:19ff, 4:1ff & 5:1ff, Matt 5:48, Col 2:6, 1Thess 2:12, 4:1

Once a person resolves to be forgiven and accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, a new life is started with new choices, new attitudes, and a new outlook and perspective. It is then that Mitchell's *perfection* begins to take shape. Perfection in terms of holiness and incarnational living simply means knowing what God expects of you and striving to reach the objectives and benchmarks that Christ has set for your life. Jesus instructed his followers in the same way; "If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:46-48). Paul even makes reference to being perfect, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor 13:11). Another version might say you should strive for full restoration, encourage one another, and live in peace with each other. As believers grow in faith, *restoration* begins to take form. Human beings were created in the image of God, but sin caused change or a breakdown, in need of repair and fragments gathered. Through confession of sin and

asking for forgiveness, Jesus restores individuals, and they begin to look more like he intended, like himself. Forgiveness is received, and Jesus shows the plans he has for everyone. “In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, Jesus will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. All power to him forever! Amen” (1 Pet 5:10). Restoration, when provided and received as intended, will then allow for proper *correction*.

Correction has a negative connotation whenever it is used. When a person falls or fails, the correct and most appreciated response would be to help that person up and get them back on course. This is essentially what is meant by correction. When humanity chose sin over the perfect life, God offered correction and restoration and a return to right standing. When Christian individuals make a wrong right, their course is back on target, and their journey continues as they strive to be like Christ. Just as sheep are in need of shepherd to offer guidance in their journey and destination, followers of Christ are in need correction when off course, or demonstrate an inability for care for ourselves or make right decisions to maintain the path Jesus has charted for our lives.

Christian education, either by preaching, teaching, or living the example, remains to be the task of making disciples. When making disciples, individual lives are transformed into something far different than previously observed. If Christians are to be *perfected in Christ*, meaning that salvation has produced holiness of heart and life, it's imperative to know and understand what that looks like and how that is developed. This holiness is an ongoing growth to be pure and live incarnational lives. That transformation

will be evident when shared with others.¹³ “So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ” (Col 1:28). A challenge in disciple-making is not only what those expectations are, but also the need to keep growing and learning.

Christian development involves spending time with other believers in fellowship, or *koinonia*.¹⁴ Koinonia is an interactive relationship between God and believers who are sharing new life through Christ. There is also a focus on what those in relationship have in common. Each individual has various gifts and talents and must use those together with others. It’s important to have unity among believers and to build relationships and teamwork toward a common goal in serving Christ and sharing his love with others. The key to *koinonia* is participation and it is Christ who connects all. Because of Christ’s work in our lives, behaviors will be changed when time is allotted for prayer, Bible study, and discipleship.

Christian education in the church has very little emphasis on prayer, discipleship, and how to make it relevant to today, or how to apply it to our everyday lives. As part of a fieldwork questionnaire to churches in the Newark, Ohio community, a fellow pastor posed the question: “Why are people leaving the church today?” Overwhelmingly, a majority of the answers was centered on three areas that included conflict, clichés, and gossip. Joseph Wood Krutch said this about the nature of humans: “Education is that

¹³ Michael R. Mitchell, *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples: World-class Christian Education in the church, School, and Home* (Bloomington, IL: Crossbooks, 2010), 249.

¹⁴ Bibledictionary.com, s.v. “Koinonia.”

which experience has shown will lead (the student) to a true understanding of his own nature, his own needs and his own wants.”¹⁵

Part of the issue with education on living a holy life in the church is related to self-centeredness of the church as indicated by “own nature, own needs and own wants.”

Jesus offers this teaching:

The most important commandment is this: “Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.” The second is equally important: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” No other commandment is greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31)

It is crucial for the church to love others. When love is shown, the church will serve others, thereby showing communities the love of Christ.

Church plants offer an example of a missional mindset where they link arms with the community before ever establishing any kind of worship opportunity. Time is spent getting to know their neighbors and building relationships. This is a model the established church could learn from in an attempt to link arms with the community and establish relationships. Len Sweet has written about the importance of spending time around the table where individuals share life and get to know one another. In a time and place where technology has taken precedence, there is more time spent with tablets, computers, and phones than that of sharing verbal communication and experiencing life together. Family meal time has transitioned from time around the table together to going through the drive-through on the way to the next event or place of entertainment.

¹⁵ <https://www.acsi.org/resources/cse/cse-magazine/the-significance-of-education-111>, accessed July 2, 2016.

Time around the table in the worship setting can be the corporate time of worship that is shared among believers. Table time can also be sharing a meal with a neighbor that may be waiting for someone to share life with and to hear about the kind of day that has taken place. The church must educate attendees on methods for reaching and loving those outside the church. Spending time around the table can lend itself to making disciples. Time spent at the table will allow for opportunities for discipleship and teaching believers what they believe and how to share those beliefs with others. This will impact how relationships may develop in communities. This teaching can be done inside the church or outside in the community. There are few churches that are teaching and educating doctrinal beliefs in a way in which it is easily understood and shared with those who do not know or understand said beliefs. Such teaching can be formal and in a classroom setting, or informal and in the community around the table with opportunities to practice relationship-building techniques while establishing a belief system that can be communicated clearly with someone who does not believe, or someone who has questions about faith and Christianity.

Decline in Christian Education that Fosters Spiritual Disciplines

In the previous chapter, we looked at discipleship and education and the need for educating believers. In previous years, education was a crucial role in establishing Sunday school as an opportunity to learn and share faith with others. Robert Raikes was a pioneer in establishing Sunday schools in England in the 1700's. He believed it was a great method to reach children living in poverty. He saw Sunday school as the instrument to assure religious literacy. Writing about Christian education Raikes journaled, "Theological education, like catechesis, concerns not merely ideas about religion; it is

also a formative discipline that includes touching hearts. Religious literacy, in the present context, entails religious ‘fluency,’ that is, the ability to communicate meaning as well as conceptual formulations. One's faith is not merely an insider's language for church folk.”

Sunday school programs have been instrumental in the education of Christians for centuries. Several trends, however, have impacted this process in recent years. Though families may drive to church together, when they arrive they are segregated into their age-appropriate rooms: children's Sunday school, youth ministry, or adult Sunday school classes. Once that hour has ended, adults and teens often come together for worship, and children will go to yet another room for Children's church. Class content has also been impacted. Some classes will study books of the Bible while others may participate in a topical study that uses scripture to support the topic.

In earlier years, Sunday school was the foundation for educating non-believers about salvation and how to live the Christian life. Conversations not possible in a corporate worship environment could be conducted in those small group settings. It was in those classes that Bible verses were memorized and the foundation was laid for living a holy life.

“Promoting appreciation for and knowledge of the Christian faith is a perennial evangelization task of the Church, enculturated in new ways in each new generation and environment.”¹⁶ This had been a function of the Sunday school. Thom Rainer writes “Virtually all of the higher-assimilation churches in our study used a comprehensive plan to teach the Bible to all age groups. For most of these churches, the denominational

¹⁶ Jeffrey Gros, “Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of Catholic Education* 6, no. 2 (2002), <http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce/vol6/iss2/9>.

Sunday School curriculum served this purpose well.”¹⁷ He further stated, “The new Christians who immediately became active in the Sunday school were five times more likely to remain in the church five years later. And those churches that were emphasizing evangelism through the Sunday school were most naturally seeing new Christians involved immediately in Sunday school.”¹⁸ He continued by saying “The research is clear if not overwhelming. Sunday school is the most effective assimilation methodology in evangelistic churches today. It is a place where teaching, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and evangelism can all take place. It is the place where relationships are formed and people become connected to the church.”¹⁹

Spiritual truths, biblical knowledge and understanding used to saturate the life of a believer so much that it was commonly shared and talked about in everyday life. Sunday school was a place where those truths were made known and the Word of God was studied weekly. It was also expected that the Word would be read throughout the week as well. Reading scripture and praying daily was an expectation of the Christian life. A study by the Barna group showed “In comparing a personal spiritual activity with participatory involvement, the study showed that two-thirds of church attenders (67%) said they had read the Bible outside of church in the last week – whether their church was a conventional or house church. Small group attenders were more likely to read the Bible

¹⁷ Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 42, 45, 47.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

personally (84%). Bible reading levels among church volunteers (77%) and Sunday school attenders (77%) were sandwiched between the other forms of group engagement.”²⁰ Younger generations seem willing to attend worship but not an educational class. Keeping updated on current trends in Christian education has been a challenge for the church. This most likely plays a role in the decreased interest of attending Sunday school, and instead, attending Sunday morning worship only. In those churches that no longer offer a Sunday school program there is often a focus on small group ministry and worship services.

Decline in Sunday school attendance could be attributed to many reasons: families no longer schedule activities around the church calendar; school events take place on Sundays; technology is rapidly changing; and Sunday schools have fallen behind in keeping up with the pace of change in what attracts people to educational classes early on a Sunday morning. The church is not engaging people in spiritual disciplines and Christian education. There are established scholars who have emphasized that spiritual formation is the key to Christian education. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) has defined spiritual formation as “the biblically guided process in which people are being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit within the faith community in order to love and serve God and others”.²¹ In a Wall Street Journal article by Charlotte Hays, she shares about the decline in Sunday school.

²⁰ "Who Is Active in 'Group' Expressions of Faith? Barna Study Examines Small Groups, Sunday School, and House Churches," Barna Group, accessed December 4, 2014, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/400-who-is-active-in-group-expressions-of-faith-barna-study-examines-small-groups-sunday-school-and-house-churches>.

²¹ <https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/vol10iss1/7ELJ-Teo.pdf>

She begins the article with an example from West Olive United Methodist Church in Bloomington, IL. When asking a veteran teacher why it had ended, her response was the competition with technology, including TVs and computers.

The decline in Sunday school attendance is further explained by the findings of a Barna Group study reported August 11, 2011. The following statistics were shared about those who claim to be Christian:

Five of the six religious behaviors tracked underwent statistically significant changes since 1991, and five of the seven belief measures also changed notably. The five transitions in religious behaviors included the following:

- Attendance at a church service in any given week has declined among self-identified Christians by nine percentage points since 1991. Now only a minority of this group – 47% – can be found in church events during a typical week.
- Adults from this segment are currently eight percentage points less likely to attend Sunday school in a typical week than was true twenty years ago. Less than one out of five (18%) now attend during a typical week.
- Whereas 30% of the self-identified Christians volunteered at a church during a typical week back in 1991, that figure has declined to 22% today.
- Bible reading dropped slightly over the last 20 years within this segment, going from 51% to 46%. This is another marker in which a majority of this group no longer participates.
- Those who embrace the label “Christian” for themselves are now ten percentage points more likely to be unchurched than was true in 1991. The 31% who fit this profile have not attended any church service during the past six months, excluding special services such as weddings or funerals.²²

The Barna Group report indicates that individuals are not attending Sunday school or worship services on a regular basis. It further documents that there are churches where no Sunday school program exists. There is a far greater attendance of onlookers outside the church from those who may not believe or have questions about Christianity than from those who fill the pews or seats each weekend in the local church building. In

²² Patheos, "Barna's Newest Study: Church Changing 6," Jesus Creed, August 17, 2011, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2011/08/17/barnas-newest-study-church-changing-6/>.

short, attendance in worship services and Sunday school is declining. Studies of attendance shown in the United States through research from the Pew Research Foundation shows that of those who attend an evangelical church: 58% at least once a week, 30% once or twice a month/a few times a year, and 12% seldom or never.²³ In today's culture, there are many outlets and activities where time can be invested, be it with family, friends, sporting events, co-workers or neighbors.

Another factor contributing to decreased church attendance has been the post-Christian culture; that is, Christianity was once a dominant religion, however, it is no longer. The belief system known as secularism has taken over. It communicates that faith, or religion should not influence government, public life or education. Secularism also advocates that what is morally right improves the material, social, and emotional health of humanity while what is morally wrong hinders human progress. If individuals are living morally right lives, the conclusion then is why bother with Sunday school or worship services?

God has established the church to be used as a vehicle to communicate love and hope into local communities. It is an opportunity to engage in relationships with others as well as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The church must find ways to engage neighbors and make the gospel tangible to everyone. Paul communicated to his understudy Timothy, "You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others." (2 Timothy 2:2) The intent was to develop a mentorship

²³ "Comparative Religions – U.S. Religious Landscape Study – Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life," accessed May 26, 2016, <http://religions.pewforum.org/comparisons>.

or discipling relationship or program in which consecutive generations passed the baton of education.

The Bible promotes a transmission of the faith as an area of responsibility and opportunity of older men and women to younger generations. Scott Thomas emphasizes this transmission in the book *Gospel Coach*. Thomas explains a need for church teachers to have a coach direct them as they grow and mature and to coach others. For Thomas, gospel coaching is:

a relationship- based process of communicating the message of the gospel from a coach to a disciple-leader projected through the three aspects of a person's life: the persona, spiritual, and missional. The outcome of this process is a Spirit-filled disciple who worships God with every area of his life, has his identity in Christ, is truly united in gospel community, and is on a mission to the people of all nations. And this happens through a shepherding process in which a person is known, fed, led, and protected by their gospel coach.²⁴

This coaching will result in effective discipleship and education in the church.

The need for purposeful Christian education is becoming increasingly apparent as the Boomer generation faces retirement and the Millennials assume forerunner positions. The local church can provide training for Millennials to gain necessary experience for guidance and living out discipleship in the church. The influence of a mentoring and coaching relationship between generations will be a catalyst for developing followers.

Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson say this about generational or secondary leadership:

The most valuable second chair leaders develop a deep-and-wide perspective that extends throughout the organization. They become knowledgeable of the key aspects of all ministry areas. They do so without being unduly intrusive and without damaging relationships with their peers. They seek this knowledge to improve the organization's overall effectiveness. In fact, their greatest

²⁴ Scott Thomas and Tom Wood, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 36-37.

contribution is in seeing the connections between silos and finding solutions that cross organizational boundaries.²⁵

Discipling or mentoring relationships between experienced believers and new believers can produce an ongoing cycle of developing new believers and seeing the decline in attendance witness a transformation. The new believers become experienced and take on other new believers and help them through the transformation of becoming effective disciples. This promotes disciples making disciples making disciples.

Decline in Missional Thinking that Comes with Incarnational Sense of Presence

In the previous section, decline in Sunday school attendance and necessary training were discussed as a problem churches face. There is a need for individuals to be trained and to understand what they are to teach others. This section will focus on teaching and missional attitudes with practical examples.

The first example is that of Jesus and his teaching of the disciples. Jesus employed an apprenticeship program with his disciples. Gary Moon describes this apprentice type teaching in his writings on learning to live like the master. The focus is upon doing life like the master and modeling after the example presented.²⁶ When Jesus taught, there were no classrooms, only dusty roads, hillsides, bodies of water, and public places. Jesus spent approximately three years developing the disciples from their initial calling to follow Jesus, to their commissioning and sending out to go and do likewise.

²⁵ Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson, *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dream* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2005), 1236-38, Kindle.

²⁶ Gary W. Moon, *Apprenticeship with Jesus: Learning to Live Like the Master* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 23-24.

The disciples were in close fellowship with Jesus and lived life together. This idea of apprenticeship is also shared by Robert Turner who compared the concept with that of developing house church directors. Turner found the model to be effective for matching up experienced leaders with emerging young leaders.²⁷

The invitation Jesus offers to “follow me” is unique to his nature and developing disciples. This development was not a “to do” list or tasks to accomplish. This relationship was focused on the growth of the person (disciples) through learning alongside Jesus. The disciples witnessed how he lived life. Through this apprenticing, Jesus mentored the disciples to carry on his mission after his ascension. Gene Wilkes captures the principle that this “mission continues when people are captured by it, equipped to do it, and “teamed” to carry it on.”²⁸ The process of apprenticeship is lengthy when considering the complexity of the task; however, it ultimately develops effective followers. Randy Reese and Robert Loane write “Discipleship and Christian leadership development are inextricably linked and together make a slow and deep work.”²⁹

The disciples were ordinary men that Jesus called from their daily tasks (Mark 1:14-19). This passage from Mark is found early in Jesus’ ministry. It is found after he faces a series of temptations in the wilderness. The disciples were inexperienced and Jesus’ teaching was new to them. Jesus uses a dialogical approach in teaching the disciples through parables, storytelling, and sharing truths of the kingdom. The teaching

²⁷ Robert Turner, “Leadership Development Process of Select House Church Networks in North America: A Multi-Case Study” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 133.

²⁸ Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay, 1998), 213.

²⁹ Randy D. Reese and Robert Loane, *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 222.

is interactive with supervision although the disciples are noteworthy in their own spiritual growth as Jesus assists them in unpacking this mission he has called the disciples to complete.³⁰ The text often referred to as the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 serves as a validation for the disciples in reaching a level of maturity in their coaching and mentoring relationship with Jesus. The disciples have been instructed, provided with accountability, and have been given the responsibility to go to the communities around them and share what they know. Jesus has ended his up-close and personal mentorship training and the disciples will continue to develop skills as the church grows in the book of Acts.

The mentioned biblical examples display a model for missional enlargement as those followers contribute to the growth of those being led as well as equipping them to teach others. There is no official manual that the experienced teacher uses to guide and equip the younger or less-experienced teacher, as a majority of learning happens from sharing life together. The same is true of pastoral ministry. An assistant pastor will learn more from being involved in ministry and working alongside other pastors. The same is true of lay pastors. Pastors and individuals must equip lay people similarly to how Jesus walked the disciples through the mentoring process and then sent the disciples out to carry on the mission. The church must be about the business of equipping others and sending them out with tools necessary for building relationships and armed with knowledge to share the gospel as the opportunities are presented.

³⁰ Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Servant Leader: Transforming Your Heart, Head, Hands, and Habits* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 69-80.

As pastors and others teach and equip, they must make connections with the audience. Grabbing the attention of your audience is imperative for effective teaching. Keeping your student's attention and engaging them in what is being presented is essential to learning. Bruce Wilkinson wrote the forward in the book *Teaching to Change Lives*. He believed that Professor Hendricks was a dynamic Bible teacher who taught to produce transformed lives. Professor Hendricks was known for caring for his students and ministering to them. Wilkinson shared the story of testing his professor by refusing to pay attention in class one day. From the start of class, he simply looked out the window. It didn't take long for Hendricks to notice Wilkinson wasn't paying attention. In a little over three minutes, he was distraught at his inattention. He ran down the aisle to Wilkinson and asked, "What on earth are you looking at?" "You see, Dr. Hendricks was so committed to seeing his students learn that it drove him to distraction and he was failing in that commitment."³¹ When teachers invest in students and are adamant to engage them in learning it motivates students to participate. It is then that effective teaching and learning takes place.

Wilkinson provides seven laws of the teacher that address education, activity, communication, the heart, encouragement, and readiness. The law of the teacher implies that without daily growth, teaching is ineffective. The law of education indicates that the way individuals learn determines how one teaches. The law of activity suggests that maximum learning results in maximum contribution. The law of communication denotes imparting information, and knowledge builds bridges to the unknown. The law of the

³¹ Howard G. Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1987), 12-13.

heart is not simply head knowledge, but heart knowledge. The law of encouragement refers to impactful teaching when a learner is driven. The law of readiness implies teachers and learners are appropriately equipped and prepared. Wilkinson provides these laws as “basic principles woven forever into the fabric of effective teaching. Whatever age group you teach, or whatever subject, or whatever cultural setting you’re involved in ... your understanding and application of these laws help you make a permanent difference in the lives of others.”³²

Effective teaching in ministry should equate to missional outreach. To be missional in ministry, one must be involved in the lives of others in their community on a practical level. It is crucial to establish relationships with those who do not attend church. Communicating and sharing life with those at work or in the grocery store or in the library makes for vital, missional connections. Processing and understanding what makes people tick, what motivates them on a regular basis, and how they live life daily will help to build bridges outside the walls of the church. Christians will need to develop the desire to do life with those around them in their community. Spiritual nourishment is what takes place inside the church, ministry is what happens outside of the church.

Lay people in the church must be equipped to share Jesus Christ with those that they do life with. In *Liberating the Laity*, R. Paul Stevens writes about a liberated layperson, Joseph Housepian. Joseph is a lay pastor, tent-maker-elder and business man. He owns and runs a small electronic equipment retail store which requires him to work

³² Ibid., 12-13, 179.

more than forty hours a week. Joseph says, “his store is his pulpit.”³³ He and his wife’s ministry cover more than thirty ethnic churches. When Joseph’s home church is in need of a pastor, Joseph will fill in covering a variety of responsibilities including preaching, visiting, and teaching.

Joseph experienced a significant time of spiritual growth when his home church was going through some difficult discussions on doctrinal issues. Rather than merely listening to others, Joseph and his wife read scripture for hours each day and studied and prayed until they were confident in what they believed to be truth. What seemed like a problem for the church became a growth spurt for Joseph and his wife. Joseph has been part of his church for twenty-four years and has seen many changes take place. Rather than leave during times of strife, Joseph grew through those times. Joseph makes this statement, “they learned how to care for people in Christ, how to nurture people, and how to open up his home and use it for ministry.”³⁴ Joseph demonstrated the importance of knowing the Word and imitating God in the hope that those he was influencing would live a life of love, walk in the light given them, use wisdom, and be submissive to the truth.

The idea of imitating God is discussed in Michael Mitchell’s book, *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples*. He identifies four directives that capture the process of imitating God from Ephesians chapter 5:

1. A Life of Love (vv 1-7)

³³ Paul R. Stevens, *Liberating the Laity: Equipping All the Saints for Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 165.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 167-68.

2. A Life of Light (vv. 8-14)
3. A Life of Wisdom (vv.15-20)
4. A Life of Submission (vv.21-6:9) ³⁵

The above-mentioned changes that take place when a believer grows and matures are only possible when the Holy Spirit is at work in a person's life and said person is also obedient to the direction of the Holy Spirit. There is no real "program" that helps to discern the moving of the Holy Spirit but an environment can be created to facilitate responses to the Holy Spirit. "Jesus... grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and people." (Luke 2:52) Jesus demonstrated dependence on the Father (John 5:19) and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 10:28) Karl Barth in his writings, *"The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life,"* makes this statement about the Holy Spirit: "Christian life is born out of the Holy Spirit as a new life in hope. Having been hidden with Christ in God the human always has a Conscience leading him into all truth, and because in freedom he is bound always in gratitude to God, he prays and always is heard while he prays."³⁶

³⁵ Michael R. Mitchell, *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples: World-class Christian Education in the Church, School, and Home* (Bloomington, IL: Crossbooks, 2010), 251.

³⁶ Karl Barth, "The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life," Translated and Annotated by Michael Raeburn, accessed December 23, 2017, <http://people.duke.edu/~mr33/Barth%20Holy%20Spirit.pdf>.

SECTION TWO:

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Loving people, caring for people, and being open to minister to people where they live provides the opportunity to build relationships and bridges with those who may not know that Jesus Christ loves them. It is vital to establish relationships, do life together, and trust that God will open the doors for individuals to share the love of Christ with those who need to hear. The responsibility of the Christian is to walk through the open doors provided. If Followers simply shared what God is doing in their lives, they may find that there are those who are just waiting to hear. If followers look for Christ at work in the lives of people and point that out, there is opportunity for Christ to grow a relationship with that person.

There is a desperate need for the church to engage community, to serve others, and to cease from being so inward focused. There are needs all around, and it is time for the church to rise up and begin serving those in need and thus end this season of being selfish. If the church will teach believers, believers will then teach unbelievers by the way they live life in practical examples. To engage community there is often a need for attraction or appeal to peak an interest in others to lay a foundation for relationships to begin. Over the years, many have tried to solve this same problem. They have seen the issue, but their attempts to solve it have mostly failed. Below are four primary areas of research that have served as band aids in an attempt to solve relational issues.

Attractional Ministry

Attractional Ministry was characterized by its attempts to attract people from the community into the church through church based programs and top notch presentations on Sunday mornings. Attractional ministry is not incarnational living, but rather copying what others do. Focus is placed on events as a drawing force instead of sharing life stories of transfiguration, or establishing a relationship with Jesus. The attraction was the church and not the relationship with Jesus. While attractional churches would advocate their pursuing the mission of loving others in the world, their ministries had a focus on those inside the walls of the church.¹ Three remarkable characteristics of attractional ministry include: 1) an obvious focus on those outside the church to encourage newcomers to the church, 2) cultural relevance to communicate effectively, and 3) the sending out of members using gift-based ministry.²

Hugh Halter and Matt Smay have characterized the attractional ministry as a secure environment where its members are nurtured and growing in their faith with an emphasis on public worship. While their main concern is with ministry that happens within the church, they are giving to and involved in missions as well. Attractional ministry has a large percentage of children being converted over adults. This would also

¹ Aaron L. Graham, "The Leadership Dynamics of Growing a Missional Church in the City: The District Church, Washington, D.C." (D.Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2013), 23-24.

² Rob Wegner and Jack Magruder, *Missional Moves: 15 Tectonic Shifts that Transform Churches, Communities, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Kindle, From Missional Outpost to Mega Church, 80-81.

be reflective of the evangelical, Pentecostal, or mainline churches.³ Attractional ministry has failed because it draws people into the building called church, rather than moving out of doors to live incarnational lives and be the church.

Individuals across the United States seem weary of opposing sides that plague our world, religion, and communities today (i.e., right wing/left wing, conservative/liberal, believers/unbeliever). They have observed both religious and secular organizations miss the mark and fall hard. And yet, as disheartened as people seem to be with “the way it is has always been done,” many seem to be searching for significance of life as they live in a multicultural world afflicted with fear, hatred, uncertainty, violence, and terrorism.⁴ Marcus Borg believes that the philosophy of the existing church, what he calls the “Belief-Centered Paradigm,” must be modified so that the disillusioned may once again embrace Christianity.⁵ Borg advocates for an alternate “Transformed-Centered Paradigm.” This shift recognizes that being a Christian is not a set of doctrinal beliefs, but rather a relationship with God through Jesus Christ; a relationship that transforms as the experience of the journey unfolds with him.⁶ The journey with God becomes part of an individual’s life story.

³ Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), Kindle Chapter 4 (Section paraphrased).

⁴ Edward H. Hammett and James R. Pierce, *Reaching People under 40 While Keeping People over 60: Being Church for All Generations* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), xii.

⁵ Marcus Borg, *The Emerging Way: Thoughts, Stories, and Wisdom for a Faith of Transformation*, ed. Michael Schwartztruber (British Columbia: Copperhouse, 2006), 12.

⁶ Ibid., 18.

Stanley Hauerwas declares we are a “storied” people because God who sustains us is a “storied” God.⁷ Those who follow Christ have been shaped by story. Jesus has provided the story that offers the means and motivation to negotiate this imperfect existence, as trust in God’s promises offer much-needed redemption.⁸ Perhaps as the church starts to rightly honor God and live out his story rather than following a set of rules and regulations, not only will there be spiritual growth, but the Kingdom of God will grow as God’s children engage others by telling their stories and sharing the God-story. Romans 8:14-16, says “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, ‘Abba, Father.’ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children” (NLT). As children of God, he offers an intimate relationship and a profound connection through his Son, Jesus Christ. This relationship develops with God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit. As the relationship grows it expands and flourishes and this personal journey touches the lives of others. All who become Christ-followers are beckoned to this quest and where this relationship with God is flourishing, disciples are being formed, and followers are placing others before themselves. While God certainly loves everyone, he also has provided humanity with a free choice to participate in this relationship. If the choice is to turn from God, there is a missing out on true joy and

⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 91.

⁸ Ibid., 10.

fulfillment offered through this relationship. There is no transfiguration into the men and women of God he intended. There will be no spiritual formation take place.

Those who choose this adventure are called disciples.

In first century Palestine, the word *disciple* had a different meaning than what is known today. It did not imply a student in a school setting with books and workbooks instructed by a licensed teacher. Instead, it meant apprentice. A disciple was one who learned a skill or trade from a teacher. With respect to Jesus, a *disciple* was a follower – not just of a set of teachings, but an entire way of living.⁹

Followers of Christ (disciples), are invited to learn his way of living and join him as others are introduced and invited to live this “way.” As followers join Jesus in this whirlwind of life and follow his “way,” a host of new followers will join, deep relationships will be established, and followers will invest in each other’s lives as they become aligned with Christ and become one with God.¹⁰

Being a disciple mirrors a close relationship with God. However, this spiritual journey was not meant to be experienced and traveled alone. As followers journey together there is a becoming of “one body” in Jesus Christ. When individual stories become Jesus’ story, disciples are made and “baptized in the Spirit with grace of his resurrection life.”¹¹ When followers or disciples are formed, there is a new sense of understanding that our story becomes God’s story, and God’s story becomes our story. Lives are transfigured through this journey with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

⁹ Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus: A Theography* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 130.

¹⁰ Leonard Sweet, *I Am A Follower: The Way, The Truth, and Life of Following Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 361, Kindle.

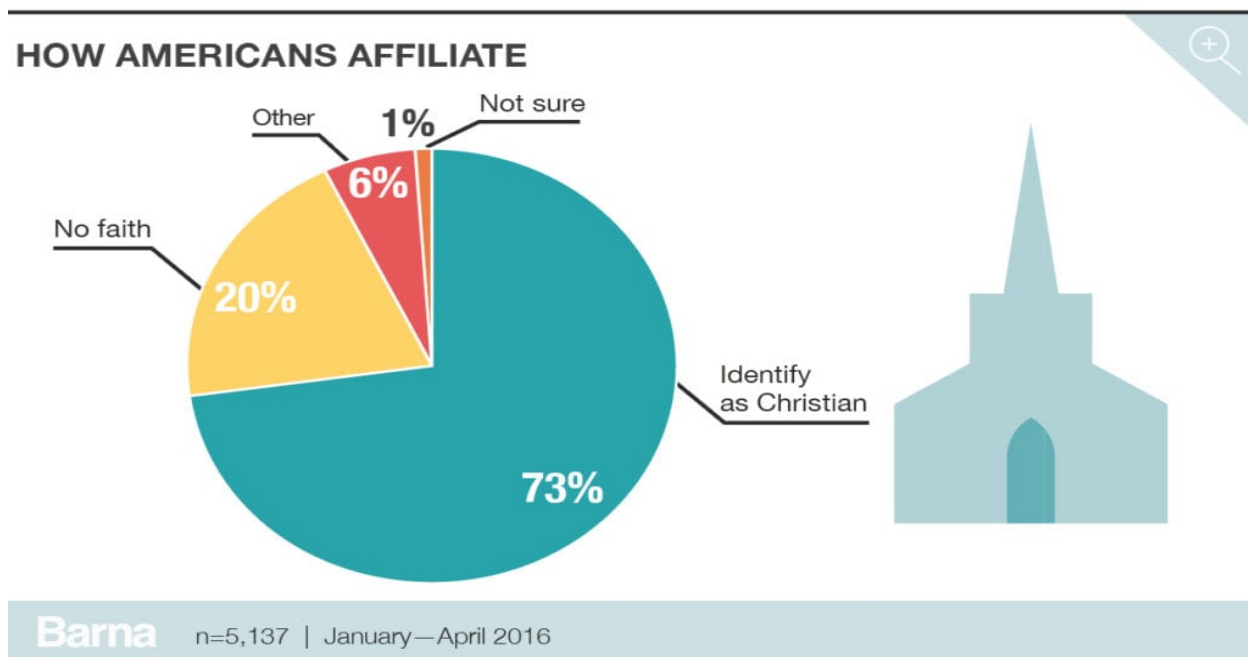
¹¹ *Ibid.*, 378, Kindle.

that cannot be kept silent. Lives begin to change, actions change, attitudes change, thinking changes, and evidence begins to reveal the God at work within each transformed life. As growth occurs, others will take notice and question what is taking place. When such changes are noticed, it will create new opportunities to “make disciples” and to share our story with God’s story. This will be demonstrated through true discipleship and result in the open mentoring of these new believers as they become committed followers of Christ, as well. God’s story and a disciple’s story is a transfigured life. “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (John 12:32).

Establishment Based on Connection Groups

Connection groups or small group ministry has failed in America in part because such groups are trying to establish themselves around the existing church. There is a focus on people meeting at the building called the church. Small groups have become just another ministry branch of the church. The focus has been for those who already claim Christianity. There have been debates for at least the past 25 years over the United States being a Christian Nation. The majority of individuals in the United States would claim they are Christian. According to a Barna study, “almost three-quarters of Americans (73%) say they are a Christian, while only one-fifth (20%) claim no faith at all (that includes atheists and agnostics). A fraction (6%) identifies with faiths like Islam, Buddhism, Judaism or Hinduism, and one percent is unsure. Not only do most Americans

identify as Christian, but a similar percentage (73%) also agree that religious faith is very important in their life (52% strongly agree + 21% somewhat agree).”¹²



Connect groups are often made up of these individuals who claim to be Christian. In larger church settings, it can be difficult to get down to more personal and meaningful contact. As a result, “one another” ministry, then, takes place in small groups. Gathering with the same people week in and week out means relationships are established and deepened more quickly. There is space and context for insights to be shared, and for life’s problems and difficulties to be addressed in an unhurried manner. It can be easy for a connect group to become the main focus of its members’ spiritual lives. In effect, the group can become the church. Because these connect groups become so inwardly focused, it offers no room for reaching out to those who need to hear the gospel.

¹² Barna Group. “The State of the Church 2016,” Barna Group, September 15, 2016, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016>

David Platt describes this mindset and gracefully restates the teachings of Jesus. He says, “We have settled into a status quo where we’re content to sit idly by while literally billions of people die without ever hearing the gospel. Surely this is the greatest social injustice in the entire world, over and above all the other issues we have considered”¹³ The church is great at providing for those they know and those who are regular attenders of worship. Churches are guilty of developing close groups of people that often restrict new members from engaging. There is often an unspoken expectancy of like-mindedness. Connect groups leave no room for including guests who may attend our worship services.

Despite how well a church’s programming and use of the latest materials, the ultimate goal is connecting people to meaningful and real relationships. Connecting with new attendees and new converts must be intentional and others driven rather than program driven. Programs, processes, and procedures come and go, but the basic need within every person for meaningful relationships will always remain because God designed each person for relationships.

Small group ministry fails because of lack of ministerial involvement and organization. Small group ministry is often seen as an opportunity for lay people to get involved in facilitating. Whereas, the more involvement the ministerial team has with small groups, the more likely it is to be successful. Small groups require personal

¹³ David Platt, *Counter Culture: A Compassionate Call in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Abortion, Persecution, Orphans and Pornography* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale), 247.

knowledge, experience, organizational skills, hospitality, and genuine interest in establishing relationships with others.

Small group ministry fails because there is no knowledge of the needs of the community. There is an inward focus developed rather than an attitude of equipping to send out to the community to live as Jesus. The needs of the community must be assessed if a small group is interested in reaching non-Christians to be a part of the small group. Every community has hurting people who need to know who Christ is, but will need to establish relationships with others first and develop a connection and trust to share life with each other. Today's society demands ingenuity in reaching hurting people and attempting to meet their needs.

Small group ministry fails because of lack of training. Effective ministry requires trained followers. Small group facilitators must commit to a training program which is essential to effective, dynamic, and growing groups with a purpose to send others out. Goals must be established and a vision set forth with complete understanding of desired outcomes.

Small group ministry fails because people do not pray. Facilitators and attendees alike must spend 50-75% of their time praying. Reliance on human effort is a recipe for failure, however, when an individual relies on God and his power, the possibilities are endless.

Rick Howerton, currently serves as Small Group and Discipleship Specialist at LifeWay Church Resources and is author of *A Different Kind of Tribe, Destination Community*, and *Small Group Life Ministry Manual*. Rick is a consultant in small group ministry, and shares four reasons small groups fail:

- “They don't have a leader who can move the group toward a common vision.
- They ignore having a written covenant.
- They don't really have discussion about the Bible; they just have discussion.
- They don't pray.”¹⁴

Effective teachers help to cast vision and propel a group towards reaching established goals and vision while using spiritual gifts, disciplines or relational practices along the journey. Effective facilitators must delegate responsibly and empower others in sending out and disciple making. A group covenant is declaring commitment. A covenant can be used to identify boundaries, maintain confidentiality, manage personalities within the group and keep communication flowing within the group.

Time is the most precious gift that is taken for granted. To effectively connect and develop community with others, availability is required. In this fast-paced mobile culture, time and space to run into someone is nearly lost. The few moments of free time are spent with technology rather than face-to-face contact. Availability to connect is limited to what the day planner or phone calendar indicates. Family meals together are nearly lost or perhaps need scheduled a month or so in advance. Common meals are nearly unheard of in the current culture. How many families today actually sit at a table and share a meal together? Frequency of community contact is limited by countless other commitments such as school or work. Geography and living close to others also influence community.¹⁵

¹⁴ Right Now Team, “4 Reasons Small Groups Fail,” Right Now Media, accessed April 9, 2019, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Training/Post/Preview/157058>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Generations play a role in establishing connections. When individuals and generations are understood, there are increased opportunities to connect. Hayley Peterson provides the following information concerning Generation Z:

- Gen Z wants to change the world...
- Advanced college degrees are less important to them...
- They are more entrepreneurial than millennials...
- They are digitally over-connected...
- They prefer to work independently...
- They prefer home-cooked foods over processed, ready-to-eat meals such as cold cereal, according to a study by The NPD Group...
- Gen Z-ers spend more money on food and drinks than anything else, and their favorite eatery is Starbucks, according to Piper Jaffray's most recent semiannual survey of teens...
- They are less active...
- They lack brand loyalty...
- Gen Z-ers are close with their families...
- They communicate with speed and often use emoticons and emojis instead of words..."¹⁶

The following is an example of a successful establishment of small group ministry. Pastor David Yonggi Cho of Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea, pastors the largest church in

¹⁶ Haley Peterson, "GENERATIONS & Millennials Are Old News — Here's Everything You Should Know About Generation Z," *Business Insider Magazine*, June 25, 2014, <https://churchhealthwiki.wordpress.com/2014/06/26/generations-millennials-are-old-news-heres-everything-you-should-know-about-generation-z/>.

the world in the Korea. His church was built on the establishment of cell groups (small groups). There was no existing traditional church in place. The perception of church in Korea is centered on people gathering together. In America, small groups have often failed because of the structure of the church and emphasis on the building. Small groups in America are often seen as another ministry tacked on to growing list of ministry opportunities a church offers its attenders. In Korea, where small groups are thriving, the small groups are central to everything else they do. As a result, the methods used here in America set the church up for failure in establishing effective, maturing small groups.

Small group connection beyond the walls cultivates relationships that afford sharing life together with others. Time is needed to foster such relationships. Jesus spent time investing in the lives of those around him. Humanity was created for such relationships. It is the responsibility of every follower to develop relationships in an attempt to live an incarnational life with someone who might not know Jesus. Every believer has a story to tell of how Jesus transformed their life.

Vocational Strategies

The pastor is responsible for establishing spiritual disciplines for the congregation as they engage in a relationship with Jesus. Followers are dependent on the Sunday morning sermon to meet their spiritual needs without any regard for personal reasonability in developing an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Attending church once a week will allow a person to maintain spirituality and growth. The pastor receives a paycheck for teaching his congregation how to become Christians and prepare for eternity. A prime example of failure in vocational pitfalls and vulnerability in ministry lies in the expectations of followers. A couple generations ago, pastors viewed their

vocation as a sacred position designed predominantly for being a model to an assigned congregation, which inferred that personal struggles and human frailties and weakness remain hidden in an attempt to be a blameless example. Often this philosophy included the pastor's clothing, which might require a suit and tie, robe, or a clerical collar. This was an outward display of the vocations set-apartness. In its worst description the pastor or teacher might be viewed as a "super Christian" which may have been the mask to conceal the reality of brokenness, hypocritical smiles, sin, loneliness, depression or failures as a result of the pastors inability to seek wise counsel or external help with life issues. The pastors house and life was surrounded by impenetrable walls, where the infirmities common to all of humanity remained absent from the public eye, so as to not ruin the image of spiritual head.

More recent spiritual mentorship has displayed nearly an opposite role as described above. Today's followers and pastors have swung the pendulum to the side of being more authentic and real. Pastors are more open to show themselves as just common people with the same life struggles as everyone else. There is a push to be more transparent and thus developing real relationships with those being led. This approach has some healthy aspects in that it squelches the whole pastor vs laity concepts which were more cultural in history than biblical. This openness provides a pathway of hope for the pastor who may have felt the only way forward was to keep hidden areas of failure or weakness. Demonstrating an appropriate balance of vulnerability and wise spiritual guidance will aid in developing appropriate vulnerability and authentic relationships that will last. There will be times in ministry when vulnerability must remain hidden to maintain healthy authority. Some level of hidden vulnerability will be required for the

benefit of others. Andy Crouch writes, “Transformational leadership helps people see and address real vulnerability. But teachers exist to match that vulnerability, as much as possible, with commensurate authority. So our job is often to increase others’ authority while gradually, in a measured and intentional way, alerting them to vulnerabilities (including our own limitations, foibles, and blindness). In the meantime, we must bear vulnerability that others cannot see, and sometimes will never see. Hidden vulnerability is the price of leadership.”¹⁷

Vocational ministry failures can be observed in many forms. One may often read of moral failures, addictions, misuse of finances, and even abuse. Failure in ministry can be the perception of lack of growth that causes pastors to feel as though they have failed. What is haunting about such failures is the lingering presence or reminder no matter what you do to escape it and move forward. What takes place is listening to the voice of the enemy rather than the Holy Spirit. The enemy will wave a follower’s shortcomings in their face and remind them of their failures. Focus is taken off what Christ can do, and placed inwardly on man’s ability. Pastors have been known to exchange God’s truth for a lie when giving in to past failures and allowing them to have control. Failure occurs when followers adhere to all that lies behind. Followers disobey God when they describe themselves by failure and refuse to press forward. It goes without saying that our awareness of success and failure in ministry is defective. Failure and success is often measured by what one did or did not accomplish and who recognizes the accomplishment

¹⁷ Andy Crouch, *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk and True Flourishing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016).

or lack thereof. Success is not always measured by faithfulness to the task, but rather desired outcomes either by oneself, peers or others.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians about dealing with past failures in Philippians 3:12-16: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only hold true to what we have attained.” Paul is saying by the power of the Holy Spirit, let your focus be on what God called you to do.

The church has failed in expecting pastors to perform all duties throughout ministry. There are times when churches will place individuals in up front positions without them having proper knowledge, skill set or training for tasks assigned. Training lay people is crucial in avoiding vocational pitfalls. John Maxwell spoke of the example of Jesus and his inner circle and the necessity of having strong management around you. Maxwell states, “You see, every leader’s potential is determined by the people closest to him. If those people are strong, then the leader can make a huge impact. If they are weak, he can’t.”¹⁸ It would be beneficial for the pastor to administer an assessment of skills and gifts in an attempt to place person in the right place for the right position.

¹⁸ John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2007), 110.

An entry point to a relationship can easily be made through storytelling. When meeting neighbors, sharing a light-hearted, personal life story is a way of making an initial connection. Other methods to make an initial connection include: performing a random or on purpose act of kindness; giving to others when they least expect it (this can have a long term impact on establishing and maintaining relationships and showing love, care and concern to others); and being in the community and knowing the environment and culture. The more familiar a person is with surroundings, the more available to answers questions that may arise, and further establish connections and relationships. Be prepared and willing to answer questions from others, and if the answer is unknown, research it and find the answer. Be willing to share an answer to prayer as a way of connecting with others. It allows for vulnerability and honesty and may open the door for a request or story to be shared. The more that individuals share, the more possibilities there for relationships and connections to be made with others.

Every Christian is responsible to be in relationships with people outside the church. Scripture indicates that Christians are to be in the world; however, our actions and choices must be different than those in the world and must reflect the characteristics of Christ. Paul writes,

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12: 1-2)

To be in the world and not of it means that Christians need to be practical and share life and stories with those in their communities. This may allow the opportunity to show others that while life is lived together in a community; there is a difference, and the

responsibility to be light in the dark lives that might be encountered. Being in the world also means that God's creation is to be loved and enjoyed without being immersed in world values or running after worldly pleasures. If Christians are to evangelize, they must know the environment and culture that surrounds them. Ed Stetzer writes, "Culturally appropriate evangelism answers the actual questions being asked by a given culture rather than those questions the church believes the culture should ask."¹⁹ The world will always have questions for Christians, and it is imperative that Christians know how to respond. Peter states "if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way" (1 Peter 3: 15-16). Being prepared to provide an answer means being aware of what the potential questions could be.

When individuals make a commitment to become Christians, they may not have all the answers to how this vocation is to be experienced. This new purpose and function comes with expectations. Jesus commanded in Matthew, "you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments" (Matthew 22: 37-40). Christians are instructed to read the Word of God as a spiritual discipline to help teach others. Paul instructs Timothy to know what he teaches and how he lives to understand his purpose in life. Paul places emphasis on knowing the Word of God; "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach what is true and to make followers realize what is wrong in their lives. It offers correction when wrong and teaches

¹⁹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 26.

what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work” (2 Timothy 3: 16-17). Christ set an example for his followers by be-friending those who were different, and eventually he shared with those individuals who he was. He became vulnerable knowing that some would reject him and not believe him.

Traditional Evangelism

Our present culture is successful at small talk and casual conversation. Most of the American culture likes to be friendly, however, that does not translate into establishing friendships or relationships. To move past this superficial level of conversation, time must be invested and interest developed in connecting with other individuals. The same is true when attempting to share your faith with others. There has been a decline in overall evangelism in our nation. I’m reminded of Paul’s writing in Acts about how believers formed a community.

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Jesus provided the ultimate example of evangelism. Len Sweet defines evangelism as nudging people into God’s presence. “Evangelism is awakening each other to the God who is already there. Evangelism is nudging people to pay attention to the

mission of God in their lives and to the necessity of responding to that initiative in ways that birth new realities and the new birth.”²⁰

Evangelism should involve calling individuals to repentance and to follow Christ, by hearing and responding to the message of the gospel. Methods of evangelism have changed over time. Several decades ago many people came to Christ while listening to great radio preachers. For that era, radio evangelism was significant and cutting edge. Radio was also a source of hearing news and entertainment for that period of time. Today, the radio would not be an effective means of evangelism, although there are some churches that produce their Sunday morning message live on the radio.

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, bus ministry was a method and tool for evangelism. I had neighbors who would ride the church bus to church because their parents wouldn’t take them. Those children were offered challenging lessons about the gospel and for a childhood friend of mine, she shared Jesus with her parents who eventually took her church themselves and their whole household was saved.

Evangelistic crusades were another method of sharing the gospel in large gatherings. They often met in a stadium or arena where people could bring their friends to hear the good news of the Gospel. Billy Graham was a well-known name among evangelist who held crusades where thousands of people were presented with the gospel message. The largest Graham crusade in the world was in Seoul, Korea, in 1973 with more than one million people in attendance. Presently, meeting-based evangelism has declined in frequency and some debate effectiveness. Crusade evangelism has not

²⁰ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge, Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David. C. Cook, 2010), 28.

completely ended if God has gifted someone as an evangelist to equip God's people for works of ministry to the building up of the body of Christ. With the passing of Billy Graham, this method may soon cease to exist. Billy Graham's son Franklin and others can still offer evangelistic messages and people will come to hear the truth of the Gospel and many will respond and lives will be changed. According to Ed Stetzer, "The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association itself has concluded that home-based evangelism is the next method of evangelism that God is using in our society. In what may have been Billy Graham's last great opportunity to share the Gospel on a national stage, they put together the My Hope America evangelistic campaign to get the message of the gospel into as many homes as possible."²¹

The church today is not seeing numbers added daily to those being saved. Tom Rainer conducted an informal survey asking the question, "Why do you think many churches aren't as evangelistic as they once were?" Here is a list of the top fifteen in order of frequency:

- 1) Christians have no sense of urgency to reach lost people
- 2) Many Christians and church members do not befriend and spend time with lost persons
- 3) Many Christians and church members are lazy and apathetic
- 4) We are more known for what we are against than what we are for

²¹ Ed Stetzer, "Evangelism Never Changes, But the Methods Do," Christianity Today, February 6, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/february/evangelism-never-changes-but-never-stays-same.html>

- 5) Our churches have an ineffective evangelistic strategy of “you come” rather than “we go.”
- 6) Many church members think that evangelism is the role of the pastor and paid staff
- 7) Church membership today is more about getting my needs met rather than reaching the lost
- 8) Church members are in a retreat mode as culture becomes more worldly and unbiblical
- 9) Many church members don’t really believe that Christ is the only way of salvation
- 10) Our churches are no longer houses of prayer equipped to reach the lost
- 11) Churches have lost their focus on making disciples who will thus be equipped and motivated to reach the lost
- 12) Christians do not want to share the truth of the gospel for fear they will offend others. Political correctness is too commonplace even among Christians
- 13) Most churches have unregenerate members who have not received Christ themselves
- 14) Some churches have theological systems that do not encourage evangelism
- 15) Our churches have too many activities; they are too busy to do the things that really matter²²

²² Thom Rainer, “Fifteen Reasons Our Churches Are Less Evangelistic Today,” Thom Rainer, February 23, 2015, <http://thomrainer.com/2015/02/fifteen-reasons-churches-less-evangelistic-today>.

Jesus in his ministry modeled for humankind the significance of building relationships with others. Whenever Jesus interacted with others, ministered to others, or responded to the needs of thousands of people, he invested large amounts of time and energy into creating relationships that included spiritual formation and preparation for the ongoing ministry to take place through his disciples. Those friendships and relationships Jesus created were real and genuine.

When be-friending others, it is important to be authentic. The words chosen are crucial for communicating and either add power to what is being said, or those words may fall on deaf ears. Learning takes place in everyday life. Education, though not always formal, is necessary for human growth and development. The church has not always been effective in communicating the need for life-long learning. This culture is influenced by the ability to persuade people and sustain communities. Paul writes,

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. (Ephesians 4: 11-13)

God created everyone for a mission, to be in relationship with him, and to ultimately bring glory to Himself.²³ In order to fulfill that mission followers must be taught what that relationship might look like and how to accomplish such a task. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to show offer a glimpse of how that is accomplished. Questions arise among skeptics and scholars alike about why Jesus Christ would leave the splendor

²³ Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful* (Downers Grove, IL IVP Academic 2009), 20.

of Heaven and the untainted relationship with the Father and Holy Spirit to experience life on earth with humanity, therefore, Christians need to understand and educate others of the basics of the Christian life and why Jesus came to earth. John Leith expressed Karl Barth's observation of the need to proclaim the gospel. "Karl Barth rightly observed, I think, that Christian believers do not face today any temptations to doubt or unbelief that they have not always faced. The peculiarities of our age ought not to be an excuse for our failures to proclaim the gospel as Christians have believed and confessed it through the centuries."²⁴

Gary A. Parrot and S. Steve Kang share some thoughts about why Jesus came to earth. Here are some pieces to the puzzle:

- "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk. 10:45)
- "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Lk. 19:10)
- "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (Jn. 3:16)
- "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (Jn. 10:10)
- "For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." (Jn. 18:37)
- "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." (Gal. 4:4-5)

²⁴ John H. Leith, *Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 42.

- “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.” (1Tim. 1:15)
- “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Heb. 2: 14-15)
- “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1 Jn. 3:8)²⁵

Goals and objectives must be set for equipping laity through Christian education so that disciples make other disciples.

Christian education, either by preaching or teaching remains the task of making disciples. When making disciples, individual lives are transformed into something far different than they have been previously. If Christians are to be *perfected in Christ*, it’s imperative to know and understand what that looks like and how that is developed. That transformation should be evident and shared with others.²⁶ Paul shares with the church that God has given believers a responsibility to serve the church by sharing the gospel message. “So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ” (Colossians 1:28). A challenge in disciple-making is not only what

²⁵ Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

²⁶ Ibid., 249.

those expectations and responsibilities are, but also the need to keep growing and learning.

Christian development and formation involves spending time with other believers in koinonia or fellowship. Each individual has various gifts and talents and must use them when spending time with other people. It's important to have unity among believers and build relationships and teamwork toward a common goal in serving Christ and sharing His love with others. It is vital for believers to change behaviors and current lifestyles. In a journal article about Christian education, J. Gros writes "Theological education, like catechesis, concerns not merely ideas about religion; it is also a formative discipline that includes touching hearts. Religious literacy, in the present context, entails religious 'fluency,' that is, the ability to communicate meaning as well as conceptual formulations. One's faith is not merely an insider's language for church folk."²⁷ Promoting appreciation for and knowledge of the Christian faith is a perennial evangelization task of the Church, enculturated in new ways in each new generation and environment. Thom Rainer writes "Virtually all of the higher-assimilation churches in our study used a comprehensive plan to teach the Bible to all age groups. For most of these churches, the denominational Sunday School curriculum served this purpose well."²⁸ He communicates further that individuals who become involved in Sunday school tend to stick around and remain active in the church. Small groups can offer education or teaching, discipleship, fellowship and evangelism. It is the place where relationships are formed and people

²⁷ Jeffrey Gros, *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 6, no. 2 (December 2002): 259-276.

²⁸ Thom Rainer, *High Expectations; The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 42,45, 47.

become connected to the church. Other priorities have taken the place of Sunday school. Students don't attend and teachers don't teach. Today, America allows slightly more than an hour for worship on Sunday mornings, and if it goes beyond that time frame, attention seems lost.

Effective teaching in ministry should result in missional outreach. To be missional in ministry, one must be involved in the lives of others in their community on a practical level. Communicating and sharing life with those at work, in the grocery store, or the library makes for vital connections to become missional. Processing and understanding what makes people tick, what motivates them on a regular basis, and how they live life daily will help to build bridges outside the walls of the church. It's crucial to establish relationships with those who don't attend church. Christians will need to develop the desire to do life with those around them in their community. Spiritual nourishment is what takes place inside the church, ministry is what happens on the outside of the church.

Doing life with others is the key to evangelism and establishing relationships. Jesus revealed God's design for all through his ministry. Hospitality is a must. Len Sweet says this about what Christianity is really about: "The debate about whether Christianity is about beliefs, behavior, or being is more about us than about God. Christianity is about a design for living as authentic human beings: a trialectical process of missionalizing, relationalizing, and incarnationalizing your life and community."²⁹ Increasingly, the most strategic ground on which to engage unbelievers with the good news of Jesus may be their very own homes. People no longer gather in droves for stadium crusades, and other

²⁹ Leonard Sweet, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cooke, 2009), 28.

do not wait long enough on the sidewalk to hear your gospel message, so what will you do? Where will you interact with them about what matters most in your life?

Invite them to coffee or for dinner. “Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.” (1 Peter 4:8-10)

Investing in others and time shared together deepens relationships. Share a coffee, or a meal and do life together. Len Sweet said, “If we were to make the table the most sacred object of furniture in every home, in every church, in every community, our faith would quickly regain its power, and our world would quickly become a better place. The table is the place where identity is born—the place where the story of our lives is retold, re-minded, and relived.”³⁰ Followers should be challenged to make an impression on everyone they meet and nudge them toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. To accomplish such a task, one must be silent at times and listen and look for where God is already working and join him in the work he has begun. As followers of Christ, there is a responsibility to go where God is. Followers must allow him to use them so that others might encounter him as well.

³⁰ Leonard Sweet, *From Tablet to Table: Where Community Is Found and Identity is Formed* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 2.

SECTION THREE:
THE THESIS:
EQUIPPING FOLLOWERS TO ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY

This dissertation addresses the equipping of lay people to engage relationally and see the work God is doing, showing others where God is at work in their lives while getting to know their neighborhood. Spiritual disciplines are needed to hear and see God at work in the lives of people. Discipleship needs to change to establish spiritual disciplines that foster incarnational living and adopt nudge evangelism. A training manual (Artifact) will be created to be used with groups of twenty or less persons to assist them in establishing spiritual disciplines and a missional focus. The training manual will uncover the areas of disciplines that can become tools for incarnational living and used to reach and minister in their local communities. It will also explore how spiritual disciplines form relational living.

The church today looks like a place where people can come and socialize and be encouraged and leave feeling better. Those problems raise the question, “How does the church reach outside into local neighborhoods and establish relationships and relevant ministry opportunities?” Len Sweet articulated in his writing of “So Beautiful” the blueprint for how the church operates. “The biblical operating system, or the divine design for life and the church, and how God intends for us to live and move and have our being is stated most classically in “go into all the world”—that’s the missional part; and “make

disciples of Jesus Christ”—that’s the relational part; and bringing all cultures into this relationship—that’s the incarnational part.”¹

In scripture, Jesus provided the example of initiating relationships with humanity. From the beginning of creation, God created man and saw the need for a helpmate for him, so God created woman. When sin entered into Adam and Eve’s lives, God provided forgiveness and restoration to bring them back into a right relationship. Jesus was also sending people out to share with others. Jesus healed a paralyzed man and instructed him to get up and go home and tell them what had happened. Following Jesus’ death and resurrection, he sent the disciples out to make disciples. All through history, there is this missional activity of God sending people into communities to teach and share through relationships. There are churches who understand missional activity as a method for missionaries and how they minister rather than an expectation from Jesus to love others, love him, and make disciples. The church has the ability to permeate neighborhoods with the presence of God to heal broken lives.

God has established the church to be used as a vehicle to communicate love and hope into local communities. When followers practice incarnational discipleship the church will find ways to engage neighbors and make the gospel tangible to everyone and will use their gifts and talents. The local church has experienced a steady decline with an inward focus, and as a result, little to no growth is witnessed. Congregations are comfortable with those who currently attend and are seeking ways to receive rather than

¹ <http://www.graceandpeacemagazine.org/articles/11-issue-may-2010/31-so-beautiful-an-interview-with-leonard-sweet>.

giving and serving others. Churches will experience true growth numerically and spiritually by loving the unchurched and living incarnationally.

Studies have shown that numerous mega churches are experiencing transfer growth rather than new growth that is witnessed with new converts and believers. This dissertation will unpack the commands of Jesus to make disciples. Jesus started making disciples with ordinary people who were not followers. Jesus trained them and then sent them out. Local churches have lost sight of the command to send and make disciples. Churches are not meeting the basic physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the community. The practice of spiritual disciplines, discipleship, and education in the church will equip disciples to make disciples.

Mission, Message, and Making Disciples

Access is not the problem to knowing the gospel but rather reliability in seeing the message of Christ's love being lived out in his followers. If churches in Newark, Ohio are going to experience growth through connecting with communities, these churches must demonstrate God's love in tangible ways. When followers proclaim God's love by actively demonstrating love outside the walls of the church we will connect with the community. The church will become a place of corporate worship and an educational institution for making disciples and equipping believers to share the gospel. Incarnational living and spiritual disciplines are vital for seeing lives transformed and Jesus drawing people to himself. According to Archbishop William Temple, he says that the church is

“the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of non-members.”²

When a church exists for itself and its members, isolation will often become evident. Our culture has become inward focused, and the church has been persuaded by that mentality. To build relationships and connections with communities, the church must spend time in the community. As relationships develop, opportunities to share the gospel can be afforded. As the gospel is shared, disciples can be made, and the process of multiplication can begin.

Becoming a disciple comes with a cost. Jesus lays out the guidelines for discipleship. “If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14: 26-27, NLT). Jesus was not actually promoting the hating of friends, family, and self; he was demonstrating a harsh opposite of love. Notice Jesus didn’t choose something easy to hate like sin, but rather chose what is difficult and dear to individuals such as the love of family. Jesus uses this distinction to demonstrate that loving him takes pre-eminence over all others.

Conflict in other relationships can arise when answering the call of discipleship. In the latter portion of Luke 9, Jesus calls on others to follow him, however, he is met with excuses. One individual says he will follow right after his father’s funeral. Jesus replies with the suggestion that they bury their own and be about the business of preaching the kingdom of God. Another individual requests permission to say goodbye to

² Philip Yancey, *Church: Why Bother?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 31

family to which Jesus says if you work and look back, you are not fit for the kingdom. If Jesus is truly Lord, he will take priority. Individuals tend to want to follow Jesus when it is convenient.

Jesus is seeking after those who will shake their world and see lives transformed. This world has plenty of fair-weather followers. Jesus is looking for radicals who are willing to count the cost. John Wesley once said something like this: give me a hundred men and women who love God with their heart, soul and mind and fear nothing but sin, and I will shake the world. If ever the love of earthly love relationships and the Christ of the cross are in conflict, the love of Christ must supersede. According to Jesus, he must be loved above all others.

When Paul and Silas were in jail, the question was asked of them by the keeper of the prison, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). They made it easy by responding, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your whole family will be saved." Notice Paul and Silas did not offer a list of do's and don'ts or criteria to be met prior to being saved. There was no mention of doing great things to earn favor with God. Salvation is a priceless gift that cannot be earned. In Acts 10, Peter teaches some basic principles of salvation. He teaches that through faith in Jesus Christ, forgiveness is received. Water baptism is offered as a symbol of burying old life and rising up to new life. True disciples who love Jesus will seek to do all that he asks of them. God graciously offers guidance because he wants what is best for his disciples. When he challenges his disciples to do something, be it baptism, corporate worship, serving in a shelter, or anything else, disciples should be obedient and willing to serve. Disciples

participate in good deeds out of love for Christ for all that he does. Paul is unwavering about disciples not earning salvation.

When forgiveness is received and salvation experienced, a believer should continue with the discipleship process. Prayer becomes a daily part of a believer's life. Prayer is a two-way communication with God. Pray for forgiveness daily for any sin that might cause separation between you and God. Pray for God to give guidance, show wisdom, and offer strength. Pray for provision and protection for yourself and others. Pray for daily needs with thankfulness for how God provides. Pray for family, those in holding positions in the church, in the community, and in the country. Pray that God will allow a dying to oneself. A.W. Tozer wrote "In every Christian's heart there is a cross and a throne, and the Christian is on the throne till he puts himself on the cross; if he refuses the cross, he remains on the throne."³ Pray for God to have control.

The Hebrew word *avodah* (for prayer) means "to be of service" and "to work or take action for a higher purpose." Prayer has a social element. When an individual prays to invite God to change their environment, they also must be ready to be transformed. Abraham, Moses, and Jesus each discovered that in their relationship with the divine, prayer is not a passive experience but rather involves action. Prayer challenges us to see a higher purpose. A healthy prayer life should move people to the deepest parts of their souls. Prayer can relocate individuals to a place where God is always present and abiding in the midst of the tumultuous influences beyond themselves. It positions people in a place where their future is created gently in a vibrant relationship between the creator and

³ Robert M. Solomon, *Following Jesus in a Fallen World* (Singapore: Armour Publishing Pte Ltd. 2009), 99

those he created. Prayer is less about understanding and far more about experiencing God.

Reading the Bible is crucial in a believer's life of discipleship. Scripture must be read daily. For recent believers, the New Testament is a great place to begin. The New Testament is broken into four significant parts. First are the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), then History (Acts) followed by the Teaching Letters (Romans-Jude) and lastly, Prophecy (Revelation). A daily devotional is also helpful for encouraging words to live by where scripture is practical. Understanding personal beliefs is crucial in preparing to share Christ with others. A solid foundation of theology is critical for living out the love of Jesus and for others to see and be drawn to Jesus as well. In that foundation, being able to share a personal story of salvation and leading others into such a commitment is vital. Being prepared to answer the question, "what must I do to be saved" is central. When this question is answered, disciples can be made.

Attending a church and participating in a worship service is beneficial for the practical application of spiritual growth and discipleship. Worship is an opportunity to join with other believers to hear the Word preached, sing songs of worship, give tithes and offerings, pray, fellowship, experience communion, and bathe in the presence of God with other believers. Participating in various areas of ministry is great for getting connected with other believers. Spending time with other believers and gaining knowledge and experience from those who serve will set an example to follow in being Christ to others. It has been said that individuals become more like those with whom they spend time with. Spending time with Jesus through prayer and study of scripture as well as with other believers will help believers grow spiritually and become that example.

Establishing Neighboring Relationships

Spending time with neighbors allows relationships to grow with the potential to eventually be Jesus to those encountered and to be on mission. To be missional is to assume the practice and posture of being a missionary in an attempt to reach the world with the gospel message. Essentially, being missional is carrying out the great command, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). The idea of the church being missional comes from the fact that God was missional. God is about sending people out just like he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to earth. To be missional means to send people out into the world, not to expect people to come to church. For years, the church has tried to be attractive by attempting to bring others to the church. When the church takes people from the culture they live in and assimilates them into the church, it often diminishes their influence with those outside church. The church has to go where people are.

A mindset shift is required for the church to have a missional perspective. The church must become effective in going out and making disciples as Jesus commanded. Dave DeVries writes that there are five biblical distinctives that form the foundation of a missional perspective:

- The Church is sent by Jesus Christ (John 17:18; 20:21; Luke 9:2; Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8)
- The Church is sent with the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:18; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17–24)

- The Church is sent in Community (Acts 2:42–47; 5:42; John 13:34–35; 1 John 3:16–17)
- The Church is sent to every Culture (John 1:14; Matthew 20:28; Acts 17:22–34; Luke 5:29)
- The Church is sent for the King and His Kingdom (Matthew 10:7; 25:34; Luke 4:43; Revelation 11:15–17; Jeremiah 10:7; John 18:36)⁴

Being missional is spending time with neighbors, and doing life together, in hopes that an opportunity presents itself to show the neighbors Jesus. “The Church is sent into the world to continue that which he came to do, in the power of the same Spirit, reconciling people to God.”⁵ God wants all people to serve him and spend eternity with him.

Conclusion

The church wants to be about the business of sending others on a mission. There are those who take to heart the great commission of making disciples. The church realizes that people must be willing to share Christ and the gospel with those who are unchurched. Followers (of Christ) often want to be bold and forward in sharing their story of transformation, however, good intentions must be laced with a teachable heart and mindset. Many followers can be trained in that endeavor and will keep sharing while using the tools given. The follower must live a life that draws unbelievers into a relationship with Jesus Christ rather than pushing them away to live life for their own

⁴ David Devries, “Missional Transformational Fueling Missionary Movements that Transform America,” (DMin Diss., Bakke Graduate University of Ministry, June 2007).

⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1989), 230

selfish desires. It is critical to long for a growing and deeper relationship with God and seeing God as love. “We may find that love, not death, ultimately rules the day as 1 Corinthians 13 tells us. And seeing God as love, we may begin to believe, with Julian of Norwich, that all ‘all manner of things shall be well.’”⁶ Followers must set an example with an infectious excitement about loving God and loving others. Francis Chan said, “Am I loving my neighbor and my God by living where I live, by driving what I drive, by talking how I talk? I urge you to consider and actually live as though each person you come into contact with is Christ.”⁷ Individuals you encounter in your communities are in need of love, and who better than God’s followers to show that love to these individuals?

Sharing the Gospel

Jesus demonstrated love to his disciples by serving them. Jesus took the initiative in servant living by becoming a lowly servant and washing the disciples’ feet. In part, servant-living is being open to change and being excited about the unexpected or newness that develops as individuals serve. In today’s culture, change and surprise is met with fearfulness and thoughts of needing to conform rather than grow. There is this thought that exists that all individuals must strive to be independent and successful in taking care of themselves and not others. Margaret Wheatley shared in an article about Greenleaf’s work, “servant-leadership starts as a feeling, a desire to serve others that then becomes a commitment to move that desire into practice, to actually take on the great

⁶ Elaine A Heath, *The Mystic Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 57.

⁷ Francis Chan and Danae Yankoski, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 166.

courageous task of serving others.”⁸ There is a stirring that often takes place within the hearts of humans that feels as though our hearts might just leap out of our chests. It is a desire to help others in times of need or to simply love others. A choice is made to either ignore the impulse or to act upon it. To act upon the need to love and help others is to serve. Jesus demonstrated servanthood to his disciples so that they might go and do likewise. As followers actively serve others, there is less thought of serving self.

Evangelism Outside the Church

Evangelism according to Len Sweet, is a daily opportunity for someone to cross our path as followers and provide a nudge into the work God is doing and the purpose for our lives. The purpose of a nudge is to manifest Christ in a moment of mutual knowing, which benefits both the person being nudged and the nudger.”⁹ True evangelism is planting seeds that move people out of their seats. It consists of changes and of listening to others story and reaching out as well as receiving from others. Evangelism is being captivated by Christ in such a way that others are impressed by Christ, shows love to others, and is a merciful giving and receiving relationship. Paul demonstrated this kind of example in Acts 17. When Paul arrived in Athens, he did not immediately set up a tent and start preaching. Instead, he visited around the city and talked to people. He listened to the philosophers and visited the temples. Paul may have felt that he needed to understand the people and the culture before trying to communicate with them. Paul met with the

⁸ www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/servantleader.html

⁹ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge, Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There*. (Colorado Springs, CO, David. C. Cook, 2010), 28

counsel and drew attention to the “Unknown god” they worshipped. Paul connected with those in Athens by sharing similarities in thoughts of wisdom and nuggets of truth that would help him share the true gospel.

After affirming their views in ways that he could with integrity, Paul preached the gospel to them. He didn’t shy away from the difficult parts but prepared the way with affirmations. The result was one that Christians in every age have experienced. Some scoffed, but some believed and were added to the church.¹⁰

Paul gracefully entered into a community where he established relationships and learned the culture before ever sharing the gospel. This opened the door to share Christ in the midst of unbelievers. Paul also recognized that God was at work and began joining in the work of God.

In every community there is evidence of many backgrounds including ethnic, financial, social, and religious. The Christian church was among the first institutions throughout history to bring together Jews and Gentiles on common ground, men and women, and slave and free. These diverse groups that make up a community can capture the attention of many individuals which will cultivate potential relationships. Some view the church as a club they can belong to. The church needs to be on a mission to know its neighbors and the needs that are present. Relationships can only be established by spending time together. Relationships develop by listening, observing, sharing life experiences, learning interests, and doing life together. The age-old phrase, “to have a friend you must be a friend” is a common method for developing relationships. In every relationship, someone must take the initiative and break new ground to get the

¹⁰ Frances S. Adeney, *Graceful Evangelism: Christian Witness in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 138-39.

relationship started. First steps must be taken for effective relationships to grow and develop. Individuals are looking for real and genuine friendships. Effective evangelism can only take place when some level of relationship is established.

Relationships will develop when time is invested in the relationship. When individuals share life together, they connect with each other. Relationships must be developed in the community and not solely within the walls of the building called church. The church has done a great job at teaching fellowship within the church, perhaps, almost to a detriment. There are many Christians who only have Christian friends, only use Christian-owned businesses, and some who have no other acquaintances outside the walls of the church. Nowhere in scripture is it written to only associate with other Christians. Christians need those relationships with other Christians for support, encouragement, and accountability; however, it is crucial to have relationships with unbelievers, as well. The church must go where people are and where God is working and work alongside him. Christians are called to be salt and light. If time is spent in places where salt is not needed and darkness is not present, how then are Christians fulfilling that calling? Consider for a moment the disciples and how Jesus shared life with them. Jesus befriended them, spent time with them, taught them, trained them, and sent them on mission. Sharing life together means doing ordinary, everyday activities with ordinary people, starting with those who are in your own community or neighborhood. Evangelism is about nudging others and planting seeds that someday will reap a harvest. Len Sweet described it this way: “To be clear, nudging encompasses the full range of gardening—from dropping a tiny seed into the ground, to loosening the dirt, watering,

weeding, fertilizing, protecting from predators, picking the fruit, and even helping in Jesus' words, 'the birds of the air...nest under its shade.'"¹¹

God Works Both Wonders And Miracles

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was sharing with his disciples how to become followers. He taught them how to teach, preach, and heal. He was not teaching them to be leaders, but rather followers. Dr. Len Sweet explains that not all called to be leaders, but followers.

Jesus didn't recruit leaders for his ministry. He didn't go to the local synagogue and place a notice on the bulletin board, announcing that he was taking resumes and setting up interviews for potential directors. Nor did Jesus, as a pastor of a well-known church unabashedly brags, cultivate the skill of raiding other ministries for top-notch leaders. Jesus wasn't looking for leaders at all. Jesus was looking for followers.¹²

As followers of Jesus the disciples were commanded to heal. "One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases" (Luke 9:1). Followers today have the same authority and power. Often when going through times of crisis, individuals will ask Christians (followers) to pray for them. Such prayers can be a vehicle to demonstrate God's healing power. These encounters help develop relationships as part of God's mission to draw all people to himself.

¹¹ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David. C. Cook, 2010), 28.

¹² Leonard Sweet, *I Am A Follower: The Way, The Truth, and Life of Following Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 484, Kindle.

The miracles of Jesus authenticate God's kingdom coming to earth and the restoration of creation. His miracles show the depth of his authority. For example, Jesus healed the woman with the issue of blood and the man with the withered hand. These are signs that God's kingdom had come to earth. Tim Keller says this about miracles:

...miracles lead not simply to cognitive belief, but to worship, to awe and wonder. Jesus' miracles in particular were never magic tricks, designed only to impress and coerce. . . . Instead, he used miraculous power to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and raise the dead. Why? We modern people think of miracles as the suspension of the natural order, but Jesus meant them to be the restoration of the natural order.¹³

Jesus' miracles reveal his divinity and serve as part of God's redemptive plan. Wayne Grudem explains miracles today. "There is nothing inappropriate in seeking miracles for the proper purposes for which they are given by God: to confirm the truthfulness of the gospel message, to bring help to those in need, to remove hindrances to peoples' ministries, and to bring glory to God."¹⁴ God uses ordinary people who become followers, to heal hurting people.

Servanthood—Living the Example

The life of Christ is the authentic example of unselfishly serving others. In Mark, Jesus predicts his death and shares with the disciples about serving others. James and John ask if they could sit at his places of honor, one on the right and one on the left. Jesus then calls his disciples together and shares, "Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of

¹³ Tim Keller, *The Reason for God* (Boston, MA: Dutton, 2009), 95-96

¹⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 371.

everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45). There is no question to the fact that if Christians are to live an incarnational life, they must give of themselves to others.

Servant living today is opposite of what culture teaches. Society today focuses on being all you can be, climbing corporate ladders, and attaining personal happiness, prestige, and power. Dr. Charles Stanley says,

If you and I are to make the impact in life upon others that we should; if we are to fulfill God’s purpose and plan for our life; and if we’re to reap the maximum blessings that God has prepared for us; we, too, must develop the spirit of a servant, and our actions must be the actions of a servant. A servant is one who realizes that Jesus is not only our Savior, but He is the Master of our life. Any unwillingness or resistance to serve others in His name is an act of rebellion.¹⁵

Serving others is love in action using the talents and gifts given to help others.

Jesus displayed the perfect example of a humble servant. Though he was God, he became human and served others. Jesus likens greatness to that of being a servant.

“Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me” (John 12:26). As believers serve and love others, Jesus is honored. Loving others is foundational to serving. Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment and he replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments” (Matthew 22: 37-40). Love is fundamental in incarnational living.

¹⁵ “The High Calling of Servanthood,” accessed October 12, 2016, <http://www.drwalt.com/blog/2014/08/24/the-high-calling-of-servanthood/>.

In the New Testament, the word bondservant is used. A bondservant is “a person who serves in bondage; slave. A person bound to service without wages.”¹⁶ Five men all describe themselves as “bondservants or slaves of Christ.” Paul describes himself as a slave. “This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News” (Romans 1:1). Timothy calls himself a slave of Christ. “This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:1). James views himself as a slave. “This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1). Peter refers to himself as a slave. “This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). Finally, Jude also calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ. “This letter is from Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James” (Jude 1:1). Slaves were seen as the lowest position held in the household. That position required the worst of jobs to include the washing of feet. Again, Jesus demonstrated his humility to serve, “So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him” (John 13: 4-5). The disciples must have been stunned at such an act of servanthood. Jesus came to serve others and not be served. This act of servanthood foreshadowed his ultimate act of humility that took place on the cross as a sacrifice for all of humanity. “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the

¹⁶ “Bond Servant,” accessed October 13, 2016, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/bond-servant>.

living God!” (Hebrews 9:14). Serving Christ and others here on earth is preparing us to spend eternity serving Christ.

Gatekeeper Strategy (Person of Peace)

Serving Christ and being able to share the work he is doing in everyday life is crucial for developing disciples. Jesus shares with his disciples a reproducible strategy for finding the person of peace. A person of peace is one who openly receives you for who you are. That person is open to listen to you and establish a relationship with you. A person of peace is also open to what you have to say about what Christ is doing in your life. God prepares a person of peace to receive what believers have to say. God is at work on individuals’ hearts all around us. The harvest is ready, and the time is now.

So often when looking for a person of peace believers are looking for an opportunity to minister, when in reality, a person of peace wants to make a contribution as well. A person of peace may be a passing relationship. Recently, a group of teens and adults were being transported from the border of Texas into Mexico for missional outreach. The van driver was a person of peace. He was generous with his time and made sure we had all we needed. He was open to the ministry being done and served this team as a driver. There are times when a person of peace is a long-term relationship, one who is open to keeping accountability and being supportive of what is being shared.

A person of peace may be viewed as a gatekeeper to the community. In scripture, Lydia was an example of a gatekeeper. She offered hospitality to Paul and his traveling companions. Lydia was a business woman with community connections. The gatekeepers may be the vehicle used to connect to those whom God is preparing to meet him. “Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure

those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!” (Matthew 10:7-8). Often, an open door is created by asking the question, “How can I pray for you, or how can I serve you?” God reaches people through his Word, through the Holy Spirit, and through other people. God has a plan in place but is looking for willing people who will commit to investing in others and working with the willing. Believers must be intentional on seeking after persons of peace. On the faith journey, if God is directing, he will provide companions for the trip.

Steve Austvold describes a person of peace in a letter shared with pastors and mission leaders. He writes:

They provide the worker with food and drink. They receive the worker. They are trusting, they desire peace. They are open to the worker and are hospitable. They are receptive to spiritual things. Their body language or countenance shows that they are peaceful. They are often a person of influence. As a person of influence, they are an insider in the community. They can open doors for ministry that the outsider cannot open. A person of peace is a gatekeeper. They are a person who gives access to ministry in their community. It is important for the worker to minister to the person of peace. Maybe, they need spiritual or physical healing. Begin ministering to them and God will open a door of opportunity in their community.¹⁷

When Jesus sent his disciples out to minister, he told them that they would encounter people who would accept them and others who would reject them. Jesus was also sending his disciples out with authority and as his representative. They were to be specific with their message and tasks to perform. They were proclaiming that God’s kingdom was near. In today’s culture, believers are spending more time hanging out with others with no intent of sharing about Jesus Christ for fear of rejection or offending someone. There

¹⁷ “The Person of Peace,” September 2014, accessed October 12, 2016, <http://ncdefca.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/ THE-PERSON-OF-PEACE-September-2014.pdf>.

are lines today that believers must be willing to cross for the sake of sharing the Gospel. Followers must go into communities with authority and power that proclaims the love of Christ.

Mike Breen shares in an article about the person of peace being like Zacchaeus. He shares these steps:

1. Find the person of peace, the person who is open to you, interested in you, likes you, and wants to be around you.
2. Go to their turf, where they are comfortable.
3. Allow them to serve you, show hospitality.
4. Spend intentional time with them.
5. Be ready to do the works of the kingdom and speak the words of the kingdom (in appropriate ways.)¹⁸

Conclusion

Effective teaching in ministry should result in missional outreach. To be missional in ministry, one must be involved in the lives of others in their community on a practical level. Communicating and sharing life with those at work, or in the grocery store or in the library makes for vital connections to become missional. Processing and understanding what makes people tick, what motivates them on a regular basis, and how they live life daily will help to build bridges outside the walls of the church. It's crucial to establish

¹⁸ "Understanding Jesus and Persons of Peace," accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.disciplingculture.com/understanding-jesus-and-persons-of-peace/>.

relationships with those who don't attend church. Christians will need to develop the desire to do life with those around them in their community. Spiritual nourishment is what takes place inside the church, ministry is what happens on the outside of the church.

If churches today would care for, love, and nurture others, churches would see spiritual and numerical growth, and communities would be transformed by seeing Jesus Christ represented in the church and community. Beyond caring for others and developing relationships with community, believers must spend purposeful, non-interrupted time in the Word and praying. Followers must be obedient to the direction of the Holy Spirit and allowing ourselves to set our own agenda aside will open doors of opportunity to share Jesus Christ like never witnessed before. "The world is changing at a rapid pace, and with it, your neighborhood, school, work, mall, and everywhere you go. For the first time in history, the whole world is showing up everywhere and changing the neighborhood."¹⁹

Knowing the Neighborhood

To become familiar with a neighborhood, it is crucial to engage in everyday life with those who make up that neighborhood. Government workers, city officials, the mayor, the school board, and the city council members know the city and the community they represent. Spending time with them in said communities will develop a better understanding of the needs of the community and the events taking place. Attending community events also creates an opportunity to meet those with whom do to life with.

¹⁹ Bob Roberts, *Bold as Love: What Can Happen When We See People the Way God Does* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 10

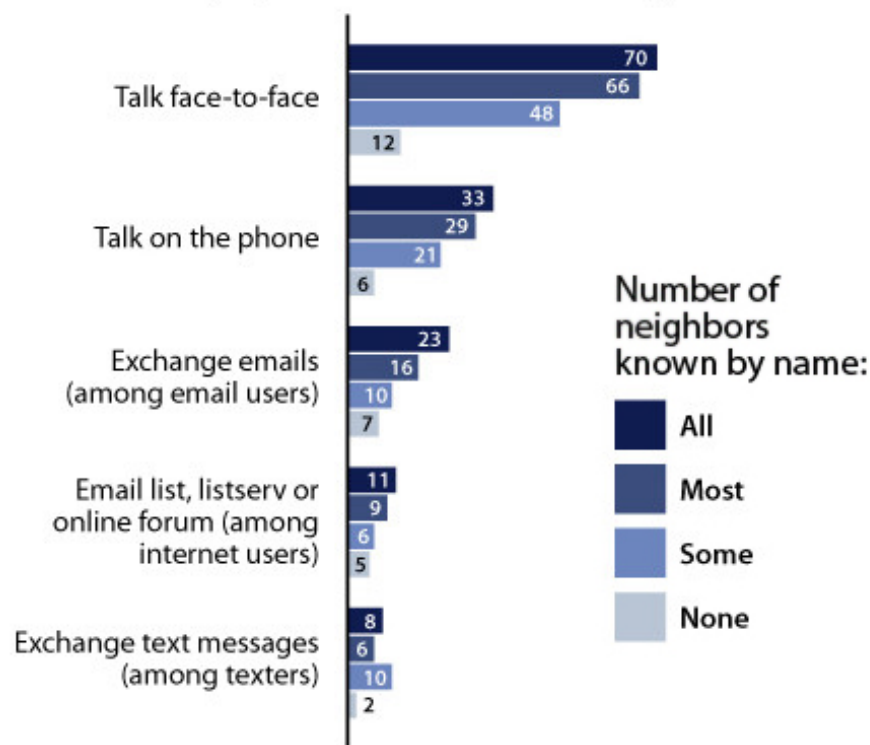
When someone new moves into a neighborhood it presents an opportunity to connect as neighbors. Moving can be a traumatic experience when facing new neighbors, new jobs, new schools, and a new community. Often, new neighbors are more open to building new relationships. Knowing what is happening in a community can help build relationships with neighbors. Pew Research Center conducted a survey in 2009 with the following findings:

When it comes to learning about what's happening in a community, the tools people use are associated with the people they know. Interestingly, the tools people use to keep up with community issues are related to whether or not they are on a first-name basis with their neighbors. As people know fewer of their neighbors by name, they become much less likely to discuss community issues face-to-face. Among those who know all of their neighbors by name, 70% have discussed community issues with neighbors in person, compared with just 12% of those who do not know any of their neighbors. When it comes to using the phone, 33% of those who know all of their neighbors by name called someone in the past year to discuss local events vs. 6% of those who don't know the names any of their neighbors. The numbers for email are 23% vs. 7%. On the other hand, individuals who do not know their neighbors by name are just as likely to keep up with community events by reading community blogs (15% of internet users who know none of their immediate neighbors by name read community blogs, identical to the 14% of those who know all of their neighbors who do so) or by joining a community-focused group on an online social network.²⁰

²⁰ <http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/06/09/neighbors-online/>. Accessed November 12, 2016.

The tools you use to keep up with community issues vary based on who you know

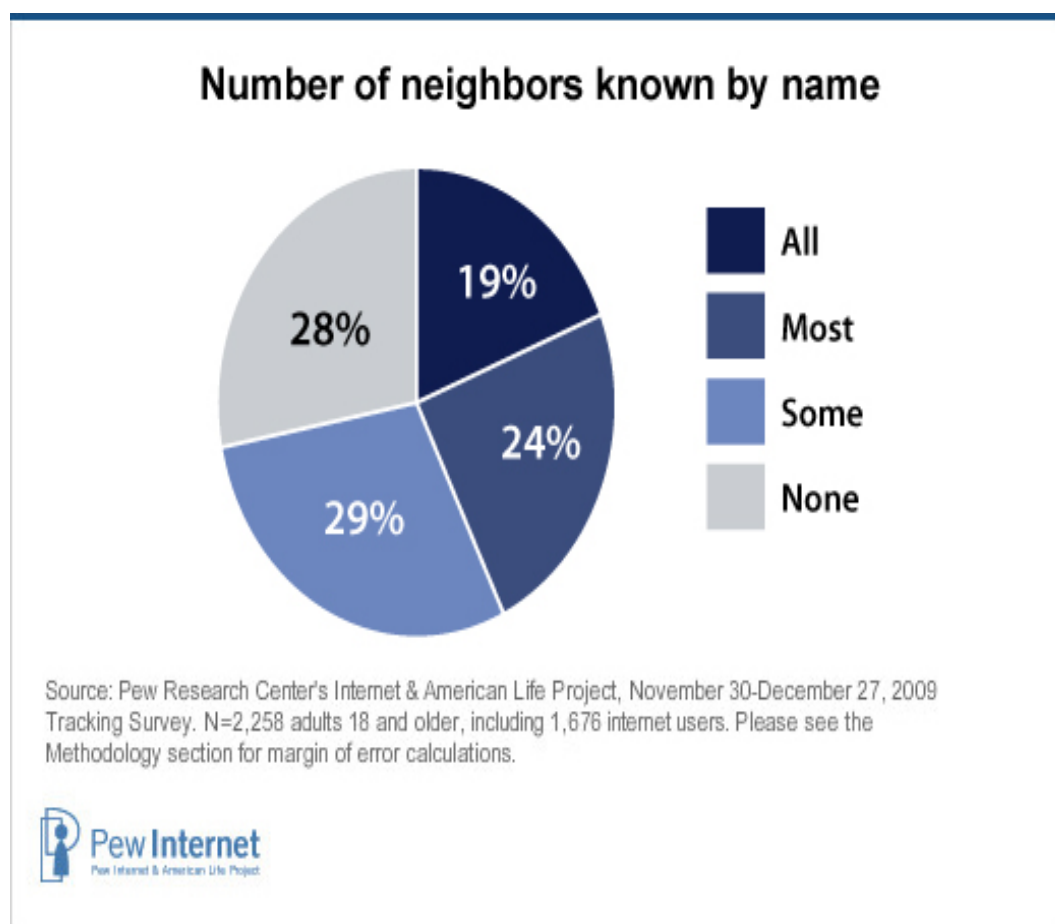
Tools used mostly by those who know their neighbors:



Tools used equally by all groups:



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 30-December 27, 2009 Tracking Survey. N=2,258 adults 18 and older, including 1,676 internet users. Please see the Methodology section for margin of error calculations.



Getting to know the people in your neighborhood can help individuals establish friendships, belonging, and shared identity. Knowing who lives down the street can offer a sense of security. Developing relationships takes time and energy. Most neighborhood relationships never grow because it seems too difficult or time consuming. On the contrary, relationships with neighbors are easy to establish, but often is not something individuals place much value upon. As a result, a culture of isolated individuals has been developed.

Summary

I am convinced that if the church would spend more time outside the church connecting with neighbors, the church as it known it would look vastly different. When individuals spend time together, they become more like each other and find common interests. There is a longing to be together and doing life with one another. As time with others increases, new relationships open with the meeting of friends that both families bring into the relationship, thus expanding the circle of meeting others and building relationships.

In looking at the example of Jesus building relationships throughout his ministry, he made it a priority to spend time with people. He went to where the people were and never expected them to just show up where he happened to be. Jesus ate with people. There is something to be said about getting to know people around a table during a meal. That might mean a home cooked meal or “take-out” food from a favorite restaurant. The idea of taking time to connect and share conversation about one’s day is almost a lost art in some cultures. It is time to take back the tradition of sharing meals around a table with others. Jesus went to people like Matthew, the tax collector, in his home. Jesus met with the adulterous woman in public. He touched the diseased, the outcast, and the forgotten. Jesus did not care about the lifestyle they were living and did not ask them to come to the temple.

Jesus loved people and was genuine with them. As followers, we need to be ourselves and care for one another. Jesus was real and looked people in the eye and used their name when speaking to them. Jesus knew their story, met their needs, and stood by them when they were being persecuted or ridiculed. What would it look like today if

followers of Jesus showed this type of care and concern for people outside the church: people in their neighborhoods? Len Sweet frames a divine design in his book *So Beautiful*. What would it look like if the church resigned old ways of focusing on attendance, buildings, and giving money, attractional, propositional or colonial and instead were focused on missional, relational, and incarnational? In today's culture followers must befriend our neighbors and go to them, communicate with them, and share life with them. As life is shared together, Jesus will be seen in the life of the believer, and the opportunity to share Jesus with others will multiply. As Jesus is shared, disciples can be made, and disciples will produce other disciples.

The best kept secret to a disciple's life is living life as a follower. Not only as in something we do, but in whom we are. If followers are to live **M**issional lives, then our daily journey will line up with the Spirit at work in us. "Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives." (Galatians 5:25) Followers will yield to the Spirit's control, leading and influence. As they live **R**elational lives, a relationship with Christ declares your faith. As followers we are commanded to be in relationships. "And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31) To live **I**ncarnationally is not actually what followers are doing. "So the Word became human and made his home among us." (John 1:14) It is allowing Jesus to live through us as followers in a way that reveals changes in our lives that enable us to accomplish what we could not achieve by ourselves.

SECTION FOUR:

ARTIFACT EXPLANATION

As we elaborated in sections one through four the church has not been successful in educating believers of living out the gospel in an attempt to build relationships and connect with communities. This abstract will address a plan to increase education and discipleship in an attempt to equip lay people to be Jesus in their communities. I will develop an artifact to assist pastors and lay leaders in developing effective disciple making and building relationships in their communities. I will develop a booklet that will be used as part one of disciples making disciples in communities for at least 13 weeks, or more based on need of each person or group. The booklet will be used as a foundation for incarnational living which is not just creating and allowing for Jesus moments but living Jesus lives. The booklet will be called “Disciples Making Disciples in Communities” may be used for 1:1 meetings or used in a small group setting. The booklet will follow the below outline.

Chapters	Description
1-3 Godliness, Prayer and Worship	Incarnational living as Jesus followers
4-6 Spiritual Dialogue, Serving and Management	Loving Jesus, loving others and loving our communities

Godliness, Prayer and Worship

The concentration of these chapters will be to establish an understanding of discipleship and being shaped into fully formed and faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Participants will have an understanding of salvation and prayer and spiritual disciplines

necessary for productive growth as disciples. Leaders will encourage each participant to read assigned chapter before meeting together, and participant and leader will work through the application portion of fill in the blank and discussion questions. At the end of each session, there will be an open time for additional questions and answers. Each week will follow the same format, allowing at least 90 minutes for each session.

Spiritual Dialogue, Serving and Management

The focus and direction of these chapters will be to understand Jesus' expectation of sentness, sharing the gospel of love, and loving others in our communities. Participants will understand that if we love Jesus most, we will love others best. This will be a practical guide to living Jesus lives demonstrating a clear understanding of Jesus loved others and built relationships and taught others to love. As a result, our transformed lives draw others into a relationship with Jesus and the process of multiplication should occur. The same process of reading the chapter before meeting together and then completing the application portion of the session together remains the same. At the end of each session, there will be an open time for additional questions and answers. Each week will follow the same format, allowing at least 90 minutes for each session.

Artifact Application

This foundational discipleship program will be launched in the Spring of 2018, at Community Wesleyan Church where I currently serve as a staff pastor. Our plan is to eventually present it to our Ohio district of the Wesleyan Church pastors and lay leaders.

It is our hope that all churches within said district can implement this tool in each of their local context, if one is not currently in place.

We are also hopeful in launching a presentation to the Local Church Pastors Association of Newark, OH. This group of pastors meets monthly to share in fellowship, prayer, announcements and community development. We are optimistic that those churches who may not have an established discipleship curriculum, will be willing to consider the use of this booklet to assist in developing a community of individuals becoming disciples who disciple, on a local level.

Artifact Development

This project is the first piece of anticipated ongoing research. I have begun the process of developing a second booklet, or a phase two if you will, of Discipling Communities. This will have a direct concentration on the influence on bringing back the table to our homes, churches and communities. It will reflect God's provision in our lives, a safe place to gather, to share life stories, faith and food together. I was greatly influenced by the reading of Len Sweet's *From Table to Table* and I want this future booklet to reflect what he shares in his book. "At the table, where food and stories are passed from one person to another and one generation to another, is where each of us learns who we are, where we come from, what we can be, to whom we belong, and to what we are called".¹ Here is an outline of the chapters of the second booklet, *Join me at the table*.

¹ Leonard Sweet, *From Tablet to Table: Where Community Is Found and Identity is Formed*. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 8.

Chapters	Description
1-3 Your story, who you are and who sits at your table	Life experiences, transformation and your love influence on others
4-6 Kitchen table, Church table and Community table	Dining in your home, at church and in your communities

Your Story, Who You Are, and Who Sits at Your Table

The attention of these chapters will be on developing and sharing your own faith story and the transformation that has taken place. It will allow for sharing how others view you and what your life should reflect. This will be an opportunity to explore missionality and evaluate who sits at your table and who does not and why. The same process of reading the chapter before meeting together and then completing the application portion of the session together remains the same. At the end of each session, there will be an open time for additional questions and answers. Each week will follow the same format, allowing at least 90 minutes for each session.

Dining in your Home, at Church and in your Community

The deliberation of these chapters will involve instruction in using your own table at home as a place for building relationships. The chapters will explore ways the church can be more effective in using their tables as methods of connecting and training. Dining in your community will launch into ways in which community can be experienced, community can be shown love and community can be influenced by the way we live our Jesus infused lives.

APPENDIX A:
ARTIFACT

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Disciples Making Disciples in Communities



Created by: Lisa A Willey

Spring 2019

Dissertation Artifact for Portland Seminary

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PREFACE

The church has not been successful in educating believers of living out the gospel in an attempt to build relationships and connect with communities. This booklet will assist pastors or lay leaders in laying a foundation of spiritual disciplines through a six week course of Disciples Making Disciples in Communities. This educational tool may be used in an individual 1:1 training, or be used in a small group environment. Ideally, individuals would be given the booklet a week prior to established meeting time, in order to read the chapter first. When meeting together all individuals would work through the chapter sessions together to fill in the blanks or add additional notes that may arise out of discussion. It is expected that this booklet and sharing together will lay the foundation for incarnational living which is not just creating and allowing for Jesus moments but living Jesus lives.

Jesus loved people. It is the responsibility of every Jesus follower to love people. If you will strive to love Jesus most, you will certainly love others best in all the relationships you establish. The world needs to see Jesus in our everyday lives. I trust that this booklet will help you develop the necessary tools for being a disciple of Jesus who makes other disciples of Jesus by loving Jesus, loving others and loving your communities.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever seen a butterfly come into existence? Have you noticed its beautiful colors and markings? The process called “Chrysalis” is the transformation that occurs when a caterpillar transitions from the short and stubby creature with no wings disposing of the old body is a remarkable makeover. Metamorphosis makes this beautiful creation a reality. The complete makeup of the caterpillar has changed.

The transformation that takes place when a person makes a decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ can be likened to a metamorphosis seen in the life of a butterfly. A butterfly will travel through four basic stages to include egg, larva, pupa and adult. Each stage has different goals, and depending on the butterfly, the lifecycle can take from one month to a year. During the final stage of life, the butterfly is constantly looking to reproduce and the lifestyle begins again. The same is true of followers of Christ living incarnational lives. There should be an ongoing metamorphosis taking place as the follower lives the life of Christ according to the example he provided us. Followers of Christ should always be looking to reproduce or make disciples, and new followers.

Ephesians 2 provides a description of the people of God who before Christ, the work of Christ accomplished in our lives, and a picture of our new identity. Let’s explore the breakdown of what Paul is describing in Ephesians 2 as individuals first and then as a corporate body. Beginning with verses 1-3 we see who we were prior to our relationship with Jesus. “Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world.[a] He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that

way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else."

We are underserving sinners who are motivated by selfishness. There is little good coming from us towards God. We are separated from God with hearts of stone much like death. We actively sin against God and have turned our love away from God to the things of this world. The passions of our flesh have overshadowed our passion for God. We are all guilty and in desperate need of God's love transforming our dead nature.

Secondly, verses 4-7 demonstrate what God through Christ accomplished through his death burial and resurrection. "But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus."

God loved us so much he provided an escape from our hopelessness and separation from him. We were lifeless and undeserving of God's grace. We have been saved by God's grace rather than receiving the righteous judgement we deserve. The mystery of the Gospel is that God takes a corrupt people without love for him, gives them a way to hear the gospel of his love for all people, and then allows them to experience God's underserving love and mercy. Christ's obedient death on the cross brought justice and exhausted God's wrath for our sin. God raised Christ and made us alive as well with him. Our lives have been transformed from objects of God's wrath to experiencing the joy in what Christ has done for us.

Lastly, verses 8-10 show us what we have become. “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

Amazingly, we have nothing to do with our hearts of stone being made new and alive. Grace and faith are a gift from God. Faith was only made possible by God’s grace and not of any work of our own, to be sure that we remain humble and not boastful. God has made us new, transforming us from our former ways of sinfulness. We are God’s work of art, his hand written poem, and one of his crowning achievements. He has a unique and custom made plan for each of our lives. This should bring us joy and hope and cause us to praise God daily.

The last half of Ephesians 2 depicts the work of Christ on the church, the corporate body of believers. And it mirrors the first ten verses of Ephesians 2 in structure: who we were, what his work has done, and our new identity as a result. Similarly, Christ followers as a corporate body can look first at who we were prior to Christ’s work. In verses 11-13 Paul says: “Don’t forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. 12 In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. 13 But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.”

Paul reminds the Gentile believers that they were once considered unholy and separated from Christ, Israel and God. Now because of Christ's death on the cross they have been united with Christ. This is the good news of the Gospel. God is reconciling the world to himself. The circumcision of the Israelites was not as crucial as the cleansing of the heart. Paul described the Gentiles as having no hope. As a result of the blood of Christ, the separation from God has been removed.

Take a look at what Christ did in verses 14-18. "For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. 15 He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us."

Jesus represents peace in contrast to the hostility and separation between the Jews and Gentiles. This wall of separation was abolished by Christ through his sacrifice on the cross. This ending the system of law or breaking down the wall offers the thought that the barrier is no longer needed. Christ has brought a new sense of unity and equality terminating the hostility that once existed through reconciliation being offered. Jesus presented peace to the far and near. Humanity has now gained access to the Father, through the Son in one unified Spirit. This is salvation of peace in the Trinitarian God.

As a result of God's work, let's explore what we have become in verses 19-22. "So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. 20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. 21 We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit."

Jew and Gentiles share equality in God's house and family. Paul explains that the Gentiles former state as strangers and aliens has been transformed to that of fellow citizens having all rights in God's family. Paul continues to describe Gentiles as stones built upon the foundation of God's house. Paul then offers comfort that the Spirit is binding them together in God's house. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone that melds the foundation together. Now that the foundation is secure, the real building of an incarnational life begins. Now we will explore together those building concepts through the establishment of spiritual and relational practices.

GODLINESS

CHAPTER ONE

As followers of Christ (Christians), we most likely have heard the word godliness or referred to a person as godly. However, to provide an easy definition is a challenge. Some may believe that its concepts will be eventually understood as we grow and mature as Christians. Jerry Bridges, author of *The Practice of Godliness*, writes that godliness is foundational in developing spiritual attributes in becoming like Christ.¹ The Bible could be considered a book

¹ Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (Nav Press Publishing House, 1996).

on godliness, yet the words godliness or godly are only mentioned a few times in the New Testament.

Paul offers instruction on godliness in Titus 2:11-13, “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Earlier in Titus 1:1 Paul states we need to further our faith and truth that leads to godliness. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy he mentions praying for those in authority in order that we might live at peace in all godliness and holiness. We are challenged to pursue godliness indicating “unrelenting pursuit” or “following after.” Godliness offers contentment, value and promise for this life and eternal life. Godliness is not an option for followers of Christ. It is rather a privilege and responsibility for followers to train themselves and commit to developing lives of godliness.

Godliness as defined by Merriam-Webster is “the quality or state of being spiritually pure or virtuous.” Webster also provides other words similar to godliness that include but are not limited to: “blessedness, devoutness, holiness, piety, piousness, sainthood, saintliness, saintship, and sanctity.” Some people when trying to define godliness, express thoughts of godly character. Phrases like Christ-like, God-like, holy, or displays of the fruits of the spirit are used to communicate godliness as an attribute. Godliness is a foundation on which Christian character is developed.

The Bible displays a road map for godliness that is initiated from the beginning in Genesis. Moses in Genesis 5 is reflecting on Enoch’s life and describes him as one who walked with God. In Hebrews 11 Enoch is described as one who pleased God. Two elements of

godliness are described in Enoch's life. Enoch walked with God and pleased God. Enoch placed God at the center of his life and he was the focus of his very existence. Enoch, in essence, was described as a devoted follower of God. Throughout the New Testament the idea of Godliness is conveyed in a personal relationship and attitude towards God that includes daily devotion. This devotion is not simply reflected in feelings or emotions or Bible study or prayer. This devotion is an attitude that requires an action of serving God and others.

The practice of godliness is a discipline that allows for a Godward attitude to develop into a godly character. It is crucial that as followers mature, a healthy fear of God, love for God, and desire for God are evident. Godliness is not just pleasing God but walking along side God and broadening our relationship with Him. William Law in *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* used the word devotion in a more extensive form to indicate all that is included in godliness. "Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted, to God. He therefore is the devout [godly] man who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God; who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety [godliness], by doing everything in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his Glory."² Notice in Law's description that Godliness involved the person's total life. Every day thoughts, actions and responsibilities are carried out to bring glory to God. In the words of Paul found in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Such a God-centered lifestyle must be anchored with a firm foundation and full devotion to God. A strong and growing relationship with God is essential for keeping focused and experiencing maturity and growth. 1 John 5: 2-4 reads, "We know we love God's children if we

² <https://bible.org/article/what-godliness>

love God and obey his commandments. Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. For every child of God defeats this evil world and we achieve this victory through our faith.” Developing godly character is the offspring of motivation to please God and being fully devoted to Him.

Motivation to please God will help an individual establish a godly moral compass, a compassionate heart and a zealous spirit to serve God. When we say no to sin and yes to righteousness our choices please God. When Paul was attempting to motivate people to obedience he gave insight to reality of pleasing God. “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.” (2 Corinthians 5:9) Those characteristics will display a life after God’s heart. “Walk as children of light . . . and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:8, 10) Many will be involved in ministry, busy doing good and using their talents and yet miss the mark of being truly devoted to God and living a life of godliness that pleases him. “Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.” (1 Thessalonians 4:1) This may happen because an individual is devoted to the ministry, or the vision or reputation of being a Christian, rather than being devoted to God. Godliness is full devotion to God that pleases him. Enoch’s relationship with God and daily walk pleased God which speaks of the impact of their relationship.

The practice of godliness is the cultivation of a relationship with God that pleases him. Our conduct and character is the reflected product of how our lives look when devoted to God. With such devotion come lives that are mindful of the fear of God, the love of God, and the desire for God. Picture, if you will, the image of the triangle: two points across the base and joining the apex at the top.



The fear and love of God form the foundation of our devotion to God, while the desire for God the highest expression of our devotion to him.

The fear of God is often misunderstood. Merriam Webster defines fear as “having a reverent feeling toward God: devout.” Scripture communicates the fear of God as that of awe or reverence, or of dread and judgment. Fear, when described as dread or judgment, is created by the awareness of God’s judgement for sin. Take for example the behavior of Adam when he sinned in the Garden. He attempted to hide from God out of shame perhaps at first but likely also out of fear. What if every unsaved person had this kind of fear in regard to sin in their lives? Unfortunately, individuals do not have that fear of judgment today. As Romans 3:18 says, “They have no fear of God at all.” John Murray wrote in *Principles of Conduct* “The fear of God is the

soul of godliness.”³ The fear of God seems antiquated, in part, due to the lack of reverence and respect for God and others.

In a conversation Peter Hastie had with Jerry Bridges author of “The Joy of Fearing God”, Jerry shared this definition of fear: “Perhaps a good working-definition of the fear of God is something like this: to truly fear God means to be in awe of God’s being and character as well as in awe of what He has done for us in Christ. When you put these two ideas together, you have an absolutely sovereign Creator of the universe who punishes those who resist Him, and yet loves us and sends His Son to die in our place. Surely that’s good reason to fear or reverence Him.”⁴

Fear described as awe and reverence comes from adoration and admiration. This attitude should focus on the majesty and holiness of God and the love God has for us. A picture of this awe is seen in Isaiah 6 when the angelic beings covered their faces with their wings in the presence of a holy God. It is evident again in the reaction of John in Revelation 1:17 when he fell at this master’s feet as though he were dead. Without a heart filled with the fear of God, one cannot be devoted to God and live a godly life. There is a profound awe and reverence that comes from hearts that worship God. A truly devoted follower sees God first in his supreme glory, splendor, and holiness,- before his love, grace, and mercy. “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come” (1Timothy 4:8).

Becoming a follower of Christ comes with a cost. Jesus lays out the guidelines for being a follower. “If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your

³ http://www.solid-ground-books.com/detail_954.asp

⁴ <https://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2002/09/the-fear-of-god-talking-with-jerry-bridges/>

father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14: 26-27, NLT).” Jesus was not asking us to hate friends, family, and self. That would be antithetical of his own mission. He was demonstrating a harsh opposite of love. Notice Jesus did not choose something easy to hate like sin, but rather chose what is difficult and dear to individuals such as the love of family. Jesus uses this distinction to demonstrate that loving him takes pre-eminence over all others.

Resistance and conflict in relationships can arise when answering the call of discipleship. In the later portion of Luke 9 Jesus calls on others to follow him and he is met with excuses. One individual says he will follow right after his father’s funeral. Jesus replies with the suggestion they bury their own and that he be about the business of preaching the Kingdom of God. Another individual requested to say goodbye to family to which Jesus says if you work and look back, you are not fit for the kingdom. If Jesus is truly Lord, he will take priority. Individuals want to follow Jesus when it is convenient. Following Jesus is rarely convenient.

Jesus is seeking individuals who will let him shape them into fully formed and faithful followers. This world has plenty of fair-weathered followers. Jesus is looking for radicals who are willing to count the cost. John Wesley once said, “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth.” If ever the love of earthly love relationships and the Christ of the cross are in conflict, the love of Christ must supersede. According to Jesus, he must be loved above all others.

SESSION ONE

Being a follower of Christ requires pointing others to Christ even before they become a believer.

To become a follower, one must be interested in having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

1. Christ offers a personal invitation to enter into a relationship, and by doing so, you become a _____ of God. (John 1:12)
2. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save you because you were _____. (Luke 19:10)
3. Why were you lost? _____ (Romans 3:23)
4. According to Romans 6:23, what are the wages of sin? _____
5. Who has died for the sins of all humanity? _____ (Romans 5: 8-9)
6. What does God do once you confess your sins? _____ (1John 1:9)
7. Isaiah 55:7 says, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he (God) will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”
 - a. What should you do about past sins? _____
 - b. What will God do? _____
8. Whom do you build a relationship with through Jesus Christ? (John 14: 6,9)

9. If a person believes, they may have _____. (1John 5:13)

Prayer

Chapter Two

Prayer is often described as a conversation with God or a sharing in dialog for talking and listening to God. As with other forms of communication, individuals understand that talking takes place in communication, but are often challenged to remember and appreciate that listening takes place in communication as well. Communication only happens when two or more people listen and share. Otherwise, you have a monologue. There is sometimes an emphasis placed on written prayers, recited prayers, or intercessory prayers which are beneficial and needed. However, it offers limits in listening. Followers must be cautious that in approaching prayer we do not become casual or superficial in our prayer. Godly men in scripture approached God with reverence. The same author who encourages us to enter the Most Holy Place (the throne room of God) with boldness, likewise encourages us to worship God with reverence and awe, "for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 10:19;12:28-29). In current culture, there is a need to return to having an attitude of awe and the display of a sense of wonderment and reverence for God. God should be viewed in his immeasurable majesty and as creator and ruler of the universe.

Ralph Martin, in *The Fulfillment of All Desire*, says beautifully "Prayer is, at root, simply paying attention to God."⁵ What an image! Prayer is actually paying attention to what God has to say and is doing. Prayer might look vastly different if the follower's approach to prayer was that of going somewhere free from distractions and being still and quiet. How incredible an experience it could be to think on his glory, rejoice in his truth, and genuinely take time to experience his presence?

⁵ Ralph Martin, *The Fulfillment of All Desire* (Catholic Press Association) 21.

Prayer is a direct line of communication with God. In our culture of technology we are afforded the tools that allow two or more people to interact, discuss and offer response to each other. Prayer is so simple yet we make it complicated. We have the necessary skills to communicate with God just the same as we do with other individuals. Some have said they don't know how to pray. Let's look at some practical guidelines that might help initiate the process:

1) Choose a time and place

There are times when routines are beneficial. If you can be consistent with a time and place it will help keep you on track and focused. Some find that their best time is first thing in the morning, others before bed and some in the middle of their day, perhaps on their lunch break. If you can limit distractions, like phones, television and people, it will also keep your attention on what you are sharing and listening to from God.

2) Keep it simple

We don't have to use big persuasive words when we pray. We can actually talk to God with simple everyday language as though talking to a friend. For instance, just ask for forgiveness of sins and turn to God like this: God I was wrong and sinned and I am sorry, please forgive me. God says to me you are right in saying you have sinned, and I forgive you and give you a clean slate. Acts 3:19 says "Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away."

3) Tell him your needs

Come boldly into God's presence. Don't be afraid. He is your Father who loved you and wants to do good things for you, to provide for you and to empower you. And while we don't diminish our respect for him, we come boldly into his presence

knowing he is a good Father. One suggestion would be to begin your prayer session by telling God how great he is, then thanking him for all he has done in your life. God wants to hear from you because he cares for you. “Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” (1 Peter 5:7). Prayer doesn’t have to be lengthy or eloquent. Make a list of things in your life that God needs to hear about. Write down requests given to you from others. Pray for your family, friends, neighbors, church leaders, community leaders, and national leaders.

4) Pray scripture

Express faith in God’s word by praying scripture. God loves to hear from you about his promises and asking him to intervene in your circumstances. Prayer and scripture are powerful tools for communicating with God. The book of Psalms is one of those units of scripture that functions like a prayer book. Jesus taught his disciples to pray using the Lord’s Prayer which we find in Matthew 6:

“Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive them that trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.”

5) Pray with other followers

There can be indescribable power experienced when praying with other followers. It seems beyond our comprehension that the God of the universe stops, stoops, and

listens when we call upon his name. Matthew 18:19 says, “I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you.” Praying with others cultivates unity in serving God and bringing him glory. Sometimes praying with others is necessary for God to answer according to his will. James chapter 5:16 says “the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”

The greatest advantage of an effective and consistent prayer life is getting to know Jesus better. We have a limited vision and perception of Christ that can be enlarged for us through regular times of communicating and praying with him. God wants to hear from us and prayer helps in deepening our relationship with him.

One tool that increases effectiveness in prayer is prayer cards. Prayer cards are index cards on which a person writes prayer needs he is aware of. Following are examples of prayer cards:

Card 1 – Self

Ask for forgiveness whenever needed. Give God praise and be thankful.

Pray for personal needs

Pray for God’s will in your life

Pray for your life to bear fruit as a follower of Jesus

Pray for others to see God at work in your life

Pray for any specific need (s) going on in your life

Card 2 – Family/Friends/Neighbors

Pray for lost family and friends and for God to speak to them and to use you however he wants

Pray for specific needs you are aware of, and if you don't know, ASK

Card 3 – Church family and leadership

Pray for your pastor (s)

Pray for your friends

Pray for new followers

Pray for the needs of the church

Pray for every ministry of your church

Pray for each ministry leader

Card 4 – Community Leaders

Pray for teachers and principals

Pray for bus drivers

Pray for local government officials

Pray for police officers, fire fighters, and EMT's

Card 5 – National leaders

Pray for our military

Pray for our president and vice- president and their families

Pray for Congress

Pray for the Senate

Pray for the Supreme Court and other Judges

Pray for Secretaries of State, Veteran Affairs, Homeland Security, Secretary of education, Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of Defense, Attorney General, Chief of Staff, Director of National Intelligence, etc.

Be cautious that your prayer life doesn't become lifeless. We must pray in faith believing God will answer according to his will and purpose for our lives. Pray with expectancy and keep watch for God to answer. Offer God adoration, thanksgiving and praise as part of your daily time with him.

An opportunity to spend time with Jesus is experienced through an effective prayer life. As with any type of relationship, time spent together and communicating with each other is necessary for those relationships to grow. We are talking about the Creator of the universe who created us to be like him and the least we can do is give him some time each day. A quiet place, free from distractions is an ideal place to pray. Psalm 5:3 says this, "In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation." Len Sweet shares about changing his prayer life by deleting a comma. Instead of the intercessory mode of "Please, God," his prayers are now in the form "Please God" or, how can God's

purposes be fulfilled in our lives? If our emphasis is “Please God,” rather than “Please, God,” our prayers become a celebration of our relationship with God rather than enticing God to meet our expectations. Our high-tech culture is skeptical when it comes to prayer. Human resourcefulness seems to offer more hope in this chaotic world we have created rather than reliance on God. Jesus demonstrated the importance of prayer in Mark 1:35 where it reads, “Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.” No matter what hour of the day, make it a priority to set aside time for focused prayer and be consistent with that time daily.

SESSION TWO

Prayer is about our relationship with God and other people. Prayer runs counter to our egocentric culture. Prayer involves our covenant relationship with God and his creation. “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come . . . And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us” (Luke 11:2, 4).

1. When should we pray? (Luke 18:1)

2. How often and with what kind of attitude should we approach prayer?

(1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)

3. According to Psalm 66:18, (“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”) what can be a cause of unanswered prayer?

4. How do you know that God hears your prayer? (1 John 5:14)

5. What happens in prayer when we ask in Jesus name? (John 16:24)

1. What does Christ want to do by answering your prayer? (John 14:13)

2. In order for Christ to answer prayer, what must you do? (John 15:7)

8. Here are some specific things you can pray for:

a. Philippians 1:9 _____

b. Matthew 6:11 _____

c. Matthew 9:38 _____

d. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 _____

e. James 1:5 _____

f. Matthew 26:41 _____

9. What can help you when being tempted or tested? (Matthew 26:41)

10. When and where will you plan your daily time of prayer? Commit to it right now and write it down. Ask someone to hold you accountable to it.

MEMORIZE John 16:24

Worship

Chapter Three

Worship is to be a way of life. It is not restricted to an event or place. Worship is the product of our decision to serve and honor God above all other things. It is an acknowledgement of a great God who is worthy of all praise. It is a reminder that God wants to draw near to us as we draw near to him. This closeness is crucial in the life of a follower of Christ.

Worship is walking each day in the light of his goodness and grace and unconditional love. Israel learned the importance of worship when they traveled through the desert preparing to enter the Promised Land. They transported the Altar of God and as they made camp they began to worship. There is no need to wait for a scheduled time at a certain place. Followers of Christ today should not feel that worship only happens at church during a scheduled service which is far from how we are to live a life of worship.

The foundation of our worship lifestyle can be seen in Romans 12:1-2. "And so, dear brothers and sisters,[a] I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.[b] 2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Paul uses this passage to apply Old Testament practices in a new way. We no longer have to use bulls, rams, or lambs to please God when offering a sacrifice. God wants a broken people who display a repentant heart to worship him. In John Stott's commentary on Romans he explains, "Paul is clear that the presentation of our bodies is our spiritual act of worship. It is a significant Christian paradox. No

worship is pleasing to God which is purely inward, abstract and mystical; it must express itself in concrete acts of service performed by our bodies.” Worship is greater than emotions and feelings. Worship is not only singing and raising hands in praise and affirmation while singing unto the Lord. We worship when we perform acts that give God glory and draw attention to his greatness.

Worship can be expressed in actions that we perform every day. Worship can be expressed in every aspect of our lives and in everything we do. We worship through giving of our time and finances in order that others might know who God is and see the work he is doing. Worship can create an opportunity for us to share the sacrifice God made in sending us his son to die for our sins so that we might live our lives for him. When we make a commitment to become Jesus Followers, we become worshippers. We acknowledge that God is truth and love is therefore worthy of our praise and worship. When followers of Jesus worship regularly, God draws closer to those followers and the worshipers draw closer to him. Our spirit is in union with his Spirit and we experience his unconditional love and peace as well as his conviction and grace. As we respond in obedience and submission to God, we walk in the light of the Word and truth and our worship encompasses our entire being.

Worship by definition includes the humble response of man to God. It is centered upon the work of God. It is achieved through God-directed activity. It is articulated by our praise and by living a life in service to God and others. According to Francis Davidson, in “*The Scriptural Doctrine of Worship*,” humility is to respect, bow down, or to prostrate.⁶ This is an act of reverence or submission. It can be viewed as an outward posture representing an inward work of

⁶ <https://bible.org/book/export/html/6299>

humility and respect for men and deity. Worship can be described as an individual having a high view of God in his perfection and a lower view of self with imperfections.

Robert Webber, in his writings on worship, communicated worship as a response to trust and obedience that prepares an individual or a church to minister to the world and community. Webber also writes about four areas of biblical worship: “Assembling, Word, Eucharist, and Sending.”⁷ Worship is an action that followers take part in. These areas of worship help to share the story of God, which we are called to tell. Within the worship model just mentioned there are three elements to consider: Praise, Boast and Tell. David wrote in Psalm 34: 1-3:

“I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises.

I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart.

Come, let us tell of the Lord’s greatness; let us exalt his name together.”

1) Praise

God should receive praise for all things. David says in this Psalm that his praise will always be on his lips. Our praise which becomes worship must be directed toward God and about God. This form of worship allows followers to see the gospel at work in their lives and the world around them. God’s word is truth and can bring about balance in our worship. When we worship in spirit and in truth, heartfelt praise will be given and God’s word will flow through us.

2) Boast

⁷ Robert Webber, *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship*. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996).

David points out that he will boast only in the Lord. We should talk about God's goodness with purpose so that others may know him and that those who do know can be affirmed in their trust in God who is always faithful. We were created to give glory to God, and when we boast about the work God is doing others can be encouraged. A lifestyle of worship demonstrates God's faithfulness in word and through actions. Boasting of oneself breeds selfishness, resentment and bitterness.

3) Tell

David wants to increase other people's faith in God. He wants their hearts to be overwhelmed with God's greatness. "Let us exalt his name together" means to come together as on a team and to work as one, especially when we gather corporately to worship. We have the opportunity to bring our personal worship experiences to corporate worship, and out of the overflow of how God blesses us privately, we can pour out our praises to God alongside one another.

Worship that is a result from our desire to honor God above all things as mentioned earlier, may also involve sacrifice. This sacrifice may include our time and willingness to give of our whole selves. Scripture indicates that we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. This is an appeal from the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1. When we can shift our thinking from offering a sacrifice as worship to becoming a sacrifice of worship, we are transitioning toward claiming the experience of worship as God had planned for us. We offer our sacrifice of time, talent, and treasures as part of our worship; however, offering ourselves is the sacrifice God desires most. Live each day in the mystery and wonder of worship and it will transform your life and relationship with Christ.

SESSION THREE

Worship is to be a way of life. It is not restricted to an event or place. Worship is the product of our decision to serve and honor God above all other things.

1. What should you do for the glory of God? (1 Corinthians 10:31)

2. In view of God's mercy, what is true and proper worship? (Romans: 12:1-2)

3. Read Psalm 34:1-3 and complete these sentences:

a. I will _____ the _____ at all _____.

b. I will _____ in the Lord.

c. Come let us _____ of the Lord's _____ let us _____ his name
_____.

4. What should the rich message about Christ do according to Colossians 3:16?

We should also sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with

_____.

5. "Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you." 1 Corinthians 14:26

In this verse there is a sense of order and responsibility observed. Who is to be prepared for worship? _____

The responsibility to prepare for worship doesn't just fall to the worship team and the pastor. We should all come to the house of worship prepared—whether you are singing, teaching, preaching, speaking, prophesying, serving or receiving.

6. According to Psalm 98:4-6 and Psalm 150:3-5, how are we to praise and worship and tools or methods might we use?
-

7. We are to offer up praise in our worship with clapping of hands and shouts of joy. (Psalm 47:1-2) _____ your hands, all ye nations; _____ to God with cries of joy.

8. Praising and worship can be done in many ways and below are a few examples:

- a. When the day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place and in what position? _____ (Acts 2:1-2)

- b. What position of worship might we assume according to Psalm 91:6?
-

- c. "When the people saw the cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, they would _____ and _____ down in front of their own tents." Exodus 33:10

- d. Read 1 Kings 18:9, what form or position of worship is described?
-

- e. "I will praise you as long as I live, _____ up my _____ to you in prayer. Psalm 63:4

- f. "Praise his name with _____, accompanied by tambourine and harp. (Psalm 149:3)

Spiritual Dialogue

Chapter Four

Spiritual dialogue is occasionally a replacement for the term “evangelism” in the church. It is instructing others about the gospel for the purpose of convincing belief. Mack Stiles explains evangelism this way: “Evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade.”⁸ True evangelism is relational and conversational. Think for a moment about salesmen and those in the field of marketing. They will do their best to show you how passionate they are about their product and why you should buy it. They don’t care about your passion for it. They care that you buy it. Evangelists care about how passionate you are for it. In a sense, Christians should be passionate about their relationship with Jesus Christ so much so that we want others to share in that relationship. We must proceed with caution, though. Aaron Armstrong said, “if we think of evangelism as ‘nothing more than a sales job where the prospect is to be won over to sign on the dotted line by praying a prayer, followed by an assurance that he is the proud owner of salvation,’ then we’ve missed the point. And although the promise of a better life sounds nice, it’s a promise we simply can’t keep. When I came to faith, my life didn’t get ‘better’—it got harder. Right away, I was thrown into a giant storm of family strife. I was forced to stand by my convictions and contend for a faith that, at the time, I barely understood.”⁹

The aim of sharing the gospel is simply making disciples. Here are some truths that in some form should be communicated in sharing the gospel:

Here is the truth

⁸ <https://www.9marks.org/article/how-should-we-define-evangelism/>

⁹ <https://www.exploregod.com/what-is-evangelism>

- People are separated from God by sin. (Romans 3:23; 5:12-13)
- Our sins require **judgment** from a holy God. (Romans 2)
- There is no way to receive forgiveness on our own. (Romans 3:24; 5:1-2, 12-13)
- God sent his one and only son to live a perfect life on our behalf, to die in our place, and to rise again in victory over sin and death. (John 3:16)
- Jesus' sacrifice offers us forgiveness for our sins. After accepting this offer, we must turn away from (or repent of) our sins and pursue our relationship with God. (Mark 1:15; Romans 10:9-10)
- As Christians, we belong to Christ and are being transformed to be like him. (Romans 8:28-29; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 3:21-25)
- Someday, (no one knows when) Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. On that day, all who believe in him will join God in the new creation—a creation forever free from sin, sadness, and death. (Revelation 21:1-2)

Mark Dever writes this about spiritual dialogue:

“When we tell the gospel to people, we need to do it with honesty. To hold back important and unpalatable parts of the truth is to begin to manipulate and to try to sell a false bill of goods to the person with whom we are sharing. So however we evangelize, we aren't to hide problems, to ignore our own shortcomings, or to deny difficulties. And we are not to put forward only positives that we imagine our non-Christian friends presently value and present God as simply the means by which they can meet or achieve their own ends. We must be honest.”¹⁰

While honesty is crucial, showing others love is really the foundation of engaging spiritual dialogue. J.I Packer wrote “there are two motives that should spur us constantly to evangelize. The first is love of God and concern for his glory; the second is love of man and concern for his welfare.”¹¹ Reaching others with our story is really the overflow of God's love for individuals that comes through his followers to those who need to hear the gospel. Christians must demonstrate love that is genuine and available in the everyday life. When followers display a love that shows up when there is great brokenness and pain, that will be

¹⁰ Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL Crossway, 2007), 57.

¹¹ J.I Packer *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity Press, 1961). Kindle

remembered and appreciated more than any eloquent words that may be shared or lessons taught. This love models Jesus' life. Jesus showed up, spent life with the people who were discarded by society, and loved them.

There is an old phrase that says "actions speak louder than words." If you were to search where this saying comes from you will see that it can be attributed as far back as the 1700's. "This statement is a very old proverb and is found in many languages and in various forms. It was first recorded in English in this exact way in 1736."¹² So what is the true meaning of this phrase? It means that your words mean very little until you actually do something. The apostle John spoke this truth in 1 John 3:17-18: "If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions." Here are some practical ways we can display love through our actions and reach out:

- Meet people where they are. Paul said this, "When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:22-23) Paul understood that the best way to communicate and build relationships was to understand other people's traditions and practices. Paul was raised a Jew but learned about the Gentiles in order to meet them where they were so that he might present the gospel in way that was easy for them understand. The same is true today when attempting to evangelize and

¹² <https://www.theidioms.com/actions-speak-louder-than-words/>

share Jesus with others. Not everyone knows who Jesus is or that he loves them and why. Start simple and present the truth of God's love.

- Don't be afraid to get dirty. Paul also said this: "For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you." (2Timothy 4:3-5) Telling others about God's love might require that we roll up our sleeves and dive into the work. At a busy restaurant a manager may have to jump in and bus a few tables during busy times. This is a way of sharing common ground. It is important to find areas of commonality that may open the door to share something Jesus is doing in your life. I had finished my last chemo treatment and was at the store, sporting my fun cap to cover my bald head. I saw a lady come up beside me wearing a scarf for possibly the same reason, and I commented on how beautiful it was. She mentioned starting chemo and I had an open door to share with her my experience which led to me praying with her right there in the grocery as she started this new journey.
- Give when you see a need. Ephesian 4:28 says "If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need." A great way to evangelize is to give to those who are in need. I have served on mission teams that work in the inner city and often times will give

food to the homeless who may be hanging around. While I may not give them money, I will give them something that will alleviate their hunger, and in the process let them know that God loves them. Often random acts of kindness will afford the opportunity to feed their body with food and their soul with the love of Jesus. Be kind to people. Random acts of kindness speak volumes. Purchase a coffee for the car behind you in the drive-thru at Starbucks. Take a roll of quarters to the laundry mat and leave them on a washing machine with a note that says “God loves you.” Give the street workers a cold drink while they stand holding their signal sign for you. Donate clothing to the Salvation Army, or offer to work the food pantry or ring a bell at Christmas. Offer to pump someone’s gas when it’s cold out or raining. Mow a neighbor’s yard when you are finished with your own and tell them you just wanted to bless them today. Ask for someone’s bill at a restaurant and pay their bill and write on the bottom, “God loves you.” Offer to bag someone’s groceries and take them to their car for them. Kindness makes an impression and may open the door to share Jesus with others.

- Visit with those who are aging. I work as a therapist in a nursing home and there are many individuals who never have a visitor. There are gospel groups who come and share the word and sing and for some, but that is the only “visitor” they may have. I also perform pastoral care and make regular visits to shut-ins and those who may not be able to leave their home often. While old age is a gift from God, some in these circumstances may not see it that way. For some, sharing a hymn they may know or an old song from their

past is a great way of connecting that may open the door to share the gospel.

Visiting and music are great doorways for evangelism.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says “If you want happiness for an hour -- take a nap. If you want happiness for a day -- go fishing. If you want happiness for a month -- get married. If you want happiness for a year -- inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime -- help someone else.”¹³ Creating opportunities for spiritual dialogue is a way of helping others find happiness in knowing that Jesus loves them and wants a relationship with them. Spiritual dialogue is way for Christians to represent Christ to those who may not know him. Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette makes this observation about the spread of the gospel: “The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or a major part of their occupation, but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion.”¹⁴

Allow God to use you to share his good news of the love he has for those he created. We were created to be in relationship with God that we might spend eternity with him. Do not be afraid of telling others what Christ has done and is doing in your life. Each of us have a story to tell and your story just might help someone else become a follower of Jesus Christ. So be strong and courageous and be Jesus to others. The ministry of Jesus was to bring wholeness and peace to a broken world. He set out to accomplish that in this way: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the

¹³ <http://www.quoteland.com/topic/Happiness-Quotes/72/>

¹⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Harper & Brothers, 1937), 1:116.

time of the Lord's favor has come" (Luke 4:18-19). Good news should be viewed as a positive headline and something to be shared.

To effectively share spiritual dialogue with others, we must listen in our communities and understand metaphors being used and the culture and influence from which people live. This will enable more effective communication and the establishment of relationships and relevant conversations with improved understanding. Christians should recognize that their culture is changing, and people need to hear the message of God changing lives in words and concepts they understand. Jesus provided this example in the way he told stories. When Jesus was talking in Matthew 13, he was addressing a group of farmers. He chose to use words they could relate to: seeds and planting. That language may seem foreign to us today because we simply go to a grocery store more often than growing our own food. Communication is vital in sharing our stories of transformation with those we encounter, so that God may continue to transform lives.

SESSION FOUR

Have you ever received some great news and could hardly wait to tell someone? Telling others about what Christ has done for you should be so exciting you can't wait to share it! Sharing the good news of Christ can be considered witnessing or evangelizing to others. When you have made a commitment to serve Christ, you should share that commitment and his love with others.

1. John's gospel teaches how to witness and tell others about God.

a. Based on John 3:32, to witness or testify is to share what?

2. In John 1:40-41, what is Andrew doing?

3. What does God want Christians to do? (John 6: 28-29)

4. What is Jesus appointing us to do in John 15:16?

5. What did Christians participate in that was evidence they had accepted Christ?

(Acts 8:12) _____

Have you made this public expression of your commitment to Christ?

Yes _____ No _____ Considering it _____

Why, or why not? _____

6. How can you be prepared to witness for Christ? (1 Peter 3:15)

7. Where did Paul go in order to share Christ with people? (Acts 17:17, 20:20)

8. Why is it crucial that your witness center on Christ? (John 14:6)

9. Write out how you answer the following question that a friend or neighbor might ask:

How can I be saved?

10. What is your responsibility to a person once they have accepted Christ and experienced salvation? (Acts 14: 21-22)

MEMORIZE Matthew 4:19

Serving

Chapter Five

According to Merriam-Webster, to serve is a “transitive verb to be a servant to attend; to give the service and respect due to (a superior); to comply with the commands or demands of : gratify; to give military or naval service to; to perform the duties of (an office or post); to act as server at (mass); to work through (a term of service); to put in (a term of imprisonment); to wait on at table; to bring (food) to a diner; present, provide —usually used with up the novel served up many laughs; to furnish or supply with something needed or desired; to wait on (a customer) in a store to furnish professional service to; to answer the needs of; to be enough for or suffice.”¹⁵ Simply put, to genuinely serve is to respectfully provide for or do something for someone else without an expectation for anything in return.

“The Hebrew term for service, *abad*, and its Greek counterpart, *latreuo*..., denotes the idea ‘to work, to labor, or to serve.’ In the Old Testament this service was most often priestly service. In the New Testament we are told that we are all priests of God (1 Peter 2:5,9), so that this term does not apply only to the service of the few, but of the entire congregation of believers

¹⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/serve>

in Christ.”¹⁶ The gospel writer Mark offered one of the most profound definitions of the work of Jesus, when he said in Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus was the epitome of a servant.

The Greek word Jesus used for servant was “*diakoneō*” from which we get the name “deacon”. *Diakoneō* means “to be a servant of, to serve, wait upon, or minister to.”¹⁷ Every follower of Jesus Christ is called to be a servant. In Philippians 2 Paul uses a different word for servant. “You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being” (Philippians 2:5-7). Paul uses the Greek word “*doulos*” which means a slave or bondman. To be a servant of Christ means that we choose to do what he asks of us, such as making disciples and sharing Christ with all we encounter. Throughout his preaching and service Paul was always clear in being humble about himself and proclaiming Jesus. “You see, we don’t go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake.” (2 Corinthians 4:5)

Being a servant of Jesus Christ may not always gain you popularity. Jesus himself often went against the grain of the community. Jesus instructed his disciples and followers to be set apart from the world. This idea of serving others, and even being last instead of first so that we might serve, provides a challenge. “He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, ‘Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.’ (Mark

¹⁶ <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-worship-part-1-john-41-26>

¹⁷ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2014/07/05/top-7-bible-verses-about-serving-others/>

9:35) We live in a culture today where winning, competition, and even climbing corporate ladders are the push of society. Jesus simply instructs us to serve him by serving others.

Serving others is an act of love. The freedom we experience in serving Christ and experiencing his love should spill over into our everyday lives and actions towards others. Love is an action performed openly and without grudges or expectations of anything in return. “For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13) It is crucial that we serve others with the right attitude and intent of our hearts. We are not to serve out of selfish anticipation. When we serve others we are serving Christ as well.

“Jesus said “if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward” (Matt 10:42) so even though we are not giving a cold drink to Jesus (or helping out someone financially, giving them food, our time, or our attention) when we serve others it’s like giving Jesus a cold drink of water for when we do it for others, Jesus sees it as doing it for Him.”¹⁸

Leonard Sweet said: “The church needs to be so clear about its identity as the body of Christ that everything it does generates a gravitational pull toward the heart.”¹⁹

In Romans 6 Paul is addressing the church in Rome. He tells them that they need to realize that when they offer themselves as slaves, they must be obedient which leads to righteousness. Prior to our relationship with Jesus, we were slaves of our own desires. When we enter into a relationship with Christ, and begin to serve him by serving others, those previous desires and focus is transitioned away from ourselves and onto others.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Len Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There*. (Colorado Springs, David C Cooke CO. 2010).

There is a story of a man named Dawson Trotman. He was an evangelist and the founder of The Navigators. He was visiting a Taiwan village, hiking through muddy and wet conditions to meet with a group of Christians. The pastor he hiked with was questioned about what he remembered most about Dawson, to which he replied, “He cleaned my shoes.” When the pastor got up the next day after their hike, he realized that Dawson had gotten up early and cleaned all the mud from the pastor’s shoes. Trotman was known as a servant an example of putting others first before himself.

As a follower of Jesus, one of the most valuable things we can share is ourselves; our time, our talents, our resources, our energy and our love. Jesus said, “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Jesus lived his entire life as a servant. One example of his service was the washing of his disciples’ feet found in John 13. In the first century, walking in sandals on dirty roads meant that feet were to be washed before a meal. This was assigned to the lowliest of servants. This was a true act of humility and servanthood. Before this act of serving his disciples they were arguing among themselves about who was greater. Instead of arguing, they should have been washing each other’s feet and following Jesus’s instruction to serve one another. Jesus saw the need to get their focus off themselves and onto what their purpose was. Jesus said, “And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth; slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them” (13:14-17).

The same is true for today. There is a need to get focus off self. Attitudes too often are ones motivated for position rather than the honor of serving one another. We need to ask

ourselves those challenging questions concerning our motivations for serving others. No one is immune to selfish ambition and desires, however, it is necessary to stop those thoughts early rather than allowing them to develop and derail us from serving others. Paul shares in Philippians 2 that we are to "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." We are to serve one another within the Body in practical and simple ways to bring honor to one another. Jesus washed His disciples' feet. Paul, while shipwrecked on the island of Malta, gathered wood to fuel the fire that was built for his fellow travelers. These are examples of what servanthood within the fellowship of believers is all about: being aware of simple things that need to be done, and actually performing them.

Serving is the contradiction of our natural disposition. We say, "I'm looking for a church that meets the needs of me and my family," not "I'm looking for a place to serve and be a blessing." We expect others to meet our needs. As maturity in Christ is developed, the emphasis of our lives should increasingly shift to living a life of service. The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, "Who is going to meet my needs?" and starts asking, "Whose needs can I help meet?" One of the benefits of servanthood is that it requires no special talents or giftedness. We are just to use our gifts to serve one another. If God has blessed us with certain natural abilities, we need to be good agents of those abilities to serve others. It requires no spiritual gift or talent to wash feet or gather firewood as mentioned above. What is required is a servant's heart and attitude. Here is an example of a servant's heart:

"A well-known Bible teacher once spoke to a men's group at a church in the Washington, D.C., area. Afterward he noticed a man who stayed behind to remove and stack the chairs. Upon inquiring he learned that the man stacking the chairs was a busy United States Senator. It

did not take any talent or ability usually associated with being a senator to stack chairs. But it did take the attitude of a servant”.²⁰

Disguised behind the common narratives that describe millennials as an entitled generation is an often-overlooked fact: today's young adults want to serve. College campuses are providing opportunities for community service to engage students in serving others. From middle schools to high schools to colleges and universities, educators are creating innovative ways to engage students, and to use service learning as an effective form of pedagogy. The church should be following such an example:

“In one study published by the Tisch College's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, or CIRCLE, high school students who took part in school-sponsored community service were more likely to improve their reading, math, science, and history scores—and 22 percentage points more likely to graduate from college. Service also has been found to build core skills that today's employers value, and those who serve and have served are 27 percent more likely to find a job after being unemployed.”²¹

Living a life of serving others should be an essential tool in training Christ followers to serve God and others.

Individuals should never allow themselves to get to the place they believe they are too important to serve others. In fact, a primary characteristic of a servant is one that serves downward, that is, to those who by society's standards are lower than him in position or season in life. It is relatively easy to serve those who are superior to us. In fact, the world expects people to serve those in leadership or those who are above us. Jesus demonstrated true servanthood by serving downward. Jesus though deity, and the leader of the twelve disciples, served them. He could have appointed a disciple to wash their feet but he humbled himself and took on the role of a servant performing this lowly task himself. Jesus recognized during his time on earth that those who were lower served those who were above or greater. At one point

²⁰ <https://bible.org/article/loving-serving>

²¹ <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/10/21/millennials-want-to-serve-lets-help-them.html>

he said, "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Lk. 22:27). While this attitude of the lesser serves those above them may be evident in the world, it should be different in the body of Christ. Jesus said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (Jn. 13:15). Paul also provided an example for serving downward. "You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions" (Acts 20:34). One might expect Paul's student he was preparing for ministry to care for him and his needs. But Paul served them and provided for them.

While being a servant does not require any absolute talent or abilities, it does require the right attitude. Along with a proper attitude is a vision to see beyond ourselves with an observant eye. In this fast-paced world with its busyness and advances in technology, our focus is often on our own schedules. Or perhaps our gaze is on the device or technology we hold in our hands, causing us to miss some needs that might be right in front of us. We have not understood that we are to look not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:4). We must pray for God to give us a servant's heart and attitude, and then we must be compliant to what He asks of us.

This requires us to respond to the opportunities to serve what he places before us. Becoming a servant also presents challenges. "When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, 'Come in and eat with me'? No, he says, 'Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later.' And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. In the same way, when you obey me you should say, 'we are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.'" (Luke 17:7-10)

Imagine if that happened in our world today. The test of a true servant may be the response to the treatment of being served. That may seem extreme to us but in Jesus' day, it was typical.

Observe the thoughtlessness of the master in Luke 17:7-8. The servant had worked all day and had to be tired and hungry. He must prepare and serve the master's meal before he can even rest or eat himself. Servants are never too busy, too isolated, too self-centered to notice the needs of others. God calls us to be ready and available, observing and listening to the happenings around us, and nudging people toward God by acts of kindness and service. If we focus and listen to the voice of God we can hear him nudge us to help meet the needs around us. This flows from our own relationship with God and awareness of his presence. Strive to be in the moment, aware of God's work and people's needs. When we put others first and listen we can find a way to heap God's love on those around us.

SESSION FIVE

Jesus demonstrated love to his disciples by serving them. Jesus took the lead in becoming a lowly servant and washed the disciples' feet. In part, servant-leadership is being open to change and being excited about the unexpected or newness that develops as individuals serve. In today's culture, change and surprise is met with fearfulness and thoughts of needing to conform rather than grow. In some cultures there exist this thought that individuals must strive to be independent and successful, to take care of themselves and not others. Margaret Wheatley shared in an article about Greenleaf's Center for Servant Leadership, "servant leadership starts as a feeling, a desire to serve others that then becomes a commitment to move that desire into practice, to actually take on the great courageous task of serving others." There is a stirring that often takes place within the hearts of humans that feels as though our hearts might just leap out

of our chests. It is a desire to help others in times of need, or to simply love others. A choice is made to either ignore the impulse or to act upon it. To act upon the need to love and help others is to serve. Jesus demonstrated servanthood to his disciples so that they might go and do likewise. As followers actively serve others, there is less thought of serving self.

1. According to Jesus, who must you love? (Luke 10:27)

2. Based on this passage, who is Jesus reaching out to? (Matthew 9:9-13)

“As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth.

“Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?” When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

3. Living like Jesus requires us to show compassion for others. Read the parable and identify who the neighbor was to the man attacked by bandits? (Luke 10:30-37)

4. Jesus ministered to all types of people. He spent time with them and got to know them. Here are a few examples of ways you might spend time with your neighbors:

a. When you see your neighbor arriving home from work, ask them how their day was and if anything exciting happened throughout the day.

b. Invite a neighbor out for coffee or a coke.

c. Ask a couple of neighbors over for a backyard BBQ.

d. Invite some neighbors over for a game of corn hole or volleyball.

e. Offer to mow the grass of a neighbor that may need some assistance.

f. Rake the leaves for an older person in your neighborhood.

g. Invite a neighbor over for dinner and just share your day around the table.

h. Ask for a ball schedule of a neighbor kid and show up to their game and cheer them on.

i. Take your dog for a walk and make an effort to talk to at least two neighbors in your trip around the block.

j. Invite a family out for a game of bowling and pizza afterwards.

k. Ask a neighbor to join you in a game of miniature golf or 9 holes of regular golf.

l. Attend a choir or band concert that a neighbor is involved in.

5. Identify 4 neighbors that you will commit to getting to know by engaging in conversation and activities with. Write their names below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

MEMORIZE 1 Corinthians 10:31

Management

Chapter Six

A simple definition of management includes handling, directing, and controlling affairs of a business or organization or personal life. The Bible might refer to controlling affairs as stewardship and often presents it as managing money, generosity, and giving. "A biblical world view of stewardship can be consciously defined as: "Utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation."²² The central essence of a biblical world-view of stewardship is managing everything God brings into the believer's life in a manner that honors God and impacts eternity. Stewardship begins and ends with the understanding of God's ownership of all:

- "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." (Revelation 22:13)
- "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1)
- "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it." (Deuteronomy 10:14)
- "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." (Leviticus 25:23)
- "Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me." (Job 41:11)

²²<https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/hbd/s/stewardship.html>

Stewardship is further supported and sustained theologically on the understanding of God's holiness as found in such verse as: Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104; 113; 1 Chronicles 29:10-20; Colossians 1:16; and Revelation 1:8.”²³ God has ownership of all things. “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” (Psalm 24:1) Christian Stewardship is the obligation that Christians have in managing and wisely using the gifts that God provides.

Everyone has been given talents, time, and treasure and what we do with these reflect how well we perform as stewards of God. The Bible says: “To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away” (Matthew 25:29). Jesus in his storytelling fashion presented human concepts with a spiritual impact. A man going on a journey gave his servants talents and “To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away”. (It should be noted that the talent is a unit value of money (Greek) and is equivalent to approximately twenty years labor). In today’s economy that would be a significant amount of money as it would have been in Jesus’ time. One servant doubled his five talents and the master says “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master”. The one who received two talents also doubled his talents and the master also said “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master”. But the one who had been given one talent buried and or did nothing with it at all. The master said “You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the

²³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewardship_\(theology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewardship_(theology))

bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents” (Matthew 25:14-30). This story is about the stewardship that God has assigned to us with what we’ve been given. The lesson here is that Jesus expects us to use our worldly wealth for his kingdom purposes as he is the Manager, otherwise what he has given us will be taken away and will be provided for others.

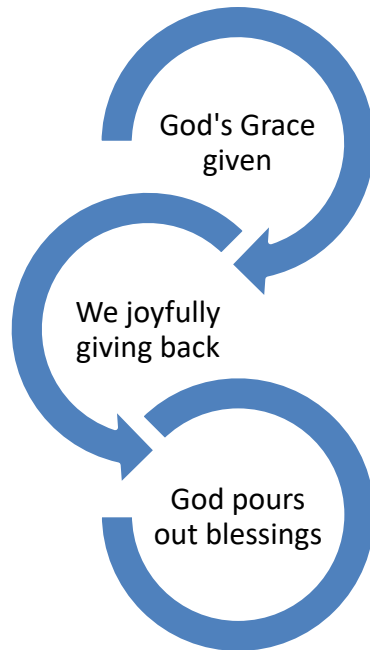
God provides spiritual gifts to those who are his followers. “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen” (1Peter 4: 10-11). These gifts are to be used to serve one another. As referenced above in Matthew 25, if they are not used they may be taken from us.

Good managers and stewards are faithful with what has been entrusted to them. Luke 16 describes the results of faithfulness. “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people’s things, why should you be trusted with things of your own? No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money” (16:10-13). This passage lends a reminder to Matthew 25 shared earlier and the story of using talents. If followers of Christ are not faithful with what has been given them, why would he keep giving? Jesus said, “But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will

be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required” (Luke 12: 48).

The giving of our time, talents, and resources to better serve Christ can at times be viewed as cause and effect. God want us to use what he has blessed us with, but he truly doesn't need it. God doesn't need your money or offerings as much as he wants your heart. A cheerful giver doesn't give out of coercion or give half-heartedly but gives cheerfully. “Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” (2 Corinthians 9: 6-7).

Aside from the implications of money, Paul is also describing how our lives should be lived. The choices we make and things we choose to do affect outcomes. If we find ourselves stranded on the side of the road because we ran out of gas, our intentions to get gas are of no good to us. We must deliberately act to get results and demonstrate faithfulness. Actions put into practice make us better stewards and managers. God desires complete trust and abandonment of our own desires in order that we might serve him well. Stewardship and management could be summarized as circles of abundance.



Jesus said “Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them” (Matt 13:12). So where do you rate? Are you a good steward or manager? Then you will be rewarded but if not, you will receive little or next to nothing. As for me, I would rather hear Jesus say “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:23). All Christ followers should want to hear, “Well done.”

SESSION SIX

As indicated earlier in our reading, a simple definition of management includes handling, directing, and controlling affairs of a business or organization or personal life. The Bible might refer to controlling affairs as stewardship and often presents it as managing money, generosity, and giving. From the beginning of Genesis, God creates everything and places Adam in the Garden of Eden to work it and be responsible for the care of it. It is clear that man was created

to work and that work is the stewardship of all of God's creation. Because God owns everything his followers are simply managers or overseers acting on his behalf.

1. As a foundational principle of stewardship, we must realize what belongs to the Lord?
(Psalm 24:1) _____
2. Scripture teaches us not be proud or to trust in money, but rather trust in God. It is God who _____ us _____ we need for our enjoyment. (1 Timothy 6:17)
3. As described in the reading of the parable of the talents, we will be called to give an account of how we have administered everything we have been given. "For to everyone who _____ will _____ be _____, and he will have an _____. But from the one who _____, even _____ he _____ will be _____ away.
(Matthew 25:29)
4. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3 the principle of reward and for whom we are working.
"Work _____ at whatever you do, as though you were working for the _____
_____. (Colossians 3:23)
5. As Christians in the 21st century, we need to embrace a larger biblical view of management and stewardship, which goes beyond tithing, church budgets or building projects, though important; it connects everything we do with what God is doing in the world. We should strive toward the hearing these words: "The master was full of praise. ' _____, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together! (Matthew 25:21) Another version ends this verse with *Come and share your master's happiness!*

6. God calls us to be stewards of our testimonies. What does 1 Peter 3:15 say about the stewardship of our testimonies?

7. Good stewards serve only their master. In Luke 16:13, Jesus says good stewards are wholly devoted to him. If we choose to serve God, we cannot serve money. What is the place of money in a Christian's life? How are we to view it? How is it to be used? (See 1 Timothy 6:6-10.)

8. God expects us to be good stewards of our gifts. Read 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7. What is the source of spiritual gifts and what can we assume of them since they come from the Spirit?

MEMORIZE Psalm 24:1

Setting an Example

The church wants to be about the business of sending others out on mission. There are those who take to heart the great commission of making disciples. The church realizes that people must be willing to share Christ and the gospel with those who are unchurched. Followers (of Christ) often want to be bold and forward in sharing their story of transformation; however, good intentions must be laced with a teachable heart and mindset. Many followers can be trained in that endeavor and will keep sharing while using the tools given. The follower must live a life led by the Holy Spirit that draws unbelievers into a relationship with Jesus Christ rather than pushing them away and to live life for their own selfish desires. It is critical to long for a growing and deeper relationship with God and seeing God as love. Followers that set an example with an infectious excitement about loving God and loving others will influence people to question such excitement. Francis Chan said, “Am I loving my neighbor and my God by living where I live, by driving what I drive, by talking how I talk? I urge you to consider and actually live as though each person you come into contact with is Christ.” (Crazy Love)

Individuals we encounter in our communities are in need of love, and who better than God’s followers to show that love to these individuals?

Being an example starts with loving people. 1 John 3:11 reads, “For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another.” Most people invest time in what is important to them.

Establishing Relationships

In most communities, there is evidence of many backgrounds including ethnic, financial, social, and religious. The Christian church was among the first institutions throughout history to bring together on common ground Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slave and free. These diverse groups that make up a community can capture the attention of many individuals which will cultivate potential relationships. A common practice for most cultures that cultivate a sense of community is the sharing of a meal with families, neighborhoods and social groups. Meals around a table are a formative social practice. Fred Roger's in his book, *Mister Rogers Parenting*, made this observation: "at the dinner table children learn the art of making conversation-how to take turns listening and talking and how to put their ideas into words. Even the vocabulary increases as they learn new words and new ideas from others in the family" (pg. 23) Dr. Len Sweet in his book, *From Tablet to Table*, writes, "If we were to make the table the most sacred object of furniture in every home, in every church, in every community, our faith would quickly regain its power and our world would quickly become a better place. The table is the place where identity is born-the place where the story of our lives is retold, re-minded and re-lived." (pg2-3) Relationships are often defined by the stories that they generate and share with one another.

Some view the church as a club or community they can belong to. The church needs to be on mission to know its neighbors and the needs that are present. Relationships can only be established by spending time together. Relationships develop by listening, observing, sharing life experiences, learning interests and doing life together. The age-old phrase "to have friends, you must be a friend" is a great mindset when thinking about relationships. See needs in peoples lives or opportunities for interaction and engaging others. When you do that you create moments

of connection and occasions for long-lasting relationships. In every relationship, someone must take the initiative and break new ground to get the relationship started. First steps must be taken for effective relationships to grow and develop. Individuals are looking for real and genuine friendships. An effective missional mindset can only take place when some level of relationship is established.

Sharing Life Together

Relationships will develop when time is invested in the relationship. When individuals share life together, they connect with each other. Relationships must be developed in the community and not solely within the church. The church has done a great job at teaching fellowship within, almost to a detriment. There are many Christians who only have Christian friends, only use Christian operated businesses, and some who have no other acquaintances outside the walls of the church. Nowhere in scripture is it written to only associate with other Christians. Christians need those relationships with other Christians for support, encouragement and accountability; however, it is crucial to have relationships with unbelievers. The church must go where people are. Christians are called to be salt and light. If time is spent in places where salt is not needed and darkness is not present, how then are Christians fulfilling that calling? Consider for a moment the disciples and how Jesus shared life with them. Jesus befriended them, spent time with them, taught them, trained them, and sent them on mission. Sharing life together means doing ordinary, everyday activities with ordinary people, starting with those who are in your own community or neighborhood.

Outreach Opportunities

To be disciple-makers the church must engage in outreach and evangelism. In years past, the phrases “evangelism crusade” and “Evangelism Explosion” were common among Christian circles as a method for sharing the gospel and drawing large crowds; the gospel message was preached and many conversions were witnessed.

One great example of this is Billy Graham. For decades, he held many crusades as a method of evangelism. He is a well-respected communicator of the gospel, and his method of evangelism drew large crowds with many salvations and baptisms occurring as a result. What did not happen at those crusades was the necessary follow-up and discipling of new believers in how to develop this relationship that was initiated.

In today’s culture and society, that method may not be effective. With a decline in crusades, Billy Graham’s association has launched a home-based evangelism method called *My Hope Campaign*. This evangelism tool promotes opening homes to family, friends, neighbors, work associates, and community members and sharing the gospel with them. The program encourages the sharing of testimonies of lives being changed and special messages from Billy Graham. The same gospel message is being shared, however, the platform and vehicle of delivery has changed. The meetings have moved from stadiums to living rooms.

New generations are looking for intimate groups of genuine individuals who are willing to invest in their lives. Some of these persons were raised in the church, then moved away from the church, but are now returning to the church so their children can experience godly influences. Other generations have no exposure to organized religion, and the thought of stepping into a church for worship is foreign to them. Methods for reaching these generations may have to change for transformations to occur. Evangelism Explosion is a tool that assists in training

individuals to share their faith. This method is not just about adding to the numbers of those being saved. Rather it focuses on multiplication, whereas those who are trained share their message and as they lead others into a relationship with Christ, they train those same individuals to share the message, and train others.

Consider for a moment a simple task of learning to ride a bike. You can be taught by reading how to ride a bike and even by watching a video about riding. Through these mediums you can learn all the right steps to effectively ride. However, it is impossible to actually ride a bike without getting on the bike. The same is true with evangelism in that you cannot just sit in a classroom and learn about it, you must get out and experience it.

“The Story” (<http://thestory.com>) is another evangelism tool being used today that offers a walk through the outreach process. (It is accessible at thestory.com.) It is a story form of creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration. Churches have created small groups where neighbors, family, and friends are invited to listen to the story, using books and videos to communicate the gospel. “I Am Second” is an evangelism method created by E3 ministries that uses celebrity testimonies as a platform. This ministry shares stories from individuals who experience everyday struggles but find hope, healing, deliverance, and peace.

Conclusion

Effective teaching in ministry should lead to missional outreach and evangelism. To be missional in ministry, one must be involved in the lives of others in their community on a practical level. Communicating and sharing life with friends, family, those at work, and our neighbors makes for vital connections to become missional. This sharing life opens the doors to evangelism. It's crucial to establish relationships with those who don't attend church. Christians will need to develop the desire to do life with those around them in their community. "The world is changing at a rapid pace and with it your neighborhood, school, work, mall, and everywhere you go. For the first time in history, the whole world is showing up everywhere and changing the neighborhood." Go be the ones to change your neighborhood!

